

## FROM THE COVER

# LISD participates in an 'Hour of Code'

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Laredo ISD campuses joined over 100 million students across the United States for an Hour of Code, a global movement to raise awareness of computer science.

The LISD Department of Instructional Technology encouraged students to join the Hour of Code during Computer Science Education Week, the first two weeks of December.

"Computers are everywhere changing every industry on the planet. Because of this LISD campuses are taking a proactive approach to make sure that all students are introduced to computer science," said Elizabeth Sandoval, director of instructional technology.



Laredo ISD / Courtesy photo

### **Kawas Elementary School students participate in an Hour of Code.**

as well as unplugged (paper based activities) which allow students to see how coding is a translation of basic real world function which, can be transformed from paper to computer.

The world of coding at LISD has extended to clubs and groups of students who meet bi-weekly afterschool to build on the skills they obtained

they've come in learning how to code."

Coding is fundamental and essentially supports the student's creativity level and builds confidence in promoting problem solving. Learning to code translates to success in other content areas such as mathematics and reading comprehension.

"I knew we were on the right track with this type

"The Hour of Code is a global movement introducing students worldwide to computer science, inspiring kids to learn more, breaking stereotypes, and leaving them feeling empowered."

The Hour of Code at Laredo ISD is a one-hour introduction to computer science. It began as a one-hour coding challenge to give students a fun, first introduction to computer science and has become a global learning event, celebration and awareness event. Hour of Code.com offers hundreds of one-hour activities in over 48 languages for kindergarten and up. Activities require no experience and can be run on browsers, tablets, smart phones. Some do not require any computer at all.

Coding is no stranger at LISD. Elementary students in the Gifted and Talented Program participated last summer in the Discovery Challenge Academy at their campuses where the main focus was the world of computer science and coding.

Students learned the basics of coding via the code.org curriculum that schools are using during the school year. Lessons are composed of both plugged (online activities)

this past summer and to prepare for future careers in computers and technology.

Several campuses hosted Family Code Night, inviting entire families to learn and become proficient with the technology. Alma Pierce, Ryan, K. Tarver, and Kawas Elementary Schools opened their computer labs for this special event.

The first family coding night was held at Alma Pierce and Kawas elementary schools. Families were given iPads to complete 20 activities featuring Hour of Code puzzles from code.org. The pairs had to work through the puzzles by taking turns with the puzzles becoming more challenging.

"The idea behind Family Code Night was to bring an opportunity for our families to see what coding is all about by giving them a hands-on experience," said Elenisa Vasquez, technology trainer for both campuses. "Not only is it a great way for families to learn together, but for families whose children had already experienced coding through last summer's Discovery Challenge Academy and our recent technology clubs, it was the perfect way for them to learn from their children and see how far

of event when at the close of our program, parents asked when we'd be having our next one! I even had a couple of parents offer to volunteer at our next Family Code Night," Vasquez said.

Both Alma Pierce and Kawas Elementary plan to organize and host another Family Code Night in the second semester to bring this educational and interactive experience to even more families in the community.

The Department of Instructional Technology has been researching ways to integrate technology into the classroom for years and has found that a collaboration between the digital world and that of curriculum can enhance learning and expand thinking skills.

"We have seen the trend grow globally and knew it was time to emphasize its great importance with our employees and students at Laredo ISD," added Sandoval.

LISD campuses will continue to offer additional opportunities for their students and parents to expand computer skills and build on the programs already being offered to the students through the annual Student Technology Expo held in the spring semester.