



Growing readers!

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IF kids code, THEN...what?

Today's parents may have had some exposure to computer programming during their high school or college career. The logic probably surrounded the use of "if-then" statements and maybe even the use of punch cards. Those days are long behind us, and there are new and serious efforts to get kids — even very young kids — involved in computer programming.

Why computer programming?

In recent years, there's been an increased focus on STEM subjects in schools, including science, technology, engineering, and math. Computer programming is an extension of that focus. Many new careers use coding skills, including web development, game development, and Internet security. President Obama and some celebrities have joined the call to get young kids involved in programming. Coding is based in technology, something that we all depend on in our daily life.

What skills are learned through coding?

Computer programming relies on the use of sequencing and logic, skills that are useful throughout a student's school career. Many subjects, including history and math, consistently ask students to methodically and critically analyze content to find answers. Coding can also be a very collaborative and creative venture, with students working together to solve a problem or create an action. All of these skills extend far beyond the classroom.

Can we try it? Where can I get more information?

A simple search will turn up many resources on this topic. Most of the apps you'll find are centered more on graphics and animations than actual code. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

Code Monster (<http://www.crunchzilla.com/code-monster>) is a site where your programming provides instant results. You and your child may have fun manipulating the code and seeing the immediate changes.

Daisy the Dinosaur (available from iTunes) is a free app for the iPad. Kids use a drag and drop interface to animate Daisy and make her dance across the screen.

Scratch (scratch.mit.edu) is designed for kids 8-16. It's free to use, and users can create stories, games, and animations. Scratch is used around the world and in thousands of classrooms.

Code (code.org) is a non-profit organization working to ensure that every student in every school has the opportunity to learn computer science.