



Arkansas Department of Education

Johnny Key, Commissioner

Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education

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CONTACT: Kimberly Friedman

PHONE: (501) 683-4788

kimberly.friedman@arkansas.gov

ADE's Reading and Computer Science Initiatives to Provide Books and Coding Devices to Teachers and School Libraries

LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas Department of Education's reading and computer science initiatives are joining forces again to provide coding devices and computer science-related books to teachers and public school libraries around the state.

Libraries that serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade will receive a copy of *If I Were a Wizard* by Paul C. Hamilton. Up to 400 Adafruit Circuit Playground devices will be provided to teachers around the state. The devices, equipped with sensors, LED lights, and a circuit board, will give students the opportunity to practice computer programming skills.

During Computer Science Education Week in 2017, ADE announced that its Reading Initiative for Student Excellence, or R.I.S.E. Arkansas campaign, and the Computer Science Initiative would team up to promote computer science as well as build a culture of reading in 2018. As a result, approximately 900 kindergarten through eighth-grade public school libraries received coding-related books and a Micro:Bit coding device.

"Today's announcement involves two of my favorite education initiatives – reading and computer science," Gov. Asa Hutchinson said. "By providing books and computer coding devices to elementary school teachers and libraries, we are giving students the opportunity to improve their reading ability while sharpening their coding skills. I am proud of the efforts of ADE this week to enhance learning for all students in the state."

"There is a magic about learning to code at a young age and the ability to make things move, speak, and tell stories," Hamilton said. "I am so privileged to be part of this initiative. Lighting the spark is what I hope my book does. With the passion and commitment from the team at the Arkansas Department of Education, I am supremely confident we can make a difference and inspire the next generation of coders."

"I am so excited to hear that so many teachers in Arkansas will get the opportunity to receive a free Circuit Playground Express," Limor Fried, the founder of Adafruit, said. "I designed this STEM board to be easy and fun to use so that teachers and students will see how cool it is to learn coding and making. Once they've attended the training course, teachers will be able to bring their own experiences and skills to these workshops so they can integrate STEM into their classrooms. We think both the teachers and students will be amazed at what they can create!"

"As we wrap up another great Computer Science Education Week, I continue to be amazed at the way the students, teachers, and communities in Arkansas are responding to the #CSforAR initiative,"

said Anthony Owen, ADE's state director of computer science education. "I am extremely happy that we were able to end the week with this announcement and by recognizing Dr. Raye Montague, Arkansas' own Hidden Figure, at an event hosted by the Women's Foundation of Arkansas at U.A.P.B., which happens to be Dr. Montague's alma mater. I am also always excited to partner with R.I.S.E. Arkansas to promote reading! Our office wants all students to have the opportunities that a quality computer science education provides, and we recognize the importance that reading has on student success beyond high school. Our office is a firm believer that #ARKidsCanCode and that through #RISEArkansas, all students can achieve their potential!"

To be eligible to receive the devices, Arkansas public school educators must attend an ADE Office of Computer Science-approved training about the device. Arkansas computer science specialists will conduct trainings at every education service cooperative. A list of approved sessions with registration links will be posted at <https://goo.gl/Lp9A87>. While the trainings are free, space is limited. To learn more, see <http://adecm.arkansas.gov/ViewApprovedMemo.aspx?Id=3844>.

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December 3-9, 2018, is Computer Science Education Week. For a full listing of Arkansas announcements, please visit the newly-redesigned ADE Computer Science webpages at <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/special-projects/arkansas-computer-science-initiative>.

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