
The MarTech LAB

Essential MarTech Categories

1. Content Creation Tools
2. Content Management Tools
3. Marketing Automation Systems
4. Account-based Marketing Systems
5. Lead Management Tools
6. Data Management Tools
7. Reporting Tools

MEETUP

Let’s Exchange Ideas

The USER-Experience

UX Workshops | Labs | Exposure Tours

PROJECT

HACKS

Providing Solutions and Services

Internal

Web and Social Media Support and Training

Flipped Classroom Support and Training

MeetUps and Demo Activities and Events

Providing Solutions and Services

External

Web and Social Media Support and Training

Digital Media and Design Services

Project Hacks and Support Services

Providing Solutions and Services

Career and Enterpreneurial

Internships

Part-Time and Fulltime Jobs

Contracts and StartUp Capital

PROJECT BASED

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Upcoming Projects

- Web and Social Media Support and Training
- Flipped Classroom Support and Training
- MeetUps and Demo Activities and Events
- Wordpress BootCamp
- South Gwinnett HackAthon

Claire Shorall is a former instructional coach and STEM teacher at Castlemont High School in Oakland, CA. Claire believes in Advanced Placement classes for all, and will let any willing student enroll in her classes. She is a 2015 recipient of Teach For America's Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching. Claire is now focusing her ambitions on bringing high quality computer science education to all students. All views are her own.

The Case for Hackathons

By Claire Shorall

As a teacher I often feel stifled by a one-hour class period. As soon as students have gained momentum on a given task, the bell rings. Even with the most engaging of assignments, traction is lost. I have — more than once — been tempted to send an email to staff and families saying, "Do you mind if I keep the students in my 3rd period for the next 48-hours? We're working on creating something super dynamic and useful, and I think students would benefit from making it their sole focus for the next two days."

By giving students a chance to attend hackathons, this is no longer a fantasy.

A hackathon is an event where people with diverse skill sets work collaboratively to create solution-oriented technology. Typically, hackathons conjure images of day-to-night, non-stop programming amidst a landscape of computers, cords, pizza boxes, and Red Bull cans. The intensity is not for the faint of heart, though as a result, teens and adult mentors learn perseverance and collaboration skills by necessity.

The goal of the team is to create a tech product that is both novel and innovative, but under enormous time and resource constraints. Collaboration, flexibility, and focus are key to their success, which is typically measured through the demonstration of a product that is working and useful. Attendees of a hackathon leave with greater skills and a robust network of similarly passionate and creative problem solvers.

Given the admirable focus on project-based learning, authentic audiences, and the development of 21st century skills by many schools, hackathons are a unique platform to facilitate student growth. And, while technical in nature, teachers of all content areas and backgrounds can utilize this project-focused space to their advantage.

Civically-Oriented Hackathons

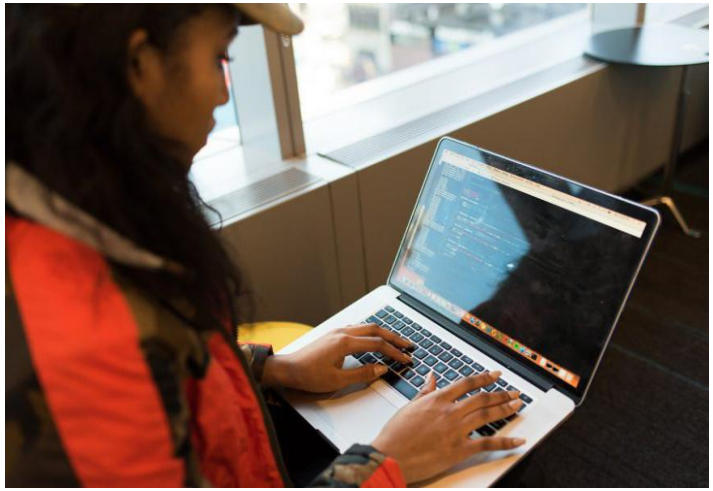
To find appropriate hackathons for students, teachers can seek out events by location, target audience, or theme. For example, I'm inclined to support my students' participation in civically-oriented hackathons that either cater exclusively to teens, or allow for adults and students to team up. In just this last year, my students created hardware-based solutions to track carbon emissions in cars and unlock school bathrooms remotely, websites to solicit student input on new teacher hires, and mobile applications to record the tenor of interactions with Oakland police, create a peer-tutor network, and even track the location of their favorite food trucks, to name a few.

In the context of the classroom, each of these projects would have taken weeks. Given the range of ideas and platforms (software, hardware, mobile), it would be challenging to offer sufficient support to each group. I would be hard pressed to find industry mentors willing to come to school daily to check in on student progress and teach them necessary skills. And, ultimately, a "demo" in front of peers pales in comparison to one in front of judges, industry professionals, and fellow competitors.

Every Student Benefits

Every student benefits from the intensity, collaboration, and exposure that hackathons provide, and every student should attend at least one. The best kept secret about hackathons is their remarkable accessibility. The vast majority of hackathons — and almost all of those marketed for teens only — require no prerequisite knowledge for participation. The recent proliferation of intuitive, beginner-focused design tools means that any student can go from zero coding experience to having a working demo on their smartphone over the course of a weekend.

Given this, hackathons must be seen for what they frequently are: inspiration over skill development. That said, the inspiration and insight gained in one weekend is often enough of a foot in the door to get students exploring the tech world and working on more complex problems.



The impact of hackathons, however, should not be understated. The exposure and access that hackathons have provided to my students — from introductions to new technologies to networking with engineers of color — has been trajectory changing. My students see themselves as producers, not solely consumers, of technology; this mindshift in underrepresented youth is critical to widening the pipeline of individuals pursuing careers in tech.

Teachers can find hackathons for their students through a simple Google search. The explosive popularity of these events, coupled with those held solely online, means that there is an event for everybody. If there isn't a hackathon close by, consider hosting your own. Imagine the possibilities of projects your students can tackle with technology, extended time and focus, and a network of professionals.

What are you most excited to see your students build?