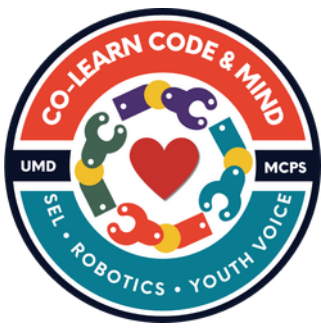
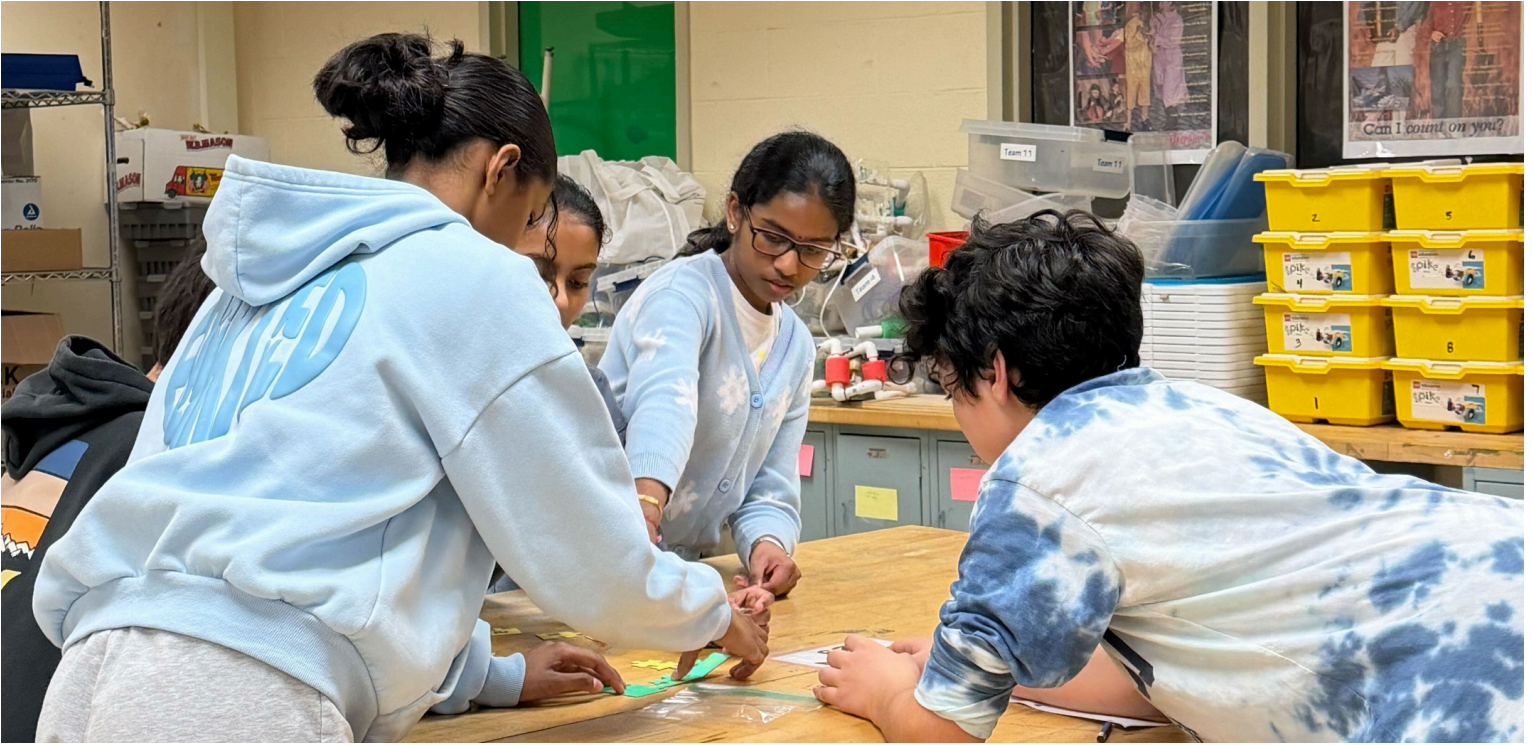




CO-LEARN CODE & MIND

Spring Highlights from Our Community across Montgomery County



A Message from the Leadership Team

Dear Co-Learn Code & Mind Community,

As we conclude our spring semester, we want to take a moment to celebrate the incredible growth, creativity, and hard work students demonstrated throughout the program. This semester marked a major milestone for Co-Learn Code & Mind as students completed the first full year of the program, building on the skills, confidence, and community they developed across both the winter and spring sessions.

