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Product Focus

Edugaming in New Content Areas

By Kurt Eisele-Dyrli
 September 2010

The current generation of edugames—computer based video games intended for educational use—stands in stark contrast to the drill-and-practice CD-ROM games of the past. While the earliest games were most often tightly focused on topics with clear right or wrong answers, such as math equations, spelling words or historical trivia, today's technology has allowed the latest generation of game developers to branch out to design games in interdisciplinary and creative subjects, including writing, history, literature, biology, business, personal finance and more.

The continued technological development of this genre is much like that of other software. Most new edugames are now online and entirely cloud-based, for example, eliminating installation and maintenance costs, streamlining implementation for entire schools and districts, and enabling students to access them anywhere. Edugames today have also taken advantage of the ever-increasing capabilities of computers and broadband Internet connections by utilizing better graphics and creating more immersive and interactive gameplay. Many of them are also able to provide much more individualized user experiences as a result, so that individual students can move at their own pace and navigate the games as they choose. Here are a few examples of the latest edugames to consider using in your district.

REALITYWORKS

Business Education Simulations

Starts at \$999 for annual school-site license

High School

Interactive simulations developer RealityWorks recently launched this collection of three online educational games for high school students. In the Business game, students run a company in a selected industry, using strategies to counter market competition and make a profit. The Entrepreneurship game challenges students to launch a start-up using market research to develop their marketing and promotions campaigns. In the Finance game, players use corporate profit-and-loss data and other resources to develop strategies to improve their simulated company's profitability. www.businessedsims.com



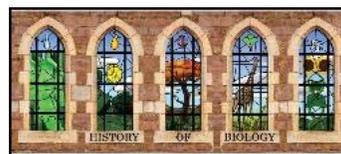
SPONGELAB INTERACTIVE

History of Biology

\$498.75 per annual classroom license

Grades 8-12

SpongeLab Interactive's new game allows high school students to explore the history of biology. Players go on an online scavenger hunt in the role of a fictional laboratory assistant trying to solve the mysterious disappearance of a famous scientist, while they explore major discoveries, important biologists, and the effects of the field on society, ethics, politics and culture from the 17th century to the present day. A specially developed game engine, which SpongeLab claims is "cheat proof," randomizes missions and navigates players



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based on their answers, so that each player's game experience is unique. www.spongegamelab.com

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TABULA DIGITA

DimensionL

\$20 per student, \$6,000 per annual school-site license

Grades K-12

Tabula Digita, most well known for its first venture, the immersive 3D math game DimensionM, has since expanded into new subjects and created a games collection called DimensionU. DimensionL is the latest addition, a literacy skills game available with either Tabula Digita curriculum packs for elementary, middle and high school levels, or alternative curriculum resources designed specifically to complement Pearson textbooks. Skills taught include language conventions, parts of speech, reading and writing processes, and spelling and vocabulary. The game also includes comprehensive reporting features to allow teachers to monitor student progress. www.dimensionu.com



WOLFQUEST

Minnesota Zoo/eduweb

Free

Grades 5-12

Created by a partnership between the Minnesota Zoo and software developer eduweb, with funding from the National Science Foundation, WolfQuest is a detailed role-playing simulation in which students play as a wolf living in Yellowstone National Park. As they navigate through the park as wolves, players learn about prey populations, ecology and topography of the landscape, competition and cooperation of species, and the impact of humans on nature. An available multiplayer version enables several students to play simultaneously as members of a wolf pack, learning to cooperate and work together to survive. www.wolfquest.org



Other new or recently released edugames include: Conspiracy Code from Florida Virtual School, Juba and Kabanga from Six Red Marbles, Gen-I Revolution from the Council for Economic Education, and Quest Atlantis from researchers at Indiana University.

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