**Teacher Spotlight: November 2018**

**Jeremy Ranch Elementary School Coding Teacher, Crystal Giles**

**How long have you been a teacher? How long in PCSD?**

I have been a teacher for 15 years and have taught for 13 years in the Park City School District.

**What grades/subjects have you taught?**

I taught 5th grade for 12 years, 4th grade for a year, and Elementary Computational Thinking/Computer Science (a.k.a. coding) for the past 3 years.

**Education**

* Brigham Young University-Idaho, BA: Elementary Education
* Endorsements in ESL, Technology, and STEM

**Kids/Family**

* Husband, Jim
* 4 awesome kids:
  + Wyatt: 9 and 4th grader in DLI program at JRSE
  + Scarlett: 6, 1st grader in DLI program at JRES
  + Cassidy: 4, attends preschool at JRES
  + Jesse: 19 months old, loves dancing and chasing the family cat, Adele.

**Who/what inspired you to be a teacher?** 

I grew up skiing at Smuggler's Notch, a ski resort in Vermont, and worked there as a camp counselor in the summer. I loved working with kids and teaching them new things. This early experience with kids inspired me to go into teaching.

**Tell me about your role as a coding specialist and how coding as a curriculum area has evolved in PC schools.**

This is year four of the Elementary Coding initiative for the Park City School District. I am one of the three original Technology Instructional Coaches that were asked to learn code and teach students. Quite a bit has changed since that first year. Students use Blockly programming to create their algorithms and programs. We started with solving logical coding puzzles on Code.org and have moved to creating new projects using the Scratch website created by MIT.Elementary Coding teachers are working to integrate curriculum into the projects students are creating in the Code classroom. It has been pretty incredible to be a part of this process and to learn along with my students.

**Why is coding a core element of STEM curriculum in PC elementary schools? What benefits have been realized through the coding program?**

Elementary Coding levels the playing field for all students. Students who are used to excelling academically may struggle in Code because it is so new and challenging. Students who may struggle in the traditional classroom are now excelling and even teaching their peers how to program or design in Code. It is really neat to see this new dynamic in my classroom. Also, it is essential to prepare students for the world they live in and computational thinking and coding does just that.

**What are some of the PCEF grants you have asked for/been involved with?**

I have been involved with many PCEF grants since I began teaching for PCSD. My first grant was the Write Source Grammar Textbook, to get all 5th graders on the same page as they enter Ecker Hill. I wrote a grant for the ALEKS Mathematics computer software for 5th-grade students. I also wrote a site grant for Lego Mindstorm Robotics. Most recently I wrote grants for Makey, Makey Inventions kits, BreakOut EDU boxes (similar to an escape room experience, but for kids), and Virtual Reality in the K-5 Classroom.

**What has PCEF funding for those programs meant to you and your students?**

PCEF funding has made a huge difference in my classroom. It has provided unique learning experiences for students that as a teacher, I could not have provided on my own. The BreakOut EDU boxes, Makey, Makey Invention Kits, Virtual Reality headsets, and robotics instantly engage all students. It is so fun to see how excited students get with these activities. I feel lucky to have PCEF as an organization to support me with the innovative learning opportunities that I want to bring to my classroom.