Working Group Celebration Event

Remarks of Richard Platts, Director of Technology, South Park School District, South Park, PA

Hi, my name is Richard Platts. I am the Director of Technology at the South Park School District and a member of the Coding & Gaming working group. It was a privilege to be invited to work with such a diverse and talented group of people ranging from professional game designers, educational administrators, and curriculum developers. Together, each brought a different perspective to the coding and gaming workgroup, resulting in a framework that will help to guide those crafting interest-based learning experiences in the coding and game design realm for children all over the region.

This process in particular excited me, as I am working within my own school curriculum to develop better opportunities for students at all grade levels to learn the beginnings of programming and computer science. Next year we will be launching a completely revamped elementary level technology curriculum that exposes students to both engineering and design as well as modules of computer programming, including games and animation. I think we all understand that each child's learning pathway is unique, and being part of the groundwork to grow a network of learning opportunities that our students can continue pursue outside of the classroom, and receive a credential for learning that we can recognize is hugely exciting as an educator who believes that each child deserves a highly-customized learning experience.

During this working group process, we spent many hours working toward the end-goal of developing a framework for the coding and gaming, at times moving from the practical to the fanciful, and even philosophical. One of the downsides to being surrounded by a group of motivated, smart, analytical minds is a tendency to want to get everything perfect, and explore every possibility. We could always rely on Gigi, our group's facilitator to steer our group back to the task at hand, and somehow we always drew consensus and progress from that day's wide-ranging discussions of knowledge, skills and dispositions.

The highlight of this whole process for me was at Pittsburgh Learning Pathways Summit, where we had a chance to network with many of the other workgroup members who had gone through the same process. It was clear that the other groups went through some of the same challenges, and breakthroughs that we went through, and that the Pittsburgh City of Learning initiative was strengthened by the resolve of the dedicated volunteers in each of the workgroup areas. I am thrilled to see the accomplishments so far, and am excited to see where it goes as programs begin to go forward.

Thanks to everyone for your hard work and your contribution for my students, my neighbors and my own kids!