

Women in Games

GIRLS MAKES GAMES

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Teaching one million girls how to make video games in the next 5 years is an extremely ambitious goal, but that's exactly what educational company LearnDistrict have set out to do by 2020.

Based in California, Girls Make Games started out as a US-based project and has grown radically in a short span of time. They offer a number of workshops, game jams and even three week-long summer camps where school-aged girls can get a feel for the world of game design, inspiring a whole new generation of engineers.

These girls-only summer camps have jumped from 5 across America to 20 in just under a year. And it's hardly surprising—they're jam-packed with a range of workshops covering topics like audio engineering, animation and programming. Students are introduced to the world of game development via field trips and mingling with industry professionals, and are sorted in to teams to produce a game over the duration of the camp.

Last year, a team called The Negatives, consisting of 8 girls with ages ranging from 10 to 16, produced a puzzle adventure game called The Hole Story. The game was a spectacular success, and went on to raise over \$30,000 on Kickstarter. Not bad for a game that was conceptualised in just three short weeks— by kids who haven't even graduated high school yet.

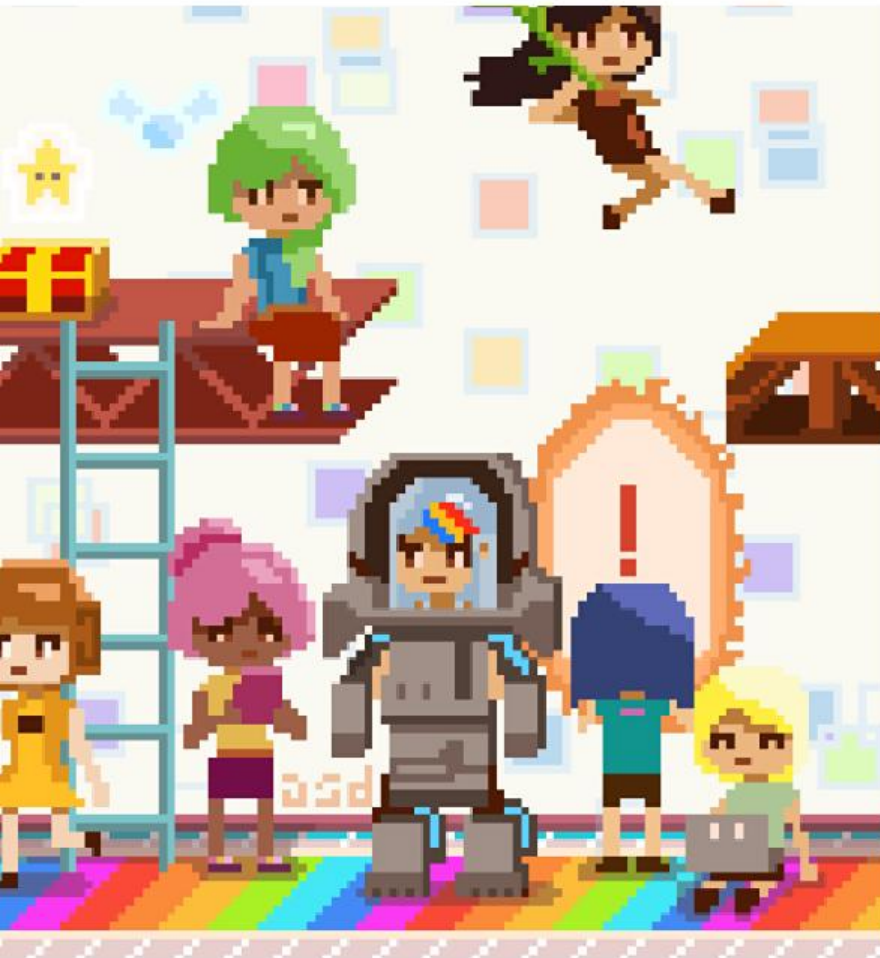
Girls Make Games not only gets young girls excited about game design, but offers close mentoring to foster this budding interest in its participants. The camps feature a four-to-one student to teacher



"STUDENTS ARE INTRODUCED TO THE WORLD OF GAME DEVELOPMENT VIA FIELD TRIPS AND MINGLING WITH INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS."

Below: The Negatives.





Below: Workshop attendees and future developers hard at work.



ratio, ensuring that even the most reserved girls are encouraged to spread their creative wings. Mentors even assist with college and internship applications, setting students up for their potential new dream careers.

Although the summer camps are costly at around \$1,200 a student, Girls Make Games offers various financial assistance to those who want to attend, but simply can't afford it. In fact, around 75% of the summer camp students are on some form of scholarship. In an industry where social inequality means that only 12% of people making video games are women,

financial difficulties shouldn't represent yet another barrier.

Relying heavily on donations to fund these scholarships, as well as to keep the project alive, Girls Make Games has been supported by a number of big names, including Google Play and Humble Bundle. The "Leading Ladies" Humble Bundle package made available for purchase last year donated a portion of the proceeds to Girls Make Games, which not only helped the initiative financially but shed light on some great female-focused narratives and female developers.

This venture isn't just restricted to the US- with a target of engaging one million girls with game development, the project has inevitably gone global, with camp locations in Europe, the Middle East and right here in Australia. Girls Make Games was even involved in a recent workshop

Above: Girls make games- and cool pixel art, too.

in Melbourne to teach game development to women of all ages.

With disturbingly low numbers of women working in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), it's more obvious now than ever that something needs to be done to encourage more young girls to get involved. Criticisms of the way women are represented in games have never been higher, and it could definitely be argued that having more women participating in the development process will help to address this issue. Luckily, this is just what Girls Make Games sets out to do.

It's still uncertain if LearnDistrict will reach their goal of teaching one million young girls to make games by 2020. But creating a world filled with fantastic games made for women, by women? Sounds like a winner to me.