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Northwest offers fifth annual Scratch workshop for K-12 teachers

Northwest Missouri State University will host the University's fifth annual Scratch Workshop in June to educate teachers about software developed to help students think creatively with a computer. For the first time this year the Scratch Workshop will be offered online to reach more teachers than ever before.

The workshop offers three tracks: Scratch, Snap! and App Inventor. Each track can both energize students and help them hone essential life skills — how to think creatively, reason systematically and work collaboratively.

The workshop is designed to introduce K-12 teachers to technology they can use in the classroom. Scratch is kid-friendly software that allows students of all ages to create computer games, animations, stories, art and music.

Snap! is a Scratch variant that enhances that award-winning interface by allowing students to design their own blocks. Snap! can form the foundation of a serious computer science course at the middle to high school level.

App Inventor lets kids write apps they can run on Android devices using a Scratch-like interface. Scribbler Robots allows kids to tap into the thrill of robotics.

"Scratch, Snap! and App Inventor are entertaining, easy-to-use programs that allow students to tell stories, make games and write music, but they are more than that," said Dr. Michael Rogers, assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems. "They are a way to teach students how to think creatively, systematically and problem solve. They also tie into coding, a skill that is being recognized as critical by more and more people in industry, education, and government."

The workshop starts on Monday, June 16, and will last four weeks. The material will be presented at a leisurely, summer time pace, and participants can enjoy it wherever they are through its online offering.

The workshop will include Google Hangouts once a week at specific times during the course of the four week workshop. Participants will proceed through the workshop downloading tutorials, watching online videos and asking questions in threaded discussions.

Teachers also may choose to participate in an optional workshop orientation session, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, June 16, at the Northwest campus. Lunch will be included. Further details will be sent to registered participants in early June.

This is the fifth year Northwest faculty have hosted the event. For the fifth consecutive year the Scratch workshops are possible with the help of a Google CS4S Grant, a grant designed to promote computer science in high schools.

To register or to learn more about Scratch Workshop visit www.tinyurl.com/northwest-k12.