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Stockton Awarded $333,313 Grant to Promote K-12 Computer Science

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NOTE TO MEDIA: The next cohort of teachers for the computer science training program begins Oct. 5. If you are interested in covering the training, please reach out to Stacey Clapp or Mark Melhorn.

Galloway, N.J. — Twenty-six years ago, Stockton University started the Educational Technology Training Center (ETTC) to create a regional network among school districts to improve education through technology.

That mission has come full circle with a recent $333,313 grant from the state to create a new K-12 Computer Science regional hub, said Patty Weeks, the director of the Southern Regional Institute and ETTC in the School of Education at Stockton.

"It's time for the next step — making sure teachers and students can use the technology to create the ideas, the codes, that can support the development of computer science," Weeks said.

The money, which is part of two-year grant, comes from a mandate by Gov. Phil Murphy in 2020 to commit funds to "promote equitable and expanded access to high-quality, standards-based computer science education for all New Jersey K to 12 students in preparation for postsecondary success."

Beginning with this school year, all students must have access to that subject. Weeks said the biggest roadblock to the mandate is that there aren't enough teachers prepared to teach the subject. That's where Stockton's institute comes in — to create a network of computer science educators across the region.

Weeks said the institute's Coastal Hub for Computer Science Education hosted its first free cohort of 30 teachers from local school districts for a four-day workshop at the end of August. This fall, teachers will receive on-site instructional coaching in their classrooms. Teachers will also participate in an online community where they will share ideas about teaching and learning computer science across all grades. The hub will host more free training throughout October and November.

"The teachers loved it because it's not just about coding," Weeks said. "It's about thinking in a different way."

Weeks said the free workshops are open to any teacher from any district, but the hub has also partnered with four districts to receive additional on-site support during the first

year of the grant — Mullica Township, Hamilton Township, Buena Regional and Wildwood. The hub plans to add additional districts in the second year.

"We really want to reach those districts that are typically underrepresented in the field of computer science, districts that don't have any computer science education," she said.

Weeks said currently there is no standard state teaching certification for computer science, but she expects that will happen shortly for a field that is rapidly evolving and changing. Once the certification is approved, the hub will offer support to novice teachers interested in acquiring it.

"I just can't imagine the world that these kids are going to face and the kinds of work they are going to do," Weeks said. "But the industry needs this computer science training. They are asking for this. Parents are asking for it. The timing is right."

Learn more about the Coastal Hub for Computer Science by visiting the program's website and see a schedule of upcoming events. For questions or more information send Patty Weeks an email.

The SRI & ETTC at Stockton University is one of the premier professional development programs in the state. Nearly 10,000 educators participate in its programs and activities each year in topics that include technology integration, core curriculum, instructional strategies, school leadership, special education and social and emotional learning.

PHOTOS: (credit: Stockton University)

computerhub1 and computerhub2: The first cohort of 30 teachers from local school districts attend a free four-day workshop held at Stockton University's Southern Regional Institute and Educational Technology Training Center from Aug. 22 to 25. The next round of training provided through a $333,313 grant from the state will take place in early October.

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