

CE Code Camp

Group Reflection

Members: Greg Romero, Hodan Mohamed, Leah Parriott, Rachel Moore

Code Camp Vision

The original vision for this project was pretty simple. A workshop to teach fundamental concepts about computer coding in a fun and engaging way. Reminiscent of what was captivating about the first time to write code.

Technology is an important part of our modern life and an incredible field of potential for interested youth. It's also fast-paced and competitive, meaning entry can be difficult, especially for those with fewer opportunities. The goal of the project was to give students the confidence needed in their programming abilities to seek a future in IT and encourage youth to pursue their dreams as a reality.

The workshop would focus on producing graphics and animations using p5.js (<https://p5js.org/>). P5.js is a javascript library and development environment that exposes users to some great programming tools to learn, create, design and educate using a simple web browser. All of it is free to use. The idea was pitched to CTEP cohorts and an additional 3 CTEP members decided to join this civic engagement project.

The community partner was Transcend IT and Transcend AE, non profit organizations that train specialized IT skills to empower underrepresented individuals. Transcend IT helps Trainees gain employment in the IT sector of work and increase their upward mobility. The Transcend IT training center is ideal for the workshops. Transcend IT was willing and excited to offer the training center for us to host and had the computers on site for the youth to use. It was a perfect situation.

We were preparing to begin the project, a practice session was scheduled to get team members comfortable with the workshop curriculum, coding concepts, and how to teach it. That weekend Covid-19 locked everyone down. Everything was cancelled, closed and we found ourselves in a very unique and frightening situation.

After some time and learning how to serve in the virtual working environment Covid-19 imposed on us, we decided to change directions. One of our team members had an opportunity for us to join a group that was building some summer youth programming. This programming had a program that focused on exploring STEM concepts. This wasn't what was originally envisioned but it was what we had available to us considering the situation we found ourselves in.

Community Partner

The new community partner was Urban Strategies inc.

"Heritage Parker Backpack Explorers" is the youth summer program for the Heritage Park Neighborhood led by Urban Strategies.

The community partner was excited to partner with us because we have a matching civic mission. Urban Strategies inc. created a summer youth program for the youth, but unfortunately was forced to move their program online.

Our team was excited to join the others who were building this STEM, gardening, cooking and art summer youth programming. When we met with the facilitators for the programs, ideas arose and excitement ensued. It was refreshing to see we had a way to serve communities in need the way we wanted to considering the situation we found ourselves in. As we planned and developed the workshops we encountered roadblocks and insecurity regarding what resources and technology the youth would have access to during the summer. This created some very intense challenges. Most of the tech curriculum we developed had to be excluded from the programming. To overcome this we pivoted to creating STEM concept workshops 'unplugged'. Using this unplugged approach we could teach some of the fundamentals we originally had in mind without the participants having to need a computer or access to the internet. It was a bittersweet solution.

Our original project was to create a summer coding workshop, our intent was to introduce coding to youth of the twin cities

Challenges

Individuals have struggled with various levels of stress in light of recent changes and events. Yet, these struggles highlighted how important the work is to provide youth with a hope for their future.

CTEP members have observed the digital divide even more deeply as services, schools, and work went online due to COVID-19. This project also highlighted the

barriers individuals face accessing technology as it applies to youth learning these essential skills that will help them now and their future.

Accomplishments

Members taught video content creation, created a video creation guide, and assisted youth volunteers in editing their videos. We also researched Stem and coding activities for youths Pre-K to 8th to take home.

Media

These videos that were produced were easily accessible on cell phones. Backpacks filled with supplies and snacks for the youth were sent home with them. They could watch the videos and follow along to complete the activities at home.

- Green garden bakery youtube channel
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofuJ33I3Sso>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjp1bFYaBPmMCugGolq2kXg/featured>

- Activities that were researched
 - <https://code.org/curriculum/course2/14/Teacher>
 - <https://csunplugged.org/en/resources/pixel-painter/>
 - <https://www.barefootcomputing.org/resources/variables-unplugged-activity>

Conclusion

Our group worked with our partners for several weeks. We were able to gain valuable experiences and learn about the ups and downs of working with youth.

Even though the outcome at the end of the civic engagement project looked nothing like what was originally envisioned, we gained knowledge and experience. This will help us as we move forward in this type of training and project development.

Our advice to future CTEP members that plan on working with youth, would be to plan ahead and enjoy your time with them because you will miss working with them!

Overall, we are thankful for the opportunity that CTEP and the Heritage Park Backpackers gave us.