



Project Proposal:

“Play the News”

Educational Modules

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Project Outline

THE STORY: A NEW CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Imagine a classroom where the students stare intently at an interactive game on their computer screens reading and watching information regarding current events unfolding somewhere in the world. After just a few minutes of playing the teacher asks the class what they chose to do as “X” world leader and why? Everyone raises their hand to tell the teacher their opinion, empowered by their ability to role-play, the first student answering “as X I chose to... because I felt...”. In another classroom a small group of students are sitting around computers debating what “X” world leader should do, heatedly pointing out different perspectives and formulating potential outcomes with little to no previous knowledge of the information before beginning the exercise. Imagine yet another classroom where the teacher leads the class through a game. The teacher then divides the class into small groups based on what they would do as “X” leader to work together to present their argument to the whole class. Finally imagine a teacher asking a class to make sure they play a game for homework and getting 100% participation. The next day, equipped with the student’s responses by looking at one screen of pre-generated data, the teacher is ready to challenge their assumptions.

In each of the above scenarios picture those same students a week later still referencing the interactive experience and as a result putting new information they are learning in perspective of broader issues. All of this is possible right now using the Play the News platform by ImpactGames (see links at the end of this document for reviews quoting just these kinds of scenarios). These examples focus on taking the role of a world leader relative to a current event, but other examples could easily be addressing a historical event, fictional scenario, or a scientific experiment.

IMPACTGAMES OVERVIEW

ImpactGames (ImpactGames.com) is a world-renowned pioneer in creating compelling interactive experiences around current events. Our aim is to partner with and enable organizations to change the way people consume information and understand the world around them. From the award-winning PeaceMaker™ game to the web platform Play the News™, we have created products that change current event consumption from passive reading to active engagement.

ImpactGames’ Play the News platform represents a cutting edge tool for the creation of interactive elements to support the work of teachers on a range of subjects. The tried and true PeaceMaker interface allows the integration of rich contextual information to inform role-playing decision points or factual quiz elements. The existing template is easy to use, very flexible, and has been proven to be versatile enough for the creation of interactives on a range of subject matter as seen on the Play the News demo website (PlayTheNewsGame.com). Please visit the site to experience the type of interactives described in the project overview.

PARTNER NEEDS

ImpactGames is looking for an institution and/or educator who is/are interested in exploring this classroom tool of the future. This partner will be involved in the creation of the modules. They will contribute the content expertise and curriculum requirements for integrating Play the News interactives into a classroom environment. The partner can be interested in one of the Modes described below or in a staged process of working through each of the separate modes.

FUNDING NEEDS

ImpactGames is looking for funds to cover training, teacher involvement, content development, and the technology expenses of undertaking this project. This would include the following:

Training – Overhead expense of training and supporting the teachers in the use of the Platform

Teacher Involvement – Release time or payment for outside of classroom time spent in development of modules, lesson plans, and assessment

Content Development – Expenses of creative team for the creation of the interactive modules

Technology – Expenses of hosting and maintaining technology platform for the delivery of content

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project is to enhance the successful educational experience demonstrated in Peacemaker and Play the News by developing modules that support school curriculum. The interface incorporates gaming elements such as role-playing, decision-making and rich visual elements to enliven content and foster engagement and discussion. The experience as a whole represent an exciting way to increase class participation, to improve engagement in content, to track participation, to assess retention and ultimately improve student achievement. The platform is very intuitive - making use of it in the classroom easily accessible for both teacher and student.

The core of the platform is the use of an engaging inciting incident that highlight a current event flash point, scenario-based decision point, or problem. The interactive elements allow the player to explore contextual information that can range from data points and historical facts to conflicting perspectives on the issues raised or problem proposed. The player is then asked to make a decision either as a player in the scenario or in answer to the question. In addition while the player ponders their decision they can consult a set of advisors who highlight important data or additional issues to consider. Finally, after the decision is made, feedback is provided to the player to analyze the decision and reinforce the learning points. All of this is accomplished in a very limited time frame (5-10 minutes) within a simple and casual experience.

The versatility of the interactives can be applied to even broader content applications in social studies, science, psychology or family life courses or even mathematics. The design of the interactives is intended to teach not just the subject matter being presented but also broader learning goals such as perspective taking, reading comprehension, critical thinking, scientific methodology and much more. The modules are effective as attention grabbers to start conversations about complex issues or as a concluding activity to test the student's ability to apply learning to selected scenarios.

The easy to use editor tool allows for time effective and cost effective creation of content. The platform can be used to (a) create pre-planned curriculum based interactives for broad use, (b) be used by teachers to create interactives on an ongoing basis in support of the teachers' specific class needs, or finally (c) be used by students to create interactives on a subject of their choosing.

The goal of the three modes of creation is to promote:

- Increased engagement in content inside and outside of the classroom
- Increased retention due to the interactive nature and role-playing nature of the experience
- Increased understanding of broader context due to multiple perspectives represented

- Increased ability to articulate in discussion and essays an understanding of complex relationships by referencing the experiences within the modules

PROJECT MODES

Mode 1 Content Modules created in cooperation with Impact Games:

ImpactGames is looking for an educational partner to work together to create a suite of games and corresponding lesson plans. These would be disseminated for use by other teachers in a district or made broadly available over the Internet. The process would entail ImpactGames working with the teacher to choose a subject to incorporate into the interactives. ImpactGames will then work with the teacher to compile the source material that would normally be used in the teaching of this material for incorporation into the interactives. ImpactGames will then lead the development of the interactives to be used in the class. ImpactGames will work with the teacher to brainstorm and understand the best ways in which the interactives could be used to help improve the student experience ultimately leading to a step-by-step lesson plan incorporating the use of the interactives. This development process could be undertaken over the summer with a look to the fall semester for testing and assessing the value of the materials created.

Mode 2 Independent Teacher Generated Modules:

ImpactGames is looking for an educational partner interested in learning how to create modules using our drag and drop interactive publishing platform to use throughout a semester however they see fit. The platform could be used to create homework assignments, quiz materials and supplemental lessons. Much of the value of the platform lies in how easy it is to create the interactives. The teacher or institution would be able to access the platform to create modules for use in the class. Creating interactive modules in response to current event issues can be used to capture student interest, support student discussion and energize participation.

The educational value would be the same as elements of the learning objectives of Mode 1. However, the teacher would have more flexibility. The teacher can develop materials with more immediacy and include current events that correlate with specific content being taught and/or tailored to include specific content or class interests.

Mode 3 Student Generated Modules:

ImpactGames is looking for an educational partner to incorporate the use of our drag and drop interactive publishing platform as a classroom exercise or class project. The teacher would engage the students in playing pre-existing interactive modules and then challenge them to create an interactive on a subject of their choosing. The process of creating an interactive module on the Play the News platform is a great exercise in formulating an argument, researching and understanding the underlying issues, presenting multiple perspectives and considering the outcomes and future implications. The class could then share and post their games for others to play.

SUGGESTED PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES

Mode 1:

ImpactGames will work with x partner (See Partner Need) to identify learning goals and relevant content by reviewing materials including books, content modules and meeting with outside subject matter experts. Together ImpactGames and the partner will develop (x number) interactive modules and corresponding lesson plans.

ImpactGames' server will host (x number) of completed interactive modules for a period of x months to assess interest and impact. Data is to be collected throughout period and compiled at the end to analyze engagement rates and educational objectives met. Pre and Post surveys will be conducted to assess engagement, retention, and impact of the inclusion of the interactives in the course.

Mode 1.b:

The content and lesson plans created in Mode 1 will be made available for a period of (x) to (x) additional school districts for usage and evaluation.

Mode 2:

ImpactGames will work with teachers to educate them on the use of the Play the News platform. The teachers will have access to the platform for a period of (x) to create and publish any number of games. ImpactGames will work with the teachers to set up a website and host the published content for the use of the teacher and class. The teachers will report on the usability and utility of the platform in addition to assessment metrics used in Mode 1 for the content created.

Mode 2.b.:

Teacher created content and lesson plans will be made available for a period of (x) to (x) school districts for usage and evaluation.

Mode 3:

ImpactGames will work with the teachers to create a classroom website for posting student generated games. ImpactGames will train the teachers on how to teach students to use the editor tool and will provide resources about best practices for writing games. The teachers will have full access to Play the News platform for overseeing and publishing student work. The teachers will create lesson-plans for how to teach the use of the Play the News platform for game creation.

Contact Info

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ImpactGames LLC
2004 E. Carson St.
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Reviews, Publicity, and Musings:

PeaceMaker: PeaceMakerGame.com

Chronicle of Higher Education (subscription required):
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i49/49a00703.htm>

Edutopia Magazine:
<http://www.edutopia.org/serious-games-computer-simulations>

Gamasutra:
http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20070131/adams_01.shtml

Peres Center (Distributed 100k Copies in Israel and Palestinian Territories):
<http://www.peres-center.org/SectionProject.asp?cc=01120212>

Other mainstream publicity: There are numerous reviews in publications globally reviewing PeaceMaker that we would be happy to share.

Play The News: PlayTheNewsGame.com

PoynterOnline:
<http://www1.poynter.org/column.asp?id=47&aid=158642>

Teachers discussing use of Play the News:
<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2008/04/11/play-the-news/>

Ranked number one for educational game:
<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2008/07/09/the-best-online-learning-games-2008/>

Teacher resource group posting use of platform for class use:
<http://www.teachersfirst.com/single.cfm?id=9278>

Other mainstream publicity and individual educator blogs available upon request.