Code Ready.

Youth Coding & Digital Literacy Program: findings and recommendations

Prepared by Charlie Nguyen, Coding Instructor Assistant & Community Technology Ambassador

Executive summary

Code Ready combined an 8-week JavaScript cohort for high school students with a weekly walk-in tech help desk for their families. The goal was to make technology learning hands-on for teens and practical for adults.

Switching the coding curriculum from lectures to short, interactive challenges nearly doubled the final project completion rate, from 45% in the prior lecture-based cohort to 83%. At the help desk, 140 support cases were documented over the program, and 85% were resolved in a single visit.

24	83%	140	85%
Students enrolled	Completed a final project	Support cases logged	Resolved in one visit

Background

Earlier coding cohorts relied on lecture-style lessons. Students who had never written code often fell behind in the first two weeks, and fewer than half finished a final project. At the same time, staff noticed that parents and grandparents dropping students off were asking for help with everyday tech: locked accounts, new phones, and online forms for school and benefits.

Code Ready set out to address both needs in one place.

Program goals

- Raise final project completion among high school students
- Give families a low-pressure place to get tech help without an appointment
- Document support requests so the service could improve over time

Approach

Youth coding track

- **Format:** 8 weeks, two 90-minute sessions per week
- **Curriculum:** each session built around one short JavaScript challenge students could finish and demo the same day, building toward a final project
- **Support:** one-on-one coaching during work time; attendance and progress tracked weekly

Community tech help desk

- **Format:** weekly walk-in hours, no appointment needed
- **Scope:** hardware, software and operating system support, accounts, and online forms
- **Tracking:** every request logged in Zendesk with the issue, troubleshooting steps and resolution

Results

Coding track: completion before and after

Measure	Prior cohort (lecture)	Code Ready (hands-on)
Students enrolled	22	24
Average weekly attendance	64%	88%
Completed a final project	10 (45%)	20 (83%)

Prior cohort figures are from the previous lecture-based session of the same course.

Help desk: what people came in for

Issue type	Cases	Share	Resolved in one visit
Accounts & passwords	45	32%	93%
New device setup	34	24%	88%
Email & online forms	31	22%	90%
Slow computer / hardware	19	14%	58%
Other	11	8%	64%
Total	**140**	**100%**	**85%**

Hardware problems were the hardest to fix in one visit, usually because they needed a replacement part or more time than walk-in hours allowed.

What worked

- **Small wins every session.** Finishing something visible in each class kept students coming back. Attendance rose as soon as lectures were replaced with challenges.
- **Plain-language explanations.** Comparing code and computers to everyday things, like recipes or mail, helped both students and adults follow along.
- **Writing everything down.** Logging each case meant repeat problems could be fixed faster, and common issues were turned into simple how-to handouts.

Challenges

- Students who missed the first week had trouble catching up without extra help.
- Hardware repairs often couldn't be finished during walk-in hours.
- Some families needed help in languages other than English, which wasn't always available.

Recommendations

1. Add a short catch-up session in week two for students who start late.
2. Offer a drop-off option for hardware issues so repairs aren't limited to walk-in hours.
3. Recruit bilingual volunteers and translate the most-used how-to handouts.
4. Invite students who complete the coding track to volunteer at the help desk, so teens and families learn side by side.

KEY TAKEAWAY

“Making technology accessible takes more than technical knowledge. It takes patience, adaptability, clear communication, and an understanding of how people learn.”

About this report. This is a sample project created to demonstrate the Supporting Files section of a Xalé profile. Figures are illustrative.