

CODING LIKE A PIRATE



RESULTS UNCOVERED

The students re-imagined our initial platform for sharing.

Planning and collaboration was all student-led, using their Google accounts.

A platform for sharing lesson plans on coding (including languages like batch, c++, dos, and java script) evolved.

The pirate coders embraced the tech club as their own organization.





by **Kirsten Wilson**

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The Pike Middle School Tech Club was initially established to foster student engagement. We wanted to facilitate the building of ePortfolios using Google Sites, so we created a group. What happened next was much like *The Legend of Blackbeard*. Our well-intentioned tech club was hijacked and its resources were pillaged by a group of pirate coders.

These pirate coders, then seventh graders, took our tech club premise and made it their own. They all were interested in coding and needed a place to congregate, collaborate, and create, so they remade the Google support site we created into a club for kids who wanted to learn coding and programming. We had no choice but to surrender to their concept, seize the opportunity, and embrace the challenge.

Hour of Code, December 2013

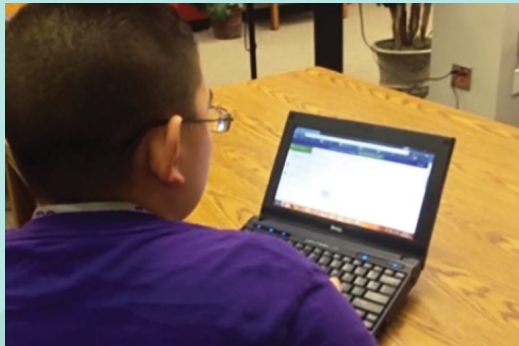
At the Hour of Code event in December 2013, our tech club students presented self-written code that created browsers, calculators with square root functions, and operating systems. To facilitate their experience, we shared the message about the importance of coding. We also created an online course where students could access resources, and they brainstormed and problem solved in the discussion forums.

The pirates were directing their own learning and loving it. Every time we met, the students collaborated, learned, and coached one another.

TechnoExpo, 2014

TechnoExpo 2014, our district's technology showcase, was the perfect forum for our pirate coders to show off their treasure trove of ideas and resources. The tech club shared their passion for coding in front of a standing-room-only audience, discussing the relevance and importance of coding, their own goals, and some big ideas. The students became instant legends and were even asked for their autographs. Word quickly spread and elementary campuses across the district began to buzz with talk of more tech clubs and Hour of Code events.

Elementary campuses created a variety of opportunities for coding, including after-school clubs, maker space events, and hosting an Hour of Code campus event.



Pike Middle School Tech Club, 2014-2015

This year, the tech club, now mostly eighth graders, had a clear organizational structure and vision and agreed to build awareness about coding's critical role in our society's future and the need for all learners to develop basic coding knowledge and skills.

The pirates also began serving as campus "first responders," assisting staff and students with hardware and product creation, all while continuing to fine-tune their own coding skills. It wasn't long before they commandeered a storage room and converted it into a maker space where they built computers and created code.

Hour of Code, December 2014

The Hour of Code in December 2014 was a truly student-led affair where our middle school pirates managed all aspects of the event, including:

- Coordinating food, organization, and promotion for the event
- Scaffolding learning for beginner-level participants using the coding courses from code.org
- Providing a blended coding experience for those with moderate experience
- Designing an advanced learning challenge for experienced coders.
- Serving as learning facilitators for an assigned group to support coding success

As the school year draws to a close and their move to high school nears, the charter members are working to pass their vision and the club along to the next group of coders. The pirates have shifted our thinking and strengthened their own, helping others and building community along the way. We, the facilitators, celebrate their adventures and success, and we await the arrival of the new Blackbeard and his crew with much anticipation. ●

All photographs compliments of Sue Fitzgerald and Kirsten Wilson.
Kirsten Wilson, Instructional Technology Coach and Sue Fitzgerald, Library Media Specialist.
"Eric Schmidt: Every 2 Days We Create As Much Information As We ..." 2010. 7 Mar. 2014
<<http://techcrunch.com/2010/08/04/schmidt-data/>>
"Code.org: Anybody can learn." 2007. 9 Mar. 2014 <<http://code.org/>>