During the spring, students worked in teams to finish building, programming, and testing their robotics cars.

They collaborated closely with peers and mentors, refined their designs, and continued troubleshooting mechanical, coding, and engineering challenges. By the end of the semester, students were able to create fully functioning robots that reflected their persistence, creativity, and teamwork.

One of the most exciting parts of the semester was seeing students put their robots to the test. Students competed in races, navigated obstacle courses with blocks, and participated in a bumper-style robot game where they challenged one another's designs in a fun and energetic setting. These activities gave students the chance to apply what they had learned in real time, make adjustments, and experience the excitement of engineering through competition and play.





Students also expanded their technical skills by working with sensors and LEDs and learning how different components can make their designs more interactive and responsive. Through this work, students deepened their understanding of coding, robotics, and problem-solving while gaining confidence in their ability to build and improve complex projects.

Beyond the technical accomplishments, the spring semester continued to strengthen students' collaboration, communication, and leadership. Students supported one another, shared ideas, asked thoughtful questions, and helped teammates troubleshoot challenges. They became more comfortable experimenting, learning from setbacks, and taking ownership of their work. These moments showed how much students had grown not only as builders and coders, but also as teammates, problem-solvers, and leaders.

The semester concluded with students graduating from the program, a meaningful celebration of their dedication and progress. Completing the first year of Co-Learn Code & Mind is an important achievement, and we are proud of everything students accomplished along the way. Their creativity, curiosity, and perseverance helped shape a strong foundation for the program's future.

We are deeply grateful to the mentors, educators, partners, families, and students who made this first year possible. As we look ahead, we are excited to continue building on this momentum, further elevating student voice, deepening technical and social-emotional learning, and creating more opportunities for students to see themselves as innovators, collaborators, and leaders.

With appreciation,

UMD-MCPS Co-Learn Code & Mind Leadership Team



Chunyan Yang, Ph.D.

Director, Risk, Resilience and Culture Lab
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling,
Higher Education, and Special Education
University of Maryland, College Park



Shauna-Kay Jorandby

Director of Student Well-being
Division of Specialized Support Services
Montgomery County Public Schools



Shella B. Cherry

Director, Student Leadership & Activities
Division of School Leadership and Improvement
Montgomery County Public Schools



Thank You to the Community That Made This Possible!

MCPS School Sponsors and Community Partners

Teacher Sponsors:

- Anne Gregal (Silver Creek)
- Brenton Hull (Odessa Shannon)
- Celeste Greaves (Julius West)
- Jeong Lee (Julius West)
- Emily Baker (Lakelands Park)
- Kayleigh Yankie (A Mario Loiederman)

Site Principals:

- Craig Staton (Julius West)
- Megan McLaughlin (A Mario Loiederman)
- Natasha Booms (Odessa Shannon)
- Rose Alvarez (Lakelands Park)
- Tiffany Awkard (Silver Creek)

Community Partners

- Xiuzhu Yang (Director, AOE Robotics Club)
- Dana Hirsch (Director, Jewish Council for the Aging)



A. MARIO LOIEDERMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL



SILVER CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL



JULIUS WEST



MIDDLE SCHOOL

LAKELANDS PARK



MIDDLE SCHOOL

ODESSA SHANNON



MIDDLE SCHOOL



UMD & MCPS Student Facilitators and JCA Volunteers (2026 Spring)



Sai Challagundla



Yijing Zhang



Lily Ureta



Anita Wei



Renae Ricketts



Krandhasi Kodaiarasu



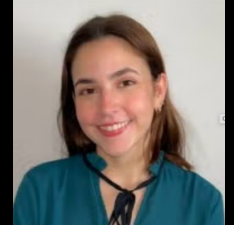
Tara Vigil



Pranav Asthana



Xinyi Zhang



Cate Patriarca

UMD Faculty and Student Collaborators

Faculty Collaborators

- Dr. Huaishu Peng (Computer Science)
- Dr. Fengfeng Ke (Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership)
- Dr. Wei Ai (College of Information)
- Dr. Ryan Daniel Sochol and Eric Tomala (Maryland Robotics Center)

