

Title:**Microsoft partners with CodeJKA to bring home-grown coding solutions to SA****Intro:**

In line with its global commitment to computer science (CS) education, multinational technology company Microsoft has partnered with South African campaign CodeJKA to raise awareness and promote the uptake of CS education and coding skills in South African schools.

A strong advocate of mainstreaming CS into the global schooling curriculum, Microsoft is doubling down on this commitment in the local context by promoting dialogue with government and leading educational stakeholders to revise the existing educational policy on CS. The tech giant will also promote the uptake of coding and CS in schools across the country by promoting the establishment of leagues of coding clubs and teacher induction workshops across various schools.

Microsoft's local partner, CodeJKA, is an initiative of non-profit organisation Code for Change, which believes that exposing the youth to coding and computer-based skills develops their computational and critical thinking skills and shows them how to create, not simply use, new technologies.

Microsoft also partnered with CodeJKA during Computer Science Education Week from 3-9 December, supporting events held at the EastRand Mall, Greenstone Mall and Sandton Library at which the youth were taught how to build their own website on their phone.

Other events, including one in held in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, focused on teaching simple CS algorithms using a Minecraft Coding tutorial. Minecraft is a popular virtual-world game which allows the user to build, explore and learn online.

Why are CS and coding important?

As the workplace evolves, candidates with either entry-level coding skills or advanced CS are increasingly in demand. This is because computational learning teaches students critical skills that are useful in areas outside of technology. Not only do the courses teach students how to code but they also teach individuals how to process, represent information as well as problem solve across many disciplines in various industries.

Contrary to the perception that advanced computer skills are only valuable for information technology (IT) professions, over 70% of computing occupations are outside of the IT industry. A knowledge of computer science is increasingly critical in research, finance and manufacturing.

The Department of Basic Education has acknowledged that computer skills drive innovation in almost all industries and fields of study, stating recently that computing deals with information processes buried in

the “deep structures” of many fields - for example, quantum waves in physics, DNA in biology, brain patterns in cognitive science, and information flows in economic systems.

Globally, CS education is on the rise due to the shifting needs of the workforce and the way technology continues to disrupt industries. In order to prepare young people for the future of work, urgent changes must be made to the way they are instructed and the curriculum they follow.

“We believe the real value in learning computer science is not in the act of coding itself but in building students’ ability to be creative, resilient and collaborative, skills they will need to succeed in the future.

“Helping more students learn computer science is crucial to filling the jobs of tomorrow. According to our [research](#), the fastest growing occupations, such as technology professionals and healthcare providers, will require a combination of digital and cognitive skills such as digital literacy, problem solving and critical thinking,” says Microsoft South Africa Philanthropies Lead, Charlene Verzmoter.

How to get involved

Microsoft and CodeJIKa are calling for students, parents, teachers, businesses and policymakers to take part in the Hour of Code campaign: a global movement organised by Code.org to introduce students around the world to CS and demystify “code” – proving anyone can learn the basics.

To get involved, visit [CodeJIKa](#) on your cellphone. This will take you to a page that will allow you build your first website in only five minutes and demonstrate how code works in HTML. It’s a great first step for anyone wanting to learn how to code. You can also visit the [online version of Minecraft](#) or download Minecraft CS lessons to install offline [here](#).

“It’s a phenomenal way to engage and just have fun with a new skill which is future-safe and exciting” says Sibusiso Khoza, Provincial Coding League Manager at CodeJIKa.com.

You can also:

- Help your child’s teacher and principal plan their Hour of Code
- Spread the work about CodeJIKa on social networks
- Ask your employer to host an Hour of Code as a teambuilding event
- Set aside an hour of your time during CSEdWeek to learn about coding

To get in touch sign up at www.codejika.com or contact the team members below.

About Microsoft:

Our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. We want to ensure that all young people are future-ready and have access to the digital skills most in demand by employers, therefore we need to empower our students and workers with the knowledge and skills they need to tackle the jobs of the future.

Early and continued access to rigorous computer science education not only opens up a world of future opportunities, it also sparks a deeper interest in topics and tools that can enrich lives and promote a greater understanding of the world we live in.

Computer science is about much more than learning to code. It teaches creativity, computational thinking, analytical reasoning and complex problem solving. And kids love learning it: students rank CS courses higher than any other academic discipline outside of the arts.

We work with nonprofits, governments, educators and businesses to:

- Help organizations, school districts and educators build their capacity to offer computer science and digital skills training;
- Bring digital skills to every young person through policy, advocacy, and partnerships
- Generate awareness, excitement, and demand for the resources available to support this goal

About Code for Change:

Code for Change's primary focus is the establishment of student-run coding clubs in secondary schools. These clubs compete for prizes and encourage other students to participate in coding, programming and CS. In addition to this, the visionary team employs a "start-up" mentality to the challenge and has, as a result, developed a mobile friendly, online learning tool, as well as an offline curriculum which can be used on any PC without requiring the installation of any software.

Code for Change has the following goals for education in South Africa:

- Introduce a new CS elective in secondary schools
- Ensure the new CS elective covers entry-level course requirements for CS University degrees
- Introduce mandatory ICT Classes for all 8th and 9th graders
- Encourage mobile operators to offer free access to mobile-friendly educational resources, especially those that offer CS themes

The campaign has been adopted and supported by dozens of educational projects throughout the country and has seen a very enthusiastic uptake both online and offline in Mpumalanga and Limpopo. It also enjoys support from local and international corporates organisations.

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