

Good Afternoon

My name is James Vesekis and I currently teach Computer Science to middle and high school students at Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy. I am also the treasure for the Connecticut Chapter of Computer Science Teachers of America.

Connecticut students are woefully under-prepared for the economy of the 21st century. Most students know how to consume today's technology but many have little or no understanding of how the technology works. Currently Connecticut only has approximately 65 schools that teach Computer Science education. 90% of all schools in this country do not offer a computer science course.

Computer Science, which focuses on innovation and the creation of new technology is the basis of many advances in all fields of endeavor. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is articulating the need for a Computer Science education in all high schools to keep the United States competitive in the global economy. The NSF has awarded grants to the College Board to develop a new AP Computer Science course that is accessible to all college bound students (<http://www.csprinciples.org/>) to help achieve this goal.

We must demand that Computer Science be taught to all students, K-12 in order to prepare students for the jobs of the future, equip them to understand the role computers play in their lives and train them to be vigilant against cyber security attacks. Industry and concerned individuals have organized to bring Computer Science to K-5 through Code.org. We need the state to assume the challenge and support schools to teach middle and high school Computer Science.

Computer Science is a subject area where most parents cannot help their students so it is important that the state prepares students in Computer Science. CTCSTA considers this an equity issue since students who self-select Computer Science are those who come from homes where Computer Science is already appreciated. Computer Science has been described as the new literacy. We do not want our students to be illiterate in this digital age. The State Department of Education has realized the importance of this new literacy and has initiated a Computer Science Advisory Board.

I started teaching Computer Science at an AP level course, and have since adapted that course to make it accessible to all students at our school. I currently teach students in grades 8-12 and

with the support of my principal who also understands the value of a Computer Science education, and we plan to have Computer Science course offerings or after school clubs for 6th and 7th graders next year.

Students with special needs have met with success in my classroom. As a result, teachers and counselors seek to place some of these students in my classes. Other students who have not normally had academic success find it in my classroom because they have a new and creative way to express themselves. So yes, computer science can be accessible to all and help close the achievement gap, especially for girls and minority groups who are miserably underrepresented in the field. My classroom is living proof of this.

The Education Committee must support this effort and bring Computer Science to all CT children to help them achieve academic success and be competitive in the new economy of the 21st century.

On a personal note learning computer science has changed my life. It has made me smarter at least that is what my wife tells me. I have a new appreciation for math and have developed better problem solving skills as a result of my training in computer science. So, if Computer Science can do this for someone who is 44 years of age and set in their ways imagine what it can do for children who have grown up with the computer technology that now dominates our society.

James Vesekis