



SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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San Gabriel Unified Elementary School Increases Coding, Robotics Opportunities

SAN GABRIEL, CA – More than 20 Washington Elementary fifth-graders laughed and cheered in jubilation as the robots they programmed launched a ball into a cup, an exercise of the computer science and critical thinking skills learned during the school’s coding and robotics club.

Running every Thursday since December, the after-school club is part of Washington’s effort to expand coding and robotics lessons to reach more students.

“Students have digital instincts and it is important to provide more opportunities for them to learn the coding language,” said Gabriel Cabrera, who teaches fifth-grade and coaches the coding and robotics club. “Coding is good for those students who are not always engaged in the classroom and struggle with other academics because they see this as something they can be successful with.”

Each week, Cabrera presents a coding challenge, such as launching a ball into a cup, and students experiment with solutions through trial and error. Using Wonder Workshop’s Dash robots, students input the desired code on iPads and the robots respond accordingly. Cabrera, a teacher at Washington Elementary since 2006, hopes to expand the club to all fifth-graders next year.

“We can do the challenges our teacher sets by finding out what code is needed to perform the function we want – like we can have the robot move its head or respond to our voice,” Washington fifth-grader Confidence Nkoroh said. “I think coding is very fun and it’s something entirely new to learn.”

Washington Elementary purchased 12 Dash and Dot robots in December, which can navigate objects, respond to voice and clapping commands and recognize other robots.

MORE

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Two Kibo Kits purchased for kindergarten and transitional kindergarten are designed to teach younger students to code using wooden building blocks. Students can code commands that include singing, shaking, spinning, turning on a light and changing the color of the light.

Transitional kindergarten and kindergarten teachers use the Kibo Kits during structured playtime to test students' leadership and communication skills, to teach sharing and to help with prepositional words and phrases.

Cabrera is working to create a coding program path for teachers to use in the classroom so all grade levels can use the Dash and Dot bots. An information session will be held at the end of the school year, when Cabrera will discuss how teachers can employ Wonder Workshop's robots in weekly instruction.

"Through coding and robotics, students have the opportunity to practice collaboration and use their critical thinking skills in a fun and engaging way," San Gabriel Unified Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. "We are continually working to find innovative teaching tools that play to students' interests while also preparing them for the rigors of middle and high school."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

042018_SANGAB_WASH_CODING1: More than 20 Washington Elementary fifth-graders applied computer science and critical thinking skills to program robots to launch a ball into a cup during the after-school coding and robotics club on April 12.

042018_SANGAB_WASH_CODING2: Washington Elementary fifth-graders learn to program Wonder Workshop's Dash robots, which can navigate objects and respond to voice commands, during the after-school coding and robotics club.

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