Student Support Team

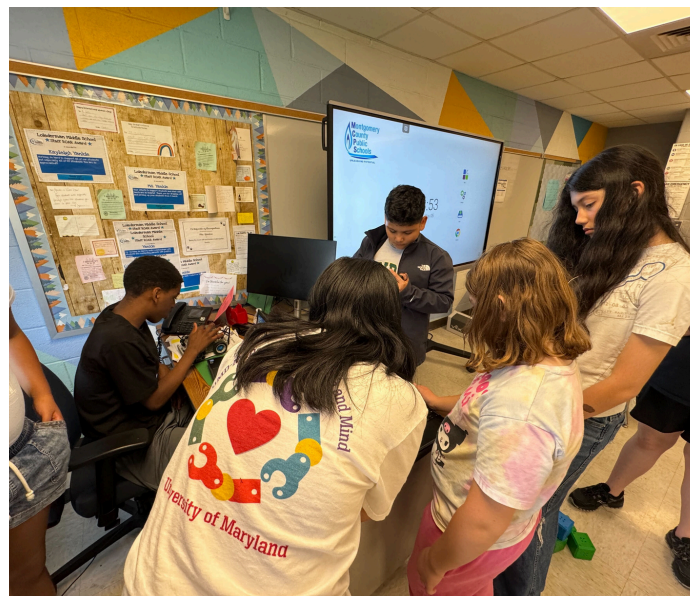
- Quennie Dong (Risk, Resilience & Culture Lab)
- Jin Hyung Lim (Risk, Resilience & Culture Lab)
- Ella Rho (Risk, Resilience & Culture Lab)
- Hanna Kelly (Risk, Resilience & Culture Lab)
- Anita Wei and Sofia Foster (MCPS High Schools)



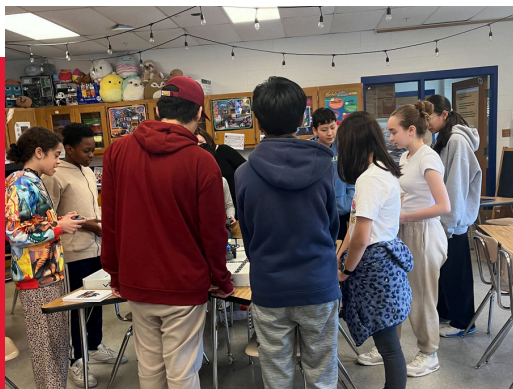
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

This work is made possible through a Community-based Seed Grant awarded by the Artificial Intelligence Interdisciplinary Institute at Maryland (AIM) and through MCPS's investment in teacher leadership via stipend support for school-based sponsors.

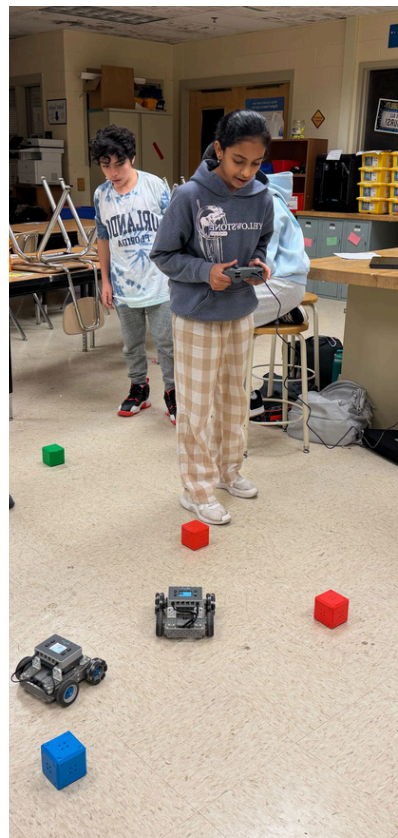
Co-Learn Code & Mind @ A Mario Loiederman Middle School



