Reality bytes for Chatham teachers

AN educational initiative designed by Google and offered at the University of Sydney has the potential to produce brighter, smarter computer students, says school teacher Katrina Tolentiono.

The Chatham High teacher who attended the Google 'Computer Science for High School' (CS4HS) course at the University of Sydney during the school break said what she had learned was terrific and would help her stimulate discussion amongst students in her computing classes.

The CS4HS workshop was aimed at increasing high school teachers' knowledge and ability to promote and teach computer science and computational thinking in classrooms. Teachers who attended admitted that in some cases teachers are not as up to date or as computer savvy as their students and are working with knowledge from 20 years ago.

"The workshop was a perfect opportunity to build our knowledge with the assistance of Google and University of Sydney experts," said Ms Tolentiono.

"Connecting and collaborating with other teachers, lecturers and even Google engineers was a wonderful opportunity."

"Given that the numbers of computing students have dropped over the years, I hope that I will be able to increase the interest in computing science through what I've learned," she said.

Ms Tolentiono hopes other teachers in Science, Mathematics and Computing will take the opportunity to attend the free course which is scheduled to be conducted again later this year.

The program which takes a "train the trainer" approach provided training, tips, and actual classroom materials to help teachers teach programming and computing in schools and turn students into computational thinkers and creators.

Dr Bernhard Scholz from the university's School of Information Technologies said the initiative was supported by the academics of the School of Information Technologies because it was beneficial for both high schools and universities.

"If we can help high school teachers fully engage their students in computer science and computational thinking, ultimately we have students with higher skills levels enrolling at the university."

Forty teachers took time out of their holidays to take part in the first of its kind workshop.

Daniel Coombes, Sydney Boys High, with Katrina Tolentiono of Chatham High School.