

Published September 27th, 2023

Local students facilitate STEM summer program at Concord elementary school

Submitted by Cathy Chang



Mason Friedrich, a ninth-grader at Campo, tests students' barge made with aluminum foil sheet during STEM challenge. Photo provided

Oliver DeyToth and Brian Harrison who have learned coding for years and competed in various robotics and computer science competitions came up with the idea of volunteering with their coding skills before they graduated from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School ("JM") in Spring 2023. The offer of their time and coding skills resulted in the creation of the new summer service project called "Meadow-Moraga Coding Community." Thirteen students from JM, Campolindo High School and Miramonte High School were recruited to participate in the Coding Community. They went through training on coding and STEM tournament curriculum development before teaching at Meadow Homes Elementary School in Concord.

Meadow Homes has over 737 students and more than 97% of the students rely on the government meal program year-round, including school breaks, as most families live under the poverty line. The school does not have resources to offer computer classes historically. The Coding Community's youth instructors were mentored and supported by six parent volunteers from Moraga. Teaching plans were reviewed with mentors before the summer program started and daily review was required after each class. The trained youth instructors taught six coding sessions and facilitated daily STEM challenges every afternoon during the month of June at the Title 1 elementary school. Guy Sandler, a current ninth-grader at Campo, rehearsed his approved teaching plan by teaching his younger sister in elementary school at home

prior to his teaching week.

Meadow-Moraga Coding Community's youth instructors taught over 120 students from TK thru fourth grades during the elementary school's 4-week summer program. Sydney Paige Foundation in Walnut Creek generously donated over 80 prizes for the Coding Community's STEM tournaments.

"Seeing kids interested in coding and trying their best really makes our work meaningful," said Eric Mu, a current ninth-grader at Campo who taught in Meadow Home's TK/K class. Ms. Emily, a Meadow Homes staff member who supervised the second- and third-grade class asked Mislav Benko, another ninth-grade youth instructor from Campo, if she could also sit with the class and learn after she observed the impressive progress the class has made within just two days of learning.

"Watching how much progress Meadow students made every week and seeing how they became confident and believed in what they could do were amazing feelings," Brian Harrison said.

Talia Walsh and Sara Harrison, current seventh-grade students at JM who taught TK/K and first/second-grade classes found the project most impactful as they helped Meadow Homes students learn new skills that were not available to them in the past. Jayin Joshi, a current ninth-grader at Campo, who taught in the second/third-grade classroom with Oliver DeyToth, enjoyed teaching Meadow Homes students that they could apply in the future.

Matija Benko and Emma Wang, current 10th-grade students at Campo and Miramonte, bonded with the students quickly as the students looked up to them. Students high-fived with the youth instructors in hallways and constantly asked when they would return to teach again. The experience of teaching at Meadow Homes also inspired a new level of appreciation for teachers and staff. "It took a lot to prepare and teach. I have so much more appreciation and empathy for teachers after working in the classrooms," said Leo Rudiger-Real, a current seventh-grader at JM who volunteered in TK/K and first/second-grade classes. Stephanie Lee, a Campo ninth-grader who taught the fourth-grade class, appreciated her teaching assistant's support. Assistant Principal Estrada-Dennis set the example of learning and knowing every student by their first name and helping everyone with a smile and calm voice.

In addition to the in-kind donations from Sydney Paige Foundation, Meadow-Moraga Coding Community also received a generous grant from Foundation Source. Instead of getting team T-shirts, the youth instructors voted to use 100% of the grant toward Meadow Homes students' learning. The Coding Community purchased 800 computer mice and 800 headsets for the school as they realized that the school had no resource to provide students computer mice and headsets. The Coding Community spent the remaining balance on Scholastic gift cards for Meadow Homes school library to purchase STEM and coding books.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA