

UBC GIRLsmarts

UBC GIRLsmarts is a Computer Science workshop for Grade 6 girls. The goal is to create a positive experience related to Computer Science and technology, by engaging participants in fun and educational activities. WWEST Partners funding has supported GIRLsmarts workshops for 2012-2013.

GIRLsmarts 2013 had over 150 participants and was run with the generous help of 46 student volunteers. Workshop activities included creating a website using HTML, designing an iPad application, programming LEGO Mindstorms robots, and programming a game using Microsoft Kodu.

Before 2012 the workshops were held on campus and most participants attended from the local area. In 2012 the first off-campus half-day workshop was held for students from East-side Vancouver schools. Working with the UBC Learning Exchange, Surrey School District, and the Aboriginal Child and Family Support Service with Vancouver Native Health, there were two half-day off-campus workshops in 2013, with a total of 34 participants.

At the end of each workshop, participants are asked to fill in a feedback form about how much fun they had, and how much they learned - ranking each activity on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the best). In 2013, the average score for each activity was 4 or higher. The feedback from parents was also very positive. Most parents were eager to know if similar workshops or summer camps would be offered by UBC in the future, if workshops could be held for longer periods of time at schools, and if there are similar workshops for boys.

