



NEW 6th-12th GRADE SCHOOL WILL USE GAMES AND GAME DESIGN AS PATHWAYS TO CREATIVITY AND LEARNING

\$1.1M MACARTHUR FOUNDATION GRANT WILL ACCELERATE PACE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION IN NEW YORK CITY AND BEYOND

School to Open Fall 2009 in New York City

Co-Designed by Gamelab Institute of Play in partnership with New Visions for Public Schools

New York, New York — June 21, 2007. New York City will be home to a new 6-12th grade public school that will use game design and game-inspired methods to teach critical 21st century skills and literacies. Opening in fall 2009, the school is being created by the Gamelab Institute of Play, a New York City-based not-for-profit organization that leverages games and play as transformative contexts for learning and creativity, in collaboration with New Visions for Public Schools, a not-for-profit organization that works in partnership with the New York City Department of Education to improve academic achievement in the City's public schools. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today awarded a grant of \$1.1 million to help with planning and development.

Gamelab Institute of Play leverages game design and its associated literacies as a necessary foundation for learning, innovation, and change in the 21st century. By bringing non-traditional audiences of all ages into the innovative space of game production and play their design for the school will explore new ways of thinking, acting, and speaking through playing and making games in a social world. Students call themselves writers, designers, readers, performers, teachers, and students. The Institute calls them *gamers*.

“We are conceiving the school as a dynamic learning system that takes its cues from the way games are designed, shared and played,” said Katie Salen, Executive Director of the Gamelab Institute of Play. “All players in the school – teachers, students, parents and administrators – will be empowered to innovate using 21st century literacies that are native to games and design. This means learning to think about the world as a set of interconnected systems that can be affected or changed through action and choice, the ability to navigate complex information networks, the power to build worlds and tell stories, to see collaboration in competition, and communicate across diverse social spaces. It means that students and teachers will engage in their own learning in powerful ways.”

“This project will reimagine the traditional school from top to bottom, based on research on how students today learn best—and will create a new learning environment that will prepare them for success in college and the 21st century workforce,” said Robert Hughes, president of New Visions for Public Schools.

The project aims to change the way schools think about learning by designing the school from the ground up around the intrinsic qualities of games and game culture. And while parents might be concerned about the amount of screentime or game play an approach such as this might involve, researchers from fields as diverse as the learning sciences, literacy studies, computer science, and anthropology are seeing that games can and do affect how, when, and where kids learn. Results of testing with players of *Quest Atlantis*, a science-oriented game supported by the National Science Foundation and MacArthur, for example, show that students were not simply immersed in the rich context of the game, but were also appreciating how knowledge gained in the game about things like the incubation of living sponges connected to phenomena in the outside world.

Gamelab Institute of Play will lead a two-year school development process that will bring together game design, learning, and literacy experts, educators, students, and parents to design the school’s vision as well as its curricular, assessment, technology and community frameworks. Together, the Institute of Play and New Visions will ground the development of the school within the unique context of New York City, ensuring that the school’s curriculum meets rigorous graduation standards. Students will design games and game-inspired materials, learn about the history and culture of games and play, build communities, and produce knowledge around the materials and relationships that result. Such an approach allows young people to explore the learning space of games and game driven pedagogy and gives them a platform on which to build the technical, technological, artistic, cognitive, social, and linguistic skills they need to graduate from high school prepared for college and the world of work.

The project will also serve as a demonstration site, integrating gaming research developed through MacArthur’s digital media and learning initiative into the development of Regents-based curricular pilots, toolkits to be used by students and teachers to design activities and experiences, and interactive spatial prototypes. The development and planning process will provide a context for synthesizing a body of work around the ways students are learning, making decisions, participating, and creating knowledge. Products created throughout the process will be made available to the larger education reform community for sampling, testing and refinement.

Gamelab Institute of Play promotes *gaming literacy*--the play, analysis, and creation of games--as agents of provocation, education, and change. Through a variety of programs centered on game design, the Institute of Play engages audiences of all ages, leveraging games and play as critical contexts for learning. Through their work the Institute builds new domains of knowledge connected to games, digital media and learning, develops innovative curricula around gaming literacies, fosters new models of collaboration between students, educators, and professional game designers, and provides a shared space for the experimentation and exchange of ideas across creative, technology, and education sectors. More information is available at www.instituteofplay.org.

New Visions for Public Schools, founded in 1989, is the largest education reform organization dedicated to improving the quality of education children receive in New York City's public schools. Working with the public and private sectors, New Visions develops programs and policies to energize teaching and learning and to raise the level of student achievement. Since 2001, New Visions has spearheaded the New Century High Schools Initiative and created 83 new small public high schools, offering students and their families both choice and quality for their high school education.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grant making institution dedicated to helping groups and individuals foster lasting improvement in the human condition. MacArthur's \$50 million digital media and learning initiative aims to help determine how digital technologies are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life. More information is available at www.macfound.org or www.digitallearning.macfound.org.

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