

January 31, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Mr. Stacey Armstrong and his recently published curriculum A+ Computer Science. I have known Stacey for about 4 years as a colleague in Computer Science competitions. I have come to learn many things from him and admire his teaching ability. I first met Stacey at the Region III UIL computer science contest at Baylor University. Coaches usually discuss how they are teaching their classes and what methods they are using during these meets. I have always found these meets the best way to become a better educator. Stacey's methods struck me as very successful.

Later on, I got to know Stacey better through discussions at local Houston area contests and saw how he groomed his students. I knew then that I wanted to try and use his approach to further my own schools computer science success. I teach at Westfield High School in the Houston area and I had built a program from scratch back in 1998. We have had good success in UIL in computer science but we could never get past Regional. We also had good AP scores. However, when java was made into the AP language, I found that my successes in the AP test fall. I wanted to improve my class and asked Stacey if he had any suggestions. Stacey suggested using his A+ curriculum.

I got his curriculum and started using it. I really like what he offers to the teacher. Since I had been doing things my own way, I wanted to keep many of my old techniques and start incorporating new ones. The A+ curriculum comes with slides, worksheets, quizzes, tests, source code, and labs so that anyone who has never taught a class before can jump in and start teaching. The slides are very thorough in teaching concepts of computer science and when taught in sequence help build into bigger ideas. I personally enjoy how Stacey uses Scanner chopper methods, files, Boolean logic, and loops to get the students ready for arrays. However, the A+ curriculum doesn't only help the new teacher but it also is a great resource for the seasoned teacher. That is how I used it. I can go through his slide shows, remove what I don't want to touch on and add an occasional slide that I feel is important. I can take his test questions and form my own tests using some of my stuff and some of his. I can modify source codes and labs to benefit what I want to focus on. This allows me my autonomy but also gives me a nice guide to build by.

In writing this letter, I went back to see the original stuff he sent me and then looked at everything I built out of it and I am amazed. I feel that his curriculum has helped me increase the learning capacity of my students and made me into a better teacher. I highly recommend the A+ Computer Science Curriculum.

Sincerely,

Paul Stroud  
AP Computer Science  
Westfield High School