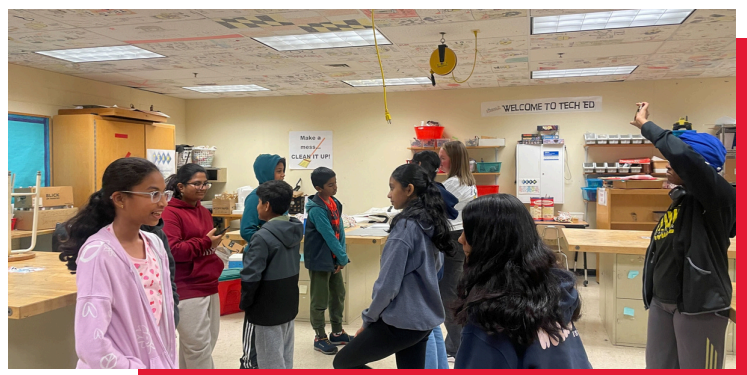
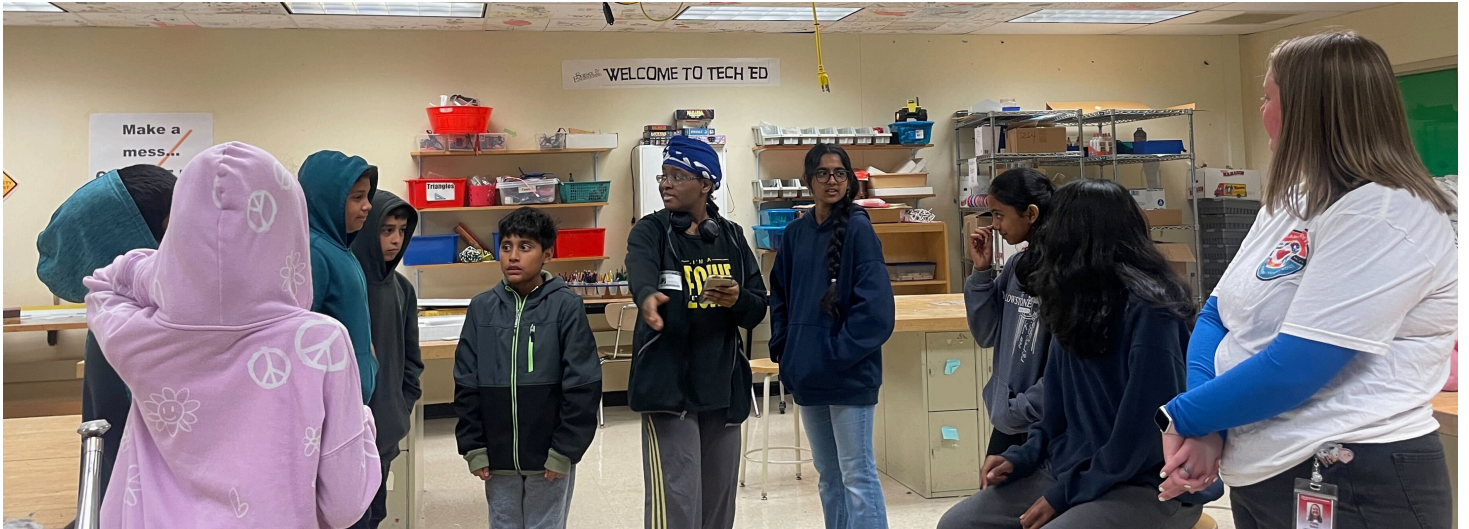
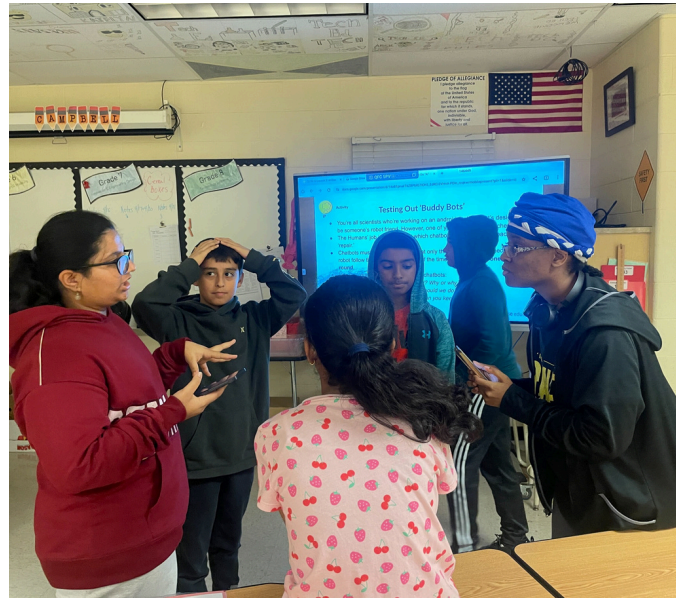
Co-Learn Code and Mind @ Julius West Middle School



Co-Learn Code & Mind @ Lakelands Park Middle School



Co-Learn Code & Mind @ Odessa Shannon Middle School



Co-Learn Code and Mind @ Silver Creek Middle School



Voices and Reflections From Students

What do you want to know about AI?

How do they program an App like ChatGPT to be so smart?

Why was AI created?

I would like to know all the different things AI can actually be used for, even if it's not for what it was made for originally.

