



Make Coding Mandatory

Coding is the new literacy. All individuals must be literate in computer systems to engage in building a better society. Everything we do is tied to using computer systems — from reading the news and purchasing groceries, to communicating with family, to teaching and learning and activating community. How are America's schools preparing youth for digital citizenship? Unfortunately, it remains mostly focused on the 3Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic) while the ability to read, write, and manipulate code is quickly becoming more relevant.

Why? Coding breaks barriers of geography, enabling collaboration, creative storytelling, and innovation, as well as leveraging the diverse expertise of people in multiple places to solve the world's most pressing problems independent of linguistic or cultural differences. This is why every student in every school should be required to learn to read and write code.

Some schools teach coding through supplemental programs or advanced computing classes, but this skill should not be a perk for some students in affluent zip codes; it must be available to everyone, starting young, despite geography or socioeconomic status. The only way to do this is through a national shift in K-12 curriculum. As with reading and mathematics, exposure to coding from an early age will yield deeper fluency — whether we become programmers or not. We all learn how to write as a pathway to prosperity, but we do not all become novelists. These days it is the same with coding. If we do not commit nationally to creating a pipeline of creative coders who can read, write, and think with this language, we compromise the future of our youth and our nation.

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