

## Cool School - Where Peace Rules

# Human Development Scientists And Computer Game Developers Design Video Game That Teaches Conflict Resolution To Kids

*December 1, 2008* — Human development scientists and computer game developers designed a video game that teaches kids how to resolve conflicts peacefully amongst themselves. Inanimate objects, such as pencils and erasers, come to life to lead players through a series of common scenarios in which arguments are about to occur. The player is prompted for the non-violent solution and is rewarded for choosing correctly.

Amid growing concern surrounding the effects violent video games have on children, a new computer game could be the alternative parents have been waiting for.

Kids who play together also argue together. Fights over games, toys and friendships are common, but when arguments heat up, it's time to solve them before things get out of hand. A new computer game teaches kids how to solve playground and classroom quarrels that kids face every day in a positive way -- without fists and fights.

"It helps them resolve conflicts by giving them a chance to think about what happens in the course of an actual conflict episode," said Melanie Killen, Ph.D., a human development expert at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md.

The game, called "Cool School: Where Peace Rules" -- designed by a team of human development scientists, teachers, government mediators, computer game developers and animators -- helps kids solve school violence and bullying while still having fun.

"You're learning things, but at the same time it's having fun with it," said student Ellen Yaffe.

Animated objects come to life and depict common conflicts. Kids experiment on how to settle each argument. Players have the option of threatening the peer, telling the teacher, forgetting about it or talking things through.

Players are rewarded for choosing positive solutions to resolve conflicts with letters they collect to win.

"What this game is doing is it's empowering children to make choices and decisions and to see what unfolds based on their own decisions," Dr. Killen said.

Parents and teachers praise the new game, and kids love it for their own reasons.

"I think they make it very realistic with like the names and how the school looks," student Jacob Tycko told Ivanhoe.

The best part is the game is totally free. You can download it online by visiting <http://www.curriki.com> and searching for "cool school."

**ABOUT THE GAME:** "Cool School: Where Peace Rules" came about when the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service asked a Human Development professor to help them design a videogame to help five to seven year old children deal with conflicts in a peaceful manner. The project relied on animators to create the visual environments, and for the professor to create scenarios that will help kids learn to resolve problems without resorting to violence. The game uses a wide variety of charactersýfrom erasers to desks to books and basketballsýto lead players through 52 different scenarios. To learn more about the game or to play it go to

([http://www.rtassoc.com/gm\\_coolschool.html](http://www.rtassoc.com/gm_coolschool.html)).

TIPS ON STOPPING BULLIES: This list is adapted from material on the website of the United States Health Resources and Services Administration. <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/>

DO:

- Tell an adult
- Join clubs and groups where you will meet other kids
- Support someone else who is being bullied

DO NOT:

- Think it's your fault.
- Fight back or bully a person back.
- Reply to online bullying

*The American Sociological Association contributed to the information contained in the TV portion of this report.*

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