

# Sparking conversations about Computer Science and AI



## It's important to talk to kids about computers.

What does your child like to do with technology? Do they have a phone or computer at home, or use devices at school? What exactly are they doing with that technology, and more importantly, do they understand important ethical concerns behind the screen? For example, how is their technology use affecting other people around them? How is their personal information being recorded and used against them? Use the questions provided on the next page to spark your child's deeper thinking about Computer Science (CS) and the role of tech in their lives.



## Let them hear it from you!

Not everyone relates to the images and stereotypes of who does CS and STEM. You can play an important role in breaking stereotypes and clarifying misunderstandings by talking to your child about tech starting early on and encouraging them to take CS courses. If you learned CS, share your experiences – the good and the bad – and how you value that learning today. If you didn't get to learn CS, share why you want your children to learn what you didn't have the chance to.

## Talk to your school and other parents.

Ask your teacher or school leader to find out what your child is learning about CS at school already, or ask how they can offer more CS learning opportunities if there are none. Talk to other parents or community members about how they approach CS conversations with their children, get tips on finding high-quality CS classes outside of school, or plan a meeting in your community to discuss how to support kids learning CS in your area.

*"I think that we as parents also have to prepare ourselves more to better understand computing and to be able to talk to our children, having a conversation with them about computers, so that they are also interested."*

– Iris, Mother of a 9-year-old



# Sparkling Conversations about Computer Science (CS)

Talk to your child to better understand what they know about CS, even if they take CS classes. You can clear up misconceptions, discuss CS career pathways, and ask critical questions about the good (and bad) of tech. And if they don't take CS already, encourage them to try it out!

## Using Computers

- What do you like to do with computers (e.g., computer, phone, smartwatch, etc.)?
- Where do you see technology in our everyday life?
- If you could do anything with technology, what would that be?
- What does a computer do? What is a code/coding?
- What kinds of career industries use Computer Science? (HINT: ALL OF THEM!)
- What kinds of careers are you interested in pursuing? How will CS be useful for that job field?
- How does technology help people? How can technology be harmful?
- When you use computers, your cell phone, AI, etc., how are your actions impacting others? And how might your private data and information be recorded and used as well?

## Ethics of Computing

- What do you envision computers doing in the future?
- What should we be careful about computers doing in the future?
- What is artificial intelligence (AI)?
- Do you think robots can be biased? How?
- How do you think human values, beliefs, and biases get built into the computing tools we use today? (for example: AI, cell phone apps, internet search engines, etc.)
- What does it mean to be inclusive of all people in technology/CS? Why is this important?
- Should technologists be responsible for their creations? Why? What happens if they are not?

## Technology in School

- How do you use technology/computers at school?\*
- What CS courses are available at school? Who's taking them or not? Why do you think that is?
- If your child is taking CS: What are you learning about CS? What do you like/dislike about your CS class? What projects do you enjoy making? What do you want to learn more about?
- If your child is not taking CS: Does your school offer CS? Have you thought about taking it? Why or why not? [If your child is in high school in California, for example, you could suggest: Let's see if it counts toward A-G, graduation and toward your college eligibility/application.]
- If not at school, what are other ways or places to learn about CS that you're interested in?

\*Keep in mind that even if your child has access to computers in school or takes CS classes, it doesn't necessarily mean they are learning "CS." Access to and quality of CS learning can vary greatly depending on the school, grade, curriculum, or staff available. For example, students have computers but only to learn typing; or a class uses unplugged activities to teach computational thinking skills without any devices; or in a school with no CS classes a history teacher teaches coding and students create interactive timelines or video games about historical events. This is why it's valuable to talk to your child or school directly.