

# 26 Learning Games to Change the World

Website: <http://www.missiontolearn.com/2008/04/learning-games-for-change/>

by Jeff Cobb



The 5th annual Games for Change Festival is coming up soon, and while I don't think it is in the Mission to Learn budget for me to attend, it seems like a good time to poke around and see what sorts of games might be out there that are geared towards teaching people something that will make a difference in the world.

Fair warning, you could easily eat up a big chunk of your day following the links in this post. Buy hey, you'll be helping out the world a bit in the process.

Here's what I found :

## Browser-based and Free

### [Deliver the Net](#)

Deliver the Net "...a cool new game created by the UN Foundation to commemorate World Malaria Day, April 25th. The challenge: race the sun and hand out as many insecticide-treated bed nets as you can to African families. The more nets you deliver – before the mosquitoes come out – the more lives you save. Once you're done playing the game, sign up, confirm your email, and a life-saving bed net will be sent on your behalf!" (Nearly 2 million nets sent as of this posting)

### [Karma Tycoon](#)

Developed by DoSomething.org "rocks the gaming world by offering you a thrilling ride through the world of social entrepreneurship as you earn Karma in virtual communities across the US." Also offers a teachers curriculum

### [Ayiti: The Cost of Life](#)

"What is it like to live in poverty, struggling every day to stay healthy, keep out of debt, and get educated? Find out now in this challenging role playing game created by the High School

students in Global Kids with the game developers at Gamelab, in which you take responsibility for a family of five in rural Haiti.” From UNICEF with Microsoft support.

### **3rd World Farmer**

“3rd World Farmer ... aims at simulating the real-world mechanisms that cause and sustain poverty in 3rd World countries. In the game, the player gets to manage an African farm, and is soon confronted with the often difficult choices that poverty and conflict necessitate. We find this kind of experience efficient at making the issues relevant to people, because players tend to invest their hopes in a game character whose fate depends on him. We aim at making the player “experience” the injustices, rather than being told about them, so as to stimulate a deeper and more personal reflection on the topics.”

### **Free Rice**

An addictive vocabulary game that promises “For each word you get right, we donate 20 grains of rice to the United Nations World Food Program.” More than 29 billion grains donated as of this posting.

### **Go Goat Go**

“Get a goat to help you grow more food! They eat weeds, their milk is magic and plants love their poo...” Just one of a number of games featuring Christian Aid’s Global Gang  
<http://www.globalgang.org/funandgames/games/Default.aspx>

### **Darfur is Dying**

“Darfur is Dying is a viral video game for change that provides a window into the experience of the 2.5 million refugees in the Darfur region of Sudan. Players must keep their refugee camp functioning in the face of possible attack by Janjaweed militias. Players can also learn more about the genocide in Darfur that has taken the lives of 400,000 people, and find ways to get involved to help stop this human rights and humanitarian crisis.” From mtvU in partnership with the Reebok Human Rights Foundation.

### **Whack TB**

“Can you whack TB off the face of the earth? Play our game and learn more about fighting TB!” From the Families USA Global Health Initiative.

### **My U.S. Rep: Role Play Congress**

“Now’s your chance to role play your favorite(or not so) House of Representative and help them become more popular! Based on real voting data, My US Rep allows you to discover your Rep’s hopes and dreams within an engaging game experience. Help your Rep become the most popular, look for bills to vote on, interact with in-game characters, collect cash and buy media time.”

### **elections: Your Adventure in Politics**

“Inspired by the classic board game “The Game of Life,” players will role-play their own virtual candidates running for President. The one or two-player game is both genuinely entertaining and genuinely educational – with emphasis on delivering a fun learning experience. Kids can play with parents, students with teachers, users of all ages with a friend, classmate, or with a computer-generated opponent. The latest edition of eLECTIONS also offers a computer-generated Third Party candidate. Created by the cable industry’s non-profit education foundation, Cable in the Classroom, in partnership with CNN Student News, C-SPAN and HistoryTM. Good teacher resources.”

### **Nuclear Weapons: The Nobel Peace Prize**

“Take on the mission to disarm the world of nuclear weapons with the help of eight “Peace Doves!”” There are also five other educational games at this site.

### **Global Warming Interactