PLUGGING INTO POWER
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR EQUITABLE CS EDUCATION

Why do I want my child to learn Computer Science?

What is the value of learning Computer Science (CS)?

People can have different reasons for wanting kids to learn CS—and there's no one right answer! For example, you may want to help your child secure a good job in the future, gain digital literacy skills, be an informed member of our technology-driven society, learn about AI and it's impact on the world, or inspire more girls and people of color to participate in STEM fields. We all want children to grow up to have a healthy, happy, and meaningful life, and to be kind people who help one another. How can your child's engagement with technology support this vision of their future or hinder it?

What do you think?

Why do you want the children in your life to learn CS? Are there other reasons beyond what we have shared so far? When people talk about CS education, they tend to draw on some combination of the seven core values* shown below that describe the impacts CS will or could have. Which of the following connect to your reasons for CS?

*Santo, R., Vogel, S., & Ching, D. (2019). CS for What? Diverse Visions of CS Education in Practice. New York, NY: CSforALL.

Define your priorities

As you help shape the educational journey of your child, it may be useful to define what you think priorities in their Computer Science (CS) education should be. To support this process, below are value statements adapted from the "CS Visions" activity* created by Rafi Santo, Sara Vogel, and Dixie Ching to help jumpstart your priorities list. This way, you will be better positioned to advocate for the CS education you believe will most benefit the children in your life. You can find the original activity cards here, an online quiz here, and an article explaining the purpose of the activity here.

Kids should learn CS because...

- Knowing how to code is a new form of literacy.
- Computing provides youth with the ability to express themselves creatively and have voice.
- Collaboration on CS projects can lead to meaningful relationships between students/educators.
- Creating new technologies like apps, websites, or robots is fun!
- There are major disparities in minorities', young women's, and rural youth's engagement in STEM fields, and universal CS education is part of addressing that.
- It will level the playing field and help close the "digital divide" and "participation gap" around tech for lower-income youth.
- Computing may provide our youth with more and better career opportunities to choose from.
- Our technology is largely designed by economically, racially and socially privileged groups, and their biases and blind spots get embedded in tech. Increased access to CS education can help.
- Not all tech will be in the best interest of our students—they'll need to be able to think critically about technology platforms. It's a "program or be programmed" world out there!
- Computational thinking will be key no matter what career youth end up in.
- Practices from CS can enhance student learning of traditional academic subjects (introducing computer modeling to learn ecology concepts, or using CS concepts to learn algebra).
- CS education often uses project-based learning approaches that can enhance school pedagogy and move away from "sage on the stage" approaches.
- Political and cultural participation are increasingly shaped by computing and our students need to understand the social impacts of tech.
- Youth shouldn't just be consumers but also producers of technology.
- Informed citizens need to understand the basics of how the technological world works in order to contribute productively to society as a whole.
- The more people that understand CS, the more innovations and new knowledge we can produce as a society that solve "wicked" problems such as climate change or cybersecurity.

*Santo, R., Vogel, S., & Ching, D. (2019). CS for What? Diverse Visions of CS Education in Practice. New York, NY: CSforALL.