

CS4NorCal Newsletter Spotlight Article

APRIL 2025: MELISSA COLLINS

Headline:

*Melissa Collins Shares Her Passion for Computer Science:
from Creative Inspirations to Critical Thinking*

Article:

Ever since she was a little girl, discovering coding and computers with her father, Melissa Collins has always been obsessed with technology. From the early days of data programming through the internet boom, and continuing with the startup of her web design company, Melissa is at her core a creator.

In 2014, Melissa, or “Ms. Collins” to her students, started at the Golden Eagle Charter School (GECS) – a personalized learning public charter school with two campus locations:

- > one in Mt. Shasta (TK - 8 / grades 9 - 12),
- > the other in Yreka (grades 5 - 12),
- > plus a remote homeschool option.



Craving more time with her three children, who were Golden Eagle students at that time, Melissa started as an after-school volunteer leading activities like basic coding and Scratch. In January 2017, the school’s Program Manager Dave Theno offered Melissa a position as a Programming Teacher. In building out the charter school’s robust CS offerings over the last eight years, Melissa has brought computer science courses to ALL the students at Golden Eagle.

“Thanks to working with CS4NorCal, we have been able to integrate computer science into every grade level in our entire school,” Melissa said. “In addition, we find ways to work computer science into our other subjects as well... like our Forestry students are currently working on a really cool drone competition.”

Another competition entry, supported by Melissa’s CS work, included this year’s SkillsUSA “Ignite Your Potential” competition. As part of the competition (in the **Interactive Application and Video Game Development** category), Melissa had two students compete in and **WIN the regional division** for their northern California area!

Keith and Kai, Golden Eagle Charter School seniors, moved on to the state competition in Ontario, California, earlier this month. Although they didn’t win the statewide competition, Keith now has a job offer to consider! He is deciding whether to jump





straight into a potential career (after graduation) or continue his computer science education in college; while Kai continues to pursue his passion for programming and video game development.

Whether the future for graduating students is career- or college-focused, in today's market almost **all** jobs (92%) require some digital / computer skills*. This demand is present across all industries including sectors like manufacturing, agriculture and utilities. However in small, rural school districts, barriers to computer science include everything from inconsistent internet connectivity and limited technology upgrades, to razor-thin budgets and a limited pool of qualified teachers.



*“I’m really shocked that I am one of the **ONLY** high-school computer science teachers in all of Siskiyou county,” said Melissa. “There are hundreds of high school students graduating, throughout our county every year, that haven’t had courses in computer science – which definitely puts them at a disadvantage as they continue onto careers or college.”*

Throughout her life, Melissa has found computer science helpful in building her career, as well as fostering her creative side. As a young mother, Melissa started creating personal web pages for herself inspired by the creative process of combining design, development and coding.

In addition to sharing her computer science enthusiasm and expertise, Melissa has raised three children – all of whom attended the Golden Eagle Charter School. Melissa’s son (Michael, 22) works in Texas; while her eldest daughter (Sarah, 21) is attending UC Merced and her youngest daughter (Emily, 18) will begin attending Southern Oregon University in the fall.

With years of computer science teaching and training, Melissa has helped ensure that ALL Golden Eagle students (*including her own three*) have more opportunities to build a brighter future with a substantial computer education foundation, key for critical thinking and creative inspirations.

About Golden Eagle Charter School (GECS)

Golden Eagle Charter School is a personalized learning public charter school with the mission of serving students in Grades K-12 in Siskiyou County – by providing a personalized learning program and supporting parental choice in education. Golden Eagle Charter School believes that students learn best in a personalized environment that takes into account their specific skills, interests, strengths, and needs.

* **Article:** [Closing the Digital Skill Divide](#), February 06, 2023 / National Skills Coalition.