



## Digital Ready launches citywide AP Computer Science A Course for students in partnership with United Way and Microsoft to open up access to Boston's growing innovation economy.

December, 7 2020

**BOSTON** -- [Digital Ready](#), in partnership with United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and Microsoft, have launched a citywide AP Computer Science A course for any high school student in the city of Boston. The course is available to any Boston Public High School student regardless of which high school they attend or which neighborhood they reside. Students who pass the AP exam receive the equivalent of a one-semester introductory college course. By offering this course, Digital Ready and its partners hope to open up access, especially for women, Black and Latinx students, in Boston's growing innovation economy. Over 23% of jobs in the state of Massachusetts require computer science literacy according to the [Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education](#).

Last year, 76 students in Boston Public Schools took the AP Computer Science A exam. Of the students who took the exam, 84% of the students attended Boston Latin, one of the city's three exam schools. Only 6 students from Boston's twenty-nine other, non-exam schools took the AP Computer Science A assessment during the same year according to the [MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#).

The first pilot course is taught by a team of highly-qualified instructors. Students in the first cohort hail from 14 different Boston public high schools and, in addition to computer science, will have the opportunity to explore robotics, mobile app development, sound engineering and virtual reality. There is no cost for students to enroll in the class and there is no cost for students to take the AP exam through the generous support of the United Way and [Edvestors](#).

According to Dr. Sarah Cherry Rice, the Executive Director of Digital Ready, "Boston has a robust innovation economy that literally continues to grow in the backyards of our students. Yet, we continue to limit who has access to computer science, which is quickly becoming the essential building block for nearly every job. Moreover, numerous research studies show that students who study computer science go on to excel at creative problem solving and are 17% more likely to attend college. Through this pilot, we hope to pave the way for every student in the city to have access to computer science. Rather than just consume technology, we believe students should be activated to create it."

“As challenging as the current crisis has been, it has also been inspiring to see people and partners coming together to respond to the needs in our communities in new ways, and virtual learning is no exception,” said Bob Giannino, President and Chief Executive Officer at United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. “The reality is we don’t want to just return to normal, because normal wasn’t working for everyone. Partnering with Digital Ready, Microsoft and BoSTEM will help us connect more underserved students to high-quality STEM learning, in this case AP computer science, to help build a diverse pipeline of STEM talent across the region.”

According to Michael English, the Regional Manager for the Microsoft Philanthropies TEALS Program, “The Microsoft TEALS Program is excited to partner with Digital Ready to support the pilot AP Computer Science A course for Boston students. Computer science education creates pathways to economic opportunity, but only 47% of high schools across the U.S. offer it. Part of the reason for this is because the number of teachers with backgrounds in computer science. The goal of the TEALS Program is to bring sustainable computer science pathways to all students in Boston Public Schools and beyond. This partnership is a great first step towards that goal.”

Additionally, from Ethan Arrowood, a Microsoft Software Engineer and advisory board member of Digital Ready’s AP computer science initiative, “I am really looking forward to working with Digital Ready to empower students across the Greater Boston area. There is so much potential for these students. By providing them with access to educational resources and industry experience, they will be most equipped for their future STEM careers. One of the aspects I’m looking forward to most is connecting these students with my colleagues at Microsoft from a variety of roles, so that they can learn about all of the different career pathways.”

*Digital Ready is a Boston-based organization with a mission to activate the creative potential of high school students, especially underrepresented young people—students from low-income backgrounds and students of color—with the agency, social capital, and skills to build their own pathways to economic mobility and success in Boston’s innovation economy. For more information, visit [www.digitalready.org](http://www.digitalready.org) or follow us [@digitalreadyboston](https://www.instagram.com/digitalreadyboston) on Instagram and [@digitalreadyMA](https://www.twitter.com/digitalreadyMA) on Twitter.*

*United Way’s BoSTEM Initiative is a collaborative dedicated to inspiring the next generation of STEM professionals of underrepresented students in Boston Public Schools. We collaborate with stakeholders across the city to close the STEM equity gap by connecting students and educators to high quality opportunities and professionals that they would otherwise be unable to access. For more information visit [www.unitedwaymassbay.org/our-impact/preparing-youth-for-success/bostem-boston-stem-initiative/](http://www.unitedwaymassbay.org/our-impact/preparing-youth-for-success/bostem-boston-stem-initiative/) or follow us on [@UnitedWayMABay](https://www.instagram.com/UnitedWayMABay) on both Instagram and Twitter.*

*Microsoft is excited to partner with Digital Ready to help expand access to rigorous computer science coursework for students in Boston Public Schools. The TEALS Program, a Microsoft Philanthropies program, partners with high schools to build teacher capacity and student interest in computer science with the goal of enabling schools to sustain equitable CS programs on their own. The TEALS Program places volunteers from across the tech industry into classrooms to team-teach computer science. Furthermore, Microsoft NERD (New England Research and Development) Center has industry engineers advising the program to support students with an industry perspective on career pathways in computer science and the application of classroom content. Microsoft’s goal in supporting Digital Ready is to assist Boston Public Schools in developing and growing effective and sustainable CS programs. For more information about Microsoft’s efforts in social responsibility, visit our website at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/corporate-responsibility/>.*