How it is created and how it works

how you make an AI

how did it become a thing, who made it

How much does AI really do in the world?

I want to know why an AI chatbot was made to sound like a human and if AI can be used to program other robots.

What is AI best used for?

Can AI help to develop/create new ideas.

Since you started working on the VEX IQ robots, how has this club changed how confident or interested you feel about robotics?

It help me understand how robots work and help me be more confident about answering questions about robots.

I have been more interested in robots and AI because I realized how much we actually use them and how helpful they are.

I have gotten even more excited about it!

I got to work on them more, building my confidence

At first I didn't feel much like a talking, but once we were put into groups I found the need to communicate to help my group.

I feel like it is easier to see the steps of a problem

It makes me more interested.

It's more fun

This club made me more interested in robots because I learned way more about them and how they could help.

I feel like I understand robots more.

Made me feel a little more motivated on doing techy stuff

I am more interested now that I see what the vex IQ robots can do.

This club has shown me that there are different parts of robotics, which peaks my interest.

I feel more confident when building robots

I like building things and problem solving more

Looking Ahead: Continuing Our Work Together in 2026

As we begin the upcoming fall semester, we are excited to continue Co-Learn Code & Mind and start a brand-new year of learning, collaboration, and discovery.

This fall, students will be introduced to foundational coding, design, robotics, and participatory inquiry skills through hands-on activities and team-based challenges. As they begin building, testing, and reflecting, students will have opportunities to grow as problem-solvers, collaborators, and creative thinkers.

We are also excited to continue expanding robotics opportunities through tools such as VEX IQ kits. These resources will help students explore advanced engineering and programming projects throughout the year.

We remain committed to creating a supportive learning community where student voice, curiosity, and creativity are central. We are grateful to the volunteers, mentors, educators, families, and community partners who make this work possible, and we look forward to a meaningful year ahead.

Want to get involved? We welcome families, community members, university and school students interested in volunteering or mentoring with Co-Learn Code and Mind. Please reach out, and we'd love to connect!

2026 Fall Session Dates

School Sites	Dates & Times	MCPS Team	UMD Team
Odessa Shannon	Tues. (3–4:30pm)	Brenton Hull (Teacher sponsor) Natasha Booms (Principal)	Caterina Patriarca (SEL & YPI Facilitator) Sai Challagundla (Robotics Facilitator)
A Mario Loiderman	Tues. (3–4:30pm)	Kayleigh Yankie (Teacher sponsor) Megan McLaughlin (Principal)	Yijing Zhang (SEL & YPI Facilitator) Lily Ureta (Robotics Facilitator)
Silver Creek	Wed. (3–4:30pm)	Anne Gregal (Teacher Sponsor) Tiffany Awkard (Principal)	Krandhasi Kodaiarasu (SEL & YPI Facilitator) Sai Challagundla (Robotics Facilitator)
Julius West	Wed. (3–4:30pm)	Celeste Greaves & Jeong Lee (Teacher Sponsor) Graig Station (Principal)	Anita Wei (SEL & YPI Facilitator) Calvin Zhu (Robotics Facilitator)
Lakelands Park	Thurs. (3–4:30pm)	Emily Baker (Teacher Sponsor) Rose Alvarez (Principal)	Tara Vigil (SEL & YPI Facilitator) Renae Ricketts (Robotics Facilitator)

Additional Resources for Students and Families

To support students' learning beyond program sessions, we encourage families to engage in conversations at home about what students are building, learning, and enjoying in Co-Learn Code and Mind. Simple questions, such as "What did you build at the Co-Learn Code and Mind Program?", "What was exciting and challenging?" or "How could robots or AI help people in our community?" can help reinforce students' reflection and confidence.

During the spring semester, students are exploring robotics building and coding using resources from Vex IQ Robotics (<https://education.vex.com/stemlabs/iq/teacher-resources>). Families and students are welcome to explore these optional resources at home to support continued curiosity and learning.

Families are also invited to explore community-based learning opportunities. The AOE Robotics Club offers free open-house events, providing opportunities to see robotics projects in action, meet mentors, and learn about pathways for continued engagement in robotics and STEM. Please feel free to reach out to AOE robotics Club by email (yangxiuzhu@gmail.com) for upcoming open-house event schedules.

Get Connected With Us!

Program Updates, Community Highlights, and Opportunities to Engage

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/co-learn-code-and-mind/about/>

<https://www.rrclub-chunyanyang.com/co-learn-code-and-mind>

Email: yangcy@umd.edu

