



EDUCATION

News & Happenings

Storytelling ... with Code

December 9 – 15 is Computer Science Education Week, when schools are encouraged to introduce coding-based activities to foster the creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills that apply to any subject area. These links will help you learn how.

- [Hour of Code](#) – This site has many tools to help you use coding to enrich teaching in any subject for pre-readers through high school. The “Activities” tab has tutorials for kids in all grades and subject areas. The “How-To” tab has numerous tools and links to help teachers get started.
- [Tips for Getting Started](#) -- This essay offers classroom-friendly tips and resources for introducing young learners to coding, storytelling and creative problem-solving. Written by an instructional coach, with links to activities to engage kids.
- [Scratch](#) – This FREE service from MIT lets students at any grade level learn the fundamentals of programming to create their own interactive stories, games and animations and share them with others in the online community. (all grades; available in several languages)
- [ScratchJr](#) – This FREE app teaches an introductory programming language to young children. Lessons allow them to create interactive stories and games by snapping together graphical programming blocks to make characters move, jump, dance and sing. (PK – grade 3)
- [Tynker](#) – This commercial site has advice and activities to ignite kids’ interest in telling stories through code. Some good teaching resources and activities are free.



... with Documentary Films

- [Ken Burns in the Classroom](#) – PBS has curated 11 films by Ken Burns and his collaborators for use in schools, featuring primary source documents, images and archival video footage to bring American stories to life. The collection has 56 lesson plans, 249 video clips and other teaching supports. The site is searchable by era and by film. (TEKS-aligned; middle and high school)



- **American Experience** – The numerous videos, lesson plans, documents and more from this award-winning PBS series bring to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America's history. Topics include biographies, civil rights, presidents, women, popular culture and science and technology, to name a few. (TEKS-aligned; middle and high school)
- **English Through The Documentary Lens** -- These interactive lesson plans help students understand complex social issues using clips from *POV's* award-winning documentaries from around the world. (TEKS-aligned; middle and high school)

... with Student Podcasts

2020 Student Podcast rules – The NPR Student Podcast Challenge has issued rules for the 2020 contest, which begins January 1. One big change is to allow music, as long as it is original or in the public domain. The contest invites students in grades 5 -12 to use the podcast to share their insights and stories on a chosen topic with the rest of the country. [Read more here.](#)



Extracurriculars

Free PD from PBS Kids – Elementary teachers can learn how to use digital resources to stimulate storytelling and encourage kids to create content. PBS will provide a certificate of attendance for each one-hour event. December 3 and December 10 at 6 p.m.



A Teacher's Take on Reform – This New York Times story tells about the at times unorthodox ideas for education reform of a teacher who draws on his own years as an indifferent student. Memorable quotes include, “One thing that worries me is the mythmaking that goes on around really good teaching and teachers, like there is some pixie dust we blow and there are fully engaged children.”

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