

2010 BPC Meeting Breakout Session Notes

Session 3—Monday, February 1 from 3:30-4:45pm, Palisades

Topic: Computational thinking in middle school and below

Led by Ursula Wolz, Laura Fay

31 participants

Ursula Wolz posed the following questions for the group:

- *Biology starts in preschool with the first chrysalis –what’s the analogy for CT?
- *Teachers say the curriculum is already too full – if you add CT what do you take out?
- *Teachers say their curriculum is too “chunked,” how do we avoid creating another chunk, or worse a “special”?
- *Teachers say they want more in service and community support -- how do we do this?

We need to help kids become better computational thinkers.

Terry—at University of Delaware, presented information about this project with a School in Chester, PA –they have 1400 x0 laptops they don’t know what to do with, so they wound up locked in closets. Laurie and Terry ran a class using the x0 machines. Teams of undergrads paired with 4 teachers in the school and the 7th and 8th grade students. Undergrads helped resolve issues with the teachers and the kids using Goopy quiz. Eventually, they moved into more complicated software and will help the kids program in Alice and Scratch down the road.

Maybe we need to figure out in stealth mode...in science classes, in math classes...how to do CS unplugged in there? And learn math too.

Laura Fay, language arts teacher at Fisher Middle School in Ewing, NJ shared information with the group about how she and other Fisher teachers participated in the BPC Interactive Journalism Institute for Middle Schoolers (IJIMS) Summer Institute through The College of New Jersey where they learned journalism and computer science. Throughout the past two school years, they have overseen the IJIMS club, a weekly, after-school program for the middle schoolers who participated in the 2008 and 2009 Summer Institutes. Laura incorporates Scratch in her language arts curriculum. The students do mandatory 8th grade projects and incorporate Scratch in their presentations and storytelling activities. The students are very participatory as they like telling their stories via creating them in Scratch. The other teachers also use Scratch in poetry, in reading and other curriculum.

Participant—Chain transition?

AP CS class by distance learning....

How do they know they want to be CS majors?

Have National Lab Day and other events.

Exposing CTR in regular curriculum. We have not tapped into this—biology, physics, and language arts. We need to help them see CT into their curriculum.

Get a bigger community to share resources.