

SMART

First Code Academy



Curious Little Coder

Clive Wright tells us about the experience his son Charles had as one of the children enrolled at the coding school, First Code Academy.

Charles Wright, who's 11, is one of the students who participated in the AppJamming Summer Tech Camp at First Code Academy. Under the guidance of dedicated mentors, Charles and his peers delved into the fundamentals of creating game apps, and got a firsthand experience in developing and presenting their own work. A huge computer game fan, Charles has been praised by the trainers at the camp for pushing the boundaries with his thinking.

Proud dad Clive Wright was pleasantly surprised at the results. "He's a bright lad. It's just difficult to get him interested, but this is something that he's really interested in," says Clive, 53, co-founder of the integrated crowdfunding platform CrowdHub Group. Clive explains that he and his wife always tries to instill a sense of curiosity into Clive and his two older sisters, Anne, 17, and Clare, 14.

Why did you choose to enroll Charles into a coding academy?

We've been talking about it for a while, and I was trying to get Charles interested because he's so interested in games. The idea was, "If you're interested in games, why don't you learn how to make them?" Then the [academy] had an open day, and one of the sessions was on VR.

I think that really got [Charles'] attention.

So we enrolled for that and got the information about the holiday camps.

It's 15 hours [the class]: five days, three hours per session. And we felt that it was good because it's intensive, and it gets them to focus. Sometimes I sit outside and I can't believe that there's programming going on because of the noise and the laughter – I could always hear Charles.



Why do you think digital literacy is so important for children?

It's really as important as learning how to read; it's just something you have to have. Even if you don't earn your living as a coder, you at least have to understand what's going on. Charles may not end up designing games – although I think he'd like to – but if he understands what's behind it and how it's structured and developed, then a lot of mysterious worries about the digital world would be transparent to him and he'll move in it much more easily.

How has coding benefitted Charles, both in direct and intangible ways?

He's bright, he's quick and the teachers have been really complimentary about how he's done not just in the assignments, but in terms of how he's always going beyond what's being asked for. In school, that's not really going to help you, but in real life, it is vital. It's the difference between surviving in a job and doing well. Indirectly, it will give him an insight into how you create something – that it doesn't just happen.

Have you seen any changes or improvements since Charles started learning coding?

He's quick on the uptake, he's creative, comes up with ideas. He's always got things he wants to talk to you about – ideas usually very 'out there' – which is great. But I think this is a way of harnessing that, and saying, "Well, you got this wild idea, put it on screen." He's absolutely in love with computer games – I don't think I've seen him this focused on anything else.

What are some of the life lessons you hope to teach Charles outside of the classroom?

What we really try to inculcate is curiosity. Wanting to learn 'why' is the start of everything. If you don't have that intellectual curiosity, you won't learn, thrive and you won't



enjoy your life. It's not just a matter of good grades and good jobs. If everything is interesting, then life is pretty exciting – even if you're not actually physically doing something at that moment.

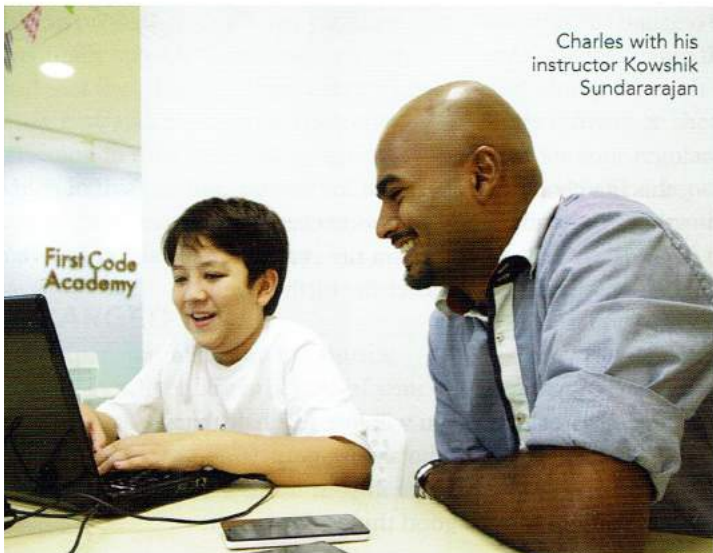
It's very much in my culture that you don't just uncritically accept what you're told. That's something that we inculcate into Charles and the girls. We'll never shut someone down for questioning, we'll always provide real reasons.

How do you define success as a parent?

I guess we are successful as parents if our children are mature and are able to make the right decisions, to find their way in the world and can think through issues for themselves.

What are some of the lessons Charles has taught you?

The excitement of the new. It's very easy to get to the stage in life where I am and it's all pretty routine. Through the eyes of children, a parent sees the world afresh. For my wife and I, it has been renewing, regenerating and rejuvenating to be on this journey with our three children. As each of them discovers different things at different ages, there's always something that makes us go, "Yes, I used to do that!" Or, "Well that wasn't around when I was a kid." It's rediscovering what we are teaching our children: to be open-minded, to question, to think and to discover the new. We'd be pretty poor people if we didn't take that advice ourselves. **PW**



First Code Academy

Charles with his instructor Kowshik Sundararajan