

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*

(BATON ROUGE, Louisiana) – 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 Louisiana - 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 has approximately 1,000 Louisiana paraprofessionals enrolled across 89% parishes in the state training to become qualified teachers. In Fall 2022, LDOE estimated the state had [1,203](#) teacher vacancies.

"Louisiana has taken strong steps towards bringing CS to every school across the state," 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."

For the past six years, Louisiana has witnessed the progressive expansion of foundational computer science course offerings at the middle and high school levels, with [35%](#) of all high schools offering foundational CS in the '22 - '23 academic year. The state also created certification pathways for educators at the elementary and secondary levels.

[13,000](#) middle and high school students took foundational CS last year, more than doubling enrollments from the year before. According to [Code.org](#), the state has some of the highest female CS enrollments, and students of all racial and ethnic groups are equally likely to take foundational computer science across schools.

“There are nearly 100 Livingston Parish paraprofessionals working to complete their debt-free bachelor’s degree and teacher credentialing through Reach University’s on-the-job training,” said Alan “Joe” Murphy, Superintendent of Livingston Parish Public Schools. “These incredibly capable and passionate school employees will soon achieve their dream of becoming a teacher, while filling a critical vacancy in our schools. The fact that they will enter the classroom with math, computational thinking and now computer science confidence will help our parish achieve its highest-level goal: inclusively preparing every learner to succeed in *all* subjects throughout their K-12 experience. We couldn’t be more thrilled about the promising outcomes of this inaugural CS cohort.”

Nationally, rural K-12 schools [trail behind](#) counterparts in offering access to CS education. 42% of public schools are designated as “rural or small-town,” yet previous data shows [only 10%](#) offer AP computer science courses despite [86%](#) of rural and small-town students recognizing they are likely to have a job requiring CS skills. In Louisiana, [29%](#) of rural and [27%](#) of small public high schools offered foundational CS in the ‘22 - ‘23 academic year.

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.

“CSforALL is proud to support and amplify Reach University’s efforts to provide preservice teachers with an inclusive, comprehensive, compulsory 12-week CS course aligned to state priorities in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and California,” said Camie Belgrave, Senior Director, Programs and Partnerships at CSforALL. “Reach’s efforts will result in 700 teachers, who serve 21,000 students, entering classrooms with strong CS skills by Fall 2024. In less than one year, Reach University is breaking down CS barriers, and bringing a quality CS education to a growing number of rural and low-income communities.”

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.

“This course taught me to no longer be only a consumer of computer science but also a creator,” said Mollie Hood, Reach teacher candidate and paraprofessional in St. Bernard Parish. “I immediately see the value for teachers and our students in understanding how to problem solve and speak the language of computer literacy - starting at a very young age. By teaching

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our students how to problem solve and use their CS creativity, we are helping them develop key skills that can be used in school and throughout their future careers. It's incredibly powerful." 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. 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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