

From Technophobe to Computer Science Champion: One Counselor's Journey (Part 1)

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As a life-long self-professed technology-phobe, I am now a technology advocate! What changed? In July 2017, I had the great fortune to attend Computer Science Professional Development Week (CSPdWeek) in Golden, Colorado. This three-day workshop was sponsored by the National Center for Women & Information Technology ([NCWIT](#)) and its subsidiary program, [Counselors for Computing \(C4C\)](#). It brought school counselors from across the nation to [Colorado School of Mines](#) to learn about the enormous opportunities for students in computer science and computing fields. It quickly became apparent that this was no ordinary professional development workshop. I was going to take an eye-opening, exciting, and entertaining journey into the world of computing and see it from a whole new perspective!

Acknowledging that many school counselors (I, especially) do not have a computer science background, let alone a feeling of math confidence, one of the first topics discussed was learning how computing can be, dare I say it, fun! Starting with [studio.code.org](#), we learned the basics of programming using an amusing, yet challenging puzzle, which could be utilized with just about any grade level. The puzzle taught me drag-and-drop block programming code to move my avatar through a maze. I had to use logic and sequencing to make my zombie do exactly what I wanted. Sometimes my estimation of using the appropriate blocks did not work. No worries! I just had to reconfigure which blocks I was using and where I needed to place them. If this sounds more difficult than you can imagine, don't imagine it. Go to [code.org](#) to see for yourself!

Education should reflect the current and future needs of society. As a public school counselor, I am a gatekeeper to information that can change students' lives. I have the responsibility to ensure I am informed in all areas of our [American School Counselor Association National Model](#), including emerging careers that can create more opportunities for my students, especially women and underrepresented students. In California alone there will be an estimated 19,750 average annual number of computing job openings by 2022 with only 9,939 estimated annual computing degrees earned. There is already a large demand in the computer science field, and the need for professionals in every industry with computing skills is increasing. School counselors can make a big difference!

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Here are some suggestions to support young women and other traditionally underrepresented students in computer science courses, majors, and careers:

1. Visit [www.ncwit.org/C4C](#) for free information,
2. Follow the C4C hashtag (#NCWITC4C) and [@NCWIT](#) on Twitter. Follow [NCWIT on Facebook](#).
3. Attend [CSPdWeek](#) in 2018! It's even better when there is more than one individual attending from the same school or district.
4. Talk about computing careers with your students, families, educators, administrators, district personnel, and community members.
5. Make a connection with a nearby college or university. Invite professors or students to present about their experience in computer science.

6. [Fill out this form](#). C4C will send a free kit containing posters, career info cards, magazines, and "unplugged" lesson ideas.

