

February 3, 2023

RE: Increasing access to Computer Science Education for Minnesota Students

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Liesa Klyn and I teach STEAM at Hermantown Middle School. In this class students work with programming languages like Scratch which use block coding and Python which use text based coding. They also explore digital design tools such as CAD. My classrooms are filled with 5th grade to 8th grade students who are both enthusiastic and successful with computer science simply because they are given the opportunity to try. No fancy college coursework needed, just an opportunity to experiment and create with some basic guidance from me.

You undoubtedly believe that supporting Minnesota students' education is a top priority. You also support preparing our Minnesota students for careers that will make our state thrive for generations. In order to achieve this goal, we need to ensure that our schools are offering students what they need to be successful careers that are emerging in our economy. For nearly all of these new careers, some knowledge and familiarity with computer science is essential. If that isn't enough to convince you that this is urgent, consider this: according to the Brookings Institution, computer science education has been linked with higher rates of college enrollment and improved problem-solving abilities in both reading and math (Brown & Brown, 2020; Salehi et al., 2020). This means that a possible solution to improving reading and math skills is NOT more reading and math classes, rather, we should be adding computer science classes.

To be clear, I am not asking for more computer *USE* classes such as typing, or learning how to make slide presentations and spreadsheets. I am asking for resources to help us with computer *DESIGN* courses where students learn essential programming and technological creation skills. We need a mandate, funding, professional development, and encouragement to take risks and try new things.

I am not able to simply add more computer science education to my school on my own. My requests to my administration are enthusiastically received and then immediately shut down due to lack of funds, lack of instructors, lack of will of the school board, lack of time for planning, etc. I need state laws such as [house bill 759](#) and [senate bill 757](#) that will compel our school board to act.

I'll close with this, did you know that Minnesota is 50th in the nation when it comes to access to computer science education? Yes, we are dead last. You can read more about this from the Minnesota House publication, "2021 State of Computer Science" Education (<https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/MKTaYdcidEqxRllsmEoogg.pdf>). Please take action.

I am happy to help in any way and can be reached at Lklyn@isd700.org.

Sincerely,

Liesa Klyn
Hermantown Middle School
Hermantown, MN

