Lagos, Michelle. "Computer Science Teachers Association." *: Are Parents Supporters or a Challenge for Computer Science in K-12?* Computer Science Teachers Association, 17 Apr. 2013. Web. 6 Oct. 2014

As a K-12 Computer science teacher I am often presented with different challenges and they all vary depending on the grade level. Most of the time when we think about challenges, we focus on school budgets, school administrators, and curriculum challenges, but we usually don't stop and think about the challenge that starts at home.

Often, the biggest challenges with the younger K-8 grades are the parents' perception of what computer science is and what their kids should be learning in the computer science class. One of the phrases that I commonly hear when a student is struggling with a CS skill is: "But my child is so good with computers, he spends so much time on it and uses it so well, you should see him using the iPad, he uses it even better than me." These parents simply do know that playing online games and using iPad apps is not really computer science. So, I find myself explaining over and over again what computer science is and why our school wants our students to become producers and not consumers. This is why our kindergarteners are learning about developing simple games and our first and second graders creating games using KODU.

Then we have the parents who insist that our curriculum is too difficult and the students should be coming to the computer lab to play games and have fun. I once had a parent conference in which the parent insisted that we should review the computer curriculum because we were actually trying to fail all kids by asking them to learn and do thing that were beyond their ages. Some parents still think that a computer science class should be a fancy typing, word processing, creating electronic worksheets and slideshows course or that it should be a course that students can take just to raise their GPA. Some parents have a hard time understanding that their kids are capable of so much more.

I have the privilege to work in a private school where most of my kids have access to different kinds of devices at home. This is a good and bad thing at the same time, because this makes parents think that their kids are expert computer scientists. They are experts at downloading apps, creating movies with iMovie or moviemaker, downloading songs from YouTube (copyright infringement is whole separate topic). I do not want to discredit these skills or applications, but my kids are also completely capable of coding or designing their own games. We just have to give them a chance!

This week I have the opportunity of addressing parents at a school assembly and explaining to them the importance on learning computer science in K-12, so let's hope that opens the door to have more parent support and rise to that challenge.

Michelle Lagos  
CSTA International Representative