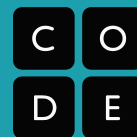# Computer Science Graduation Requirements

Computer science is necessary, supports other learning objectives, and engages students in their academics—fulfilling the purpose of a graduation requirement

Representation in Computer Science:

Every student is capable of learning computer science (CS). We believe that it is a foundational subject that every student would benefit from learning and it has become increasingly clear that we cannot leave those opportunities to chance.

Every state permits CS to count toward graduation requirements, and many have a requirement that every high school must offer. However, even in leading states, we found that some schools are finding ways to meet the letter of the requirement but are not truly providing the opportunity to all students. This changed for one state's students when South Carolina adapted its existing technology requirement to be the nation's first computer science requirement. The 2020–21 school year was the first year the requirement was in place without any waivers, which eliminated the loopholes that many schools in states with just a requirement to offer use, and the results have been stark. The national average for young women in high school foundational CS courses in 2021-22 was 31% - in South Carolina, it was 46%.

Seeing this data, it is not surprising that since 2018, seven other states have joined South Carolina in requiring computer science as a prerequisite for graduation. Arkansas, Nebraska, Nevada, Tennessee, Rhode Island, North Dakota, and North Carolina have all taken this significant step.

Ensuring Equitable Outcomes:

Ample timelines (5–6 year runway at minimum) and resources must be allocated to ensure fidelity of implementation, high-quality courses and experiences for students, and equitable outcomes in CS. When these are aligned, students are the beneficiaries, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, or which school they attend. States should also report on course implementation, demographics, and adoption each year prior and after the requirement takes effect, as well as tracking graduation rates.

State context is also crucially important—how and where states add computer science into graduation credits will vary. States should have a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape of computer science education, taking into account the number of qualified teachers, access to computers, knowledge of student demographics, appropriate curriculum, and relevant educational policies.

Access to computer science should not be a lottery or the purview of only a few who happened to be in the right zip code, district, school, or classroom.