

## Coder School subtracts curriculum and inputs creativity at new La Jolla branch

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Published - 12/20/19 - 09:00 AM | 1177 views | 2 | 29 | |

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Exclamation points, parentheses, forward slashes, addition and subtraction symbols, with numbers and words mixed in somewhere with it all: The computer screen of a coder may look like an obscure, jumbled mess of commands, but every symbol serves a purpose and La Jolla's new academic outlet, The Coder School, is teaching kids how to be passionate about that purpose.

"In every field of work, you have to talk to the computers," said marketing professional Artur Lopes Pedrosa, who co-owns The Coder School in La Jolla with his wife Aline Pampalon. "Right now, we use technology for everything, so whether you want to be an architect or a doctor, you will need to know some type of programming or another. Coding is basic knowledge we'll all need to know about in the future. Here, we can give kids a leg-up."

The Coder School brand was first founded in 2014 by computer science and engineer professionals Hansel Lynn and Wayne Teng in Silicon Valley. It's an after-school learning program, which provides weekly computer programming lessons to children ages 7 to 18 in the comfort of its own colorful facility, with state-of-the-art computer systems. In 2016,

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The Coder School brand was first founded in 2014. COURTESY PHOTO

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the brand began to franchise and currently has 40 schools operating in over 12 U.S. states.

While La Jolla is the second branch in San Diego, The Coder School is La Jolla's very first coding-focused school. Pampalon and Pedrosa, originally from Sao Paulo in Brazil, first learned about The Coding School Brand from their La Jolla neighbors — also originally from Brazil — who own The Coder School branch in North San Diego on Carmel Mountain Road.

"Both my husband and I are in marketing so we're always excited about new technologies," said Pampalon. "And we were already thinking about opening up a business ourselves when we moved here. We looked around for other business options, but nothing made our eyes sparkle as much as The Coder School did."

According to Pampalon, providing after-school coding lessons is a concept Brazil has just recently begun to invest in. In a country where learning English is mandatory, some slogans for the schools Pampalon recalls go so far as to advertise, "Coding is the new English."

"In my opinion, this is not just the new English, this is also the new math," said Pedrosa.

But even while The Coder School heavily promotes the necessity of learning to code, there's no rigid curriculum. In fact, there's no curriculum at all. Offering entry-level, large-group classes as well as two-on-one coaching lessons, each student's experience is personalized to fit their interests. If a student has an affinity for soccer, coding coaches will

help them create a soccer video game for their project, which they will eventually present at the school's Coder Fair, a celebration that takes place every three months.

"We want the kids to have fun first and then they will learn as a result from that," said Pampalon.

It seems to be working. La Jolla's coder branch has only been open a month, but local mom Jessica Harris says the school is doing wonders for her 8-year-old son, Luke.

"My son is very into video games and we wanted him to see firsthand how much work goes into making the stuff he enjoys," said Harris. "It really blew his little mind because he's making that connection for the first time between the technology side and the creative side."

Students just starting out at The Coder School will first learn tech talk and coding languages like "Scratch," then dive into web developments, games, robots, data, AIs and more. Kids at other Coder School branches — which follow the same teaching style — have created games to help better explain math or solve algebraic problems, and even developed coding programs to find out the current temperature on the NASA space station. A big part of the success, according to Pedrosa, is the coaches' enthusiasm.

"Many of our coaches aren't computer science majors, many are self-taught coders, but because of that, they have a unique passion for coding and they know how to engage the kids and get them excited about it too," said Pedrosa, whose 6-year-old son Leo will be starting at the school next year. "Giving these coaches the opportunity to give to kids what they never had, that's the coolest part of all."

For more information about The Coder School, visit [thecoderschool.com](http://thecoderschool.com).

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