

**REACH UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES COMPULSORY COMPUTER SCIENCE (CS)  
REQUIREMENT FOR ALL PRESERVICE TEACHERS**

*199 REPRESENTATIVE CANDIDATES ENROLLED IN REACH'S INAUGURAL CS COHORT,  
RESULTING IN 93% ACHIEVING MASTERY & IMPROVED CONFIDENCE IN TEACHING CS*

(RUSSELLVILLE, Alabama) – December 8, 2023 – Reach University, the accredited non-profit university dedicated to advancing job-embedded degrees and credentials, today announced the implementation of an undergraduate computer science (CS) requirement for all preservice teachers. The inaugural CS cohort, comprising 199 educators employed in rural and low-income K-12 schools across four states - including Alabama - resulted in 93% of candidates mastering computer science fundamentals aligned to state standards, an enhanced perception of the value of computer science, and overall improved confidence in teaching CS curriculum.

Reach's undergraduate school of education is the only educator preparation program (EPP) operating across multiple U.S. states to make computer science an undergraduate requirement for all preservice educators. Undergrads also complete a compulsory 15-credit hour math and computational thinking semester in part of their teacher training. Reach is currently partnered with a growing number of rural Alabama districts to train classified school employees to become qualified teachers.

"Russellville City Schools places a high priority on meeting our students where they are, and creating an exceptional educational experience every step of the way," said Dr. Heath Grimes, Superintendent of Russellville City Schools. "As the state of Alabama continues to implement its K-12 CS priorities, Russellville is working with Reach to equip our paraeducators - training to become teachers at all grade levels - with CS instructional skills and confidence. Paraeducator feedback on this course has been positive, and we're eager to see additional teacher candidates move through the program throughout the coming year."

In 2019, Alabama passed legislation to [phase in](#) K-12 schools offering computer science. Beginning in the '20 - '21 academic year, each public high school was required to offer at least one "authentic" computer science course. The following year this mandate expanded to middle schools, and then to elementary schools in the fall of 2022. The state has also created teacher certification pathways at the elementary and secondary levels.

Under Alabama's CS priorities, [95%](#) percent of all public high schools offered foundational computer science courses in the '22 - '23 academic school year, along with [94%](#) of rural and [91%](#) of small public high schools. Alabama is [one](#) of nine states to have more students taking CS at the middle school level than at the high school level, offering young learners the chance to develop foundational knowledge earlier. Alabama also ranks as one of eleven states to close the "access gap" as [39%](#) of all CS students are female, and students of all racial and ethnic groups are [equally likely to attend](#) a school that offers computer science.

“Alabama stands leaps and bounds ahead of many U.S. states in enabling access to foundational computer science courses,” said Joe E. Ross, President of Reach University. In contrast, CS is only offered in a little over half of our nation’s high schools, with [less than 6%](#) of students enrolled in these courses. Rural and low-income schools are less likely to offer CS courses, exacerbating systemic equity and racial disparities in the field of STEM.”

“To break this cycle of underrepresentation, particularly in rural America, Reach University has implemented a required 3-credit hour course on computer science to ensure all Reach-trained educators can lead the classroom with CS know-how and confidence,” Ross continued. The results of this inaugural cohort demonstrate that access and mastery can be achieved, regardless of a degree seeker’s previous educational experience.”

Reach University’s undergraduate CS course introduces candidates to the core concepts and practices common to the state and national standards for computer science. The curriculum builds teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical content knowledge through hands-on investigations of computing systems; data and analysis; networks and the internet; algorithms and programming; and impacts of computing.

The inaugural Summer ‘23 cohort was comprised of paraprofessionals working in K-12 schools across Reach’s partner districts in California, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Alabama. 97% of participants identified as female and 45% identified as educators of color. Comparatively, 42% of U.S. [K-12 CS teachers](#) are female and only 17% are Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American.

“Fostering a sense of belonging in STEM for underrepresented students is essential in achieving educational and career equity,” said Talia Milgrom-Elcott, Founder and Executive Director of Beyond100K. “Reach’s approach to teacher preparation presents a scalable model that intertwines access and representation with rigorous skill development. We are proud to support Reach in training thousands of computer-science-qualified teachers of color and empowering every learner to envision themselves thriving in the field of computer science.”

Although Reach’s course is geared towards building CS confidence and know-how for all grade levels, it is most focused on training elementary and middle school educators. Nationally, [30 states](#) require schools to teach computer science, but only [17](#) require all K-12 schools to offer CS coursework.

“Computer science makes me think of technology and coding, and I didn’t know if I was going to successfully complete this course,” said Elizabeth Alonzo, Reach University teacher candidate and EL Aide in Russellville City Schools. “But Professor Thomforde made the class very hands-on and engaging, and I found coding to be interesting and fun. Most importantly, I did it. I mastered computer science foundations, and now I get to bring these skills to my elementary and English language (EL) learners, and I couldn’t be more proud.”

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



To learn more about Reach University's computer science courses and view the outcomes of its Summer '23 cohort, please visit [www.reach.edu/computer-science](http://www.reach.edu/computer-science). Reach's Spring '24 cohort is open to any faculty member of a fellow EPP interested in enrolling.

**ABOUT REACH UNIVERSITY**

[Reach University](http://www.reach.edu) is the regionally accredited, non-profit university dedicated to advancing job-embedded degrees and credentials. Reach is actively solving America's teacher shortage by creating fully-embedded pathways for high-potential individuals to earn degrees, credentials and jobs as teachers within their own communities. By focusing on low-income, urban and rural regions, offering online tutorials and classes, and rendering academic credit for on-the-job experience, Reach University is eliminating barriers to entry in high-need professions, and building untapped pipelines of locally representative talent. Reach University currently operates in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

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