

CS4NorCal Newsletter Spotlight Article

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Headline:

Putting the Computer in Science, One Classroom at a Time!

Article:

To his middle school science students, he's known as Mr. Edwards. However, as a full-time employee at the Lake Elementary School in Glenn County, Garrett Edwards, like most teachers at most CS4NorCal schools, wears many hats: science teacher, basketball coach, head of the yearbook club, drama director (& script writer) and a technology advocate. At such a small, rural school -- with fewer than 200 K - 8 students -- Garrett has become an adopter of adding computer science education into his daily lesson plans.



Since 2021, Garrett has worked with the CS4NorCal project to add computer science into his existing science curriculum. He also has helped set up a STEM elective course, led by paraeducator Terri Lely that allows students to experience some easily accessible CS programs like Micro:bits and the Circuit Playground. He also provides Micro:bits and other hands-on computer options for Lake's afterschool program, Spark.

After graduating from the California State University at Chico with a major in Media Arts, Garrett realized he had a passion for teaching once he had his own children. Now with a 17- and 11-year-old at home, Garrett has spent the last decade of his life in the classroom -- melding his media arts background with computer software platforms (*like Canva, Google suites and Adobe art programs*) to create a robust, interesting curriculum for his students.

"Teachers are multi-media people inherently," Garrett said. "And I find, when teaching computer science -- or integrating it into an existing curriculum -- we're giving students the tools for problem-solving. So much of what we teach (science, English, geography) is about content... but with computer-assisted learning, students are learning to ask the right questions in order to get their answers."

In Garrett's classes, he continually tries to emphasize that *"it's not the destination that students should strive for -- but the process, the HOW & WHY way of thinking."* He has



also seen the value of adding some computer elements into his own science classes. *“I’ve found, with my middle school students, the more you can diversify the content and how it’s delivered -- the far greater return you’ll have capturing their interest and excitement,”* Garrett said. *“So instead of just drawing and labeling the parts of a standard plant cell, students can now design one in Canva and make a really polished, professional rendering.”*

Garrett shares the CS4NorCal mission of bringing more computer science to smaller, rural schools, like the Lake School in Glenn County, one of the six rural Northern California counties served by the CS4NorCal grant. Appreciating traditional jobs -- like a programmer or coder -- might not even exist in the next decade, computer science education is invaluable to giving students the skills they will need for the future.

“Without the CS4NorCal project, I wouldn’t have had a path or direction to get started with computer science,” Garrett said. *“I know some teachers might find it intimidating, learning something new like computer science -- but I like how we all become students in that moment.”*

Garrett credits CS4NorCal for helping provide him a path to professional learning and the opportunity to meet and connect with other teachers from around the state. With those connections, he hopes to take the computer science opportunities even further at Lake School; that is... in between dress rehearsal, managing the yearbook team and shooting hoops!

Kudos to Mr. Garrett Edwards for advancing computer science with his students, one lesson at a time!

CS4NorCal, a professional learning and research project serving over 100 schools (in Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta and Siskiyou counties), promotes equitable access to computer science education for small and rural schools in Northern California. The project, started in June 2021, brings resources and builds capacity and partnerships to create opportunities to establish CS pathways in similar districts throughout the state. It is sponsored by the Small School Districts’ Association.

To make this article more robust for the ssda magazine, we would like to add:

- A few photos of Garrett (Garrett headshot)
- and some of his school? (Karen provided)