THE WAY

TERM 1 | FRIDAY 26 MARCH 2021

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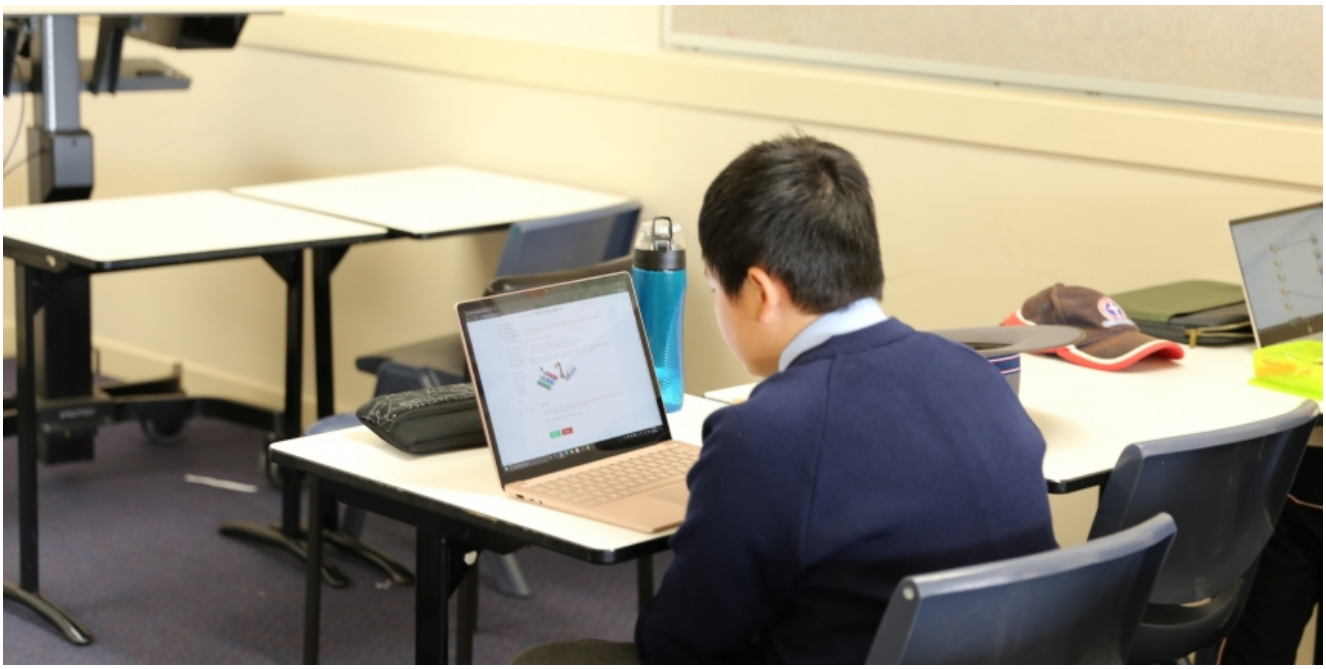

CODING CLUB

On Monday 15 March, the Coding Club at Thomas Hassall participated in the CSIRO-designed challenge known as Bebras.

Formulated in 2004 by Professor Valentina Dagiene from the University of Vilnius, the Bebras Challenge aims to encourage computational thinking within students from Years 3-12, prompting an improvement in their collaborative thinking and strengthening their overall work ethic. In Australia, the Bebras Challenge takes place in March and August-September each year, however, it is internationally recognised for its initiative in promoting problem-solving skills and Informatics concepts including the ability to break down complex tasks into simpler components, algorithm design, pattern recognition, pattern generalisation and abstraction. Thus, bringing the challenge's community to include **60 countries with over 2.9 million students participating worldwide.**

Despite having prior knowledge surrounding the concept of computational thinking, the challenge involves sets of short-answer questions that students are required to complete in 45 minutes. The questions get progressively more difficult as students advance through the levels of schooling and at each year level band, there are 15 problems to be solved. The problems are presented under three levels of difficulty; easy, medium and hard, with five questions allocated to each level of difficulty. In considering this, students are encouraged to apply skillful collaboration as they are permitted to work in teams of up to four.

While the students completed the Bebras Challenge, I spoke to the co-ordinator of the Coding Club, Mrs Megan Bennett.

Defined as the process of using a programming language to get a computer to behave how you want it to, Mrs Bennett was able to provide an overview of the club and what they do in their weekly meetings. Mrs Bennett expressed that during their lunch time meet-ups, students in the club are taught the concepts behind coding, where they are then able to apply their skills and knowledge into formulating and developing their own computational programs.

With a focus on helping students with programming skills, Mrs Bennett shares that she encouraged her students to participate in the Bebras Challenge as being able to solve complex problems using computational thinking is a vital aspect to the complexity that is, coding.

In addition to this, an account from active member of the club and Year 8 student, Stratos

Demertjis, portrays his insights into the Coding Club and his overall experience in participating in and completing this challenge.

“Bebras isn't the stereotypical term when it comes to coding. It's not 1's and 0'1, Java, HTML or anything like that.

I would say that Bebras is more of a computational learning platform that requires a lot of consideration towards the question. You have to understand the context of the situation that is given, and then interpret that information into an answer that works with the question. Sometimes, the answer was obvious, but other times, you had to 'play' the described situation in your head to visualise it.

I didn't feel like it was too hard or too intense, because it's what I like doing. The room was quiet, but it had a good vibe, like I usually get when I'm in coding club; hanging out with my friends and doing some cool stuff.

Overall, I would say that the challenge was pretty fun, but the phrasing for some of the questions made it a bit difficult.”

Written by Marie S, Year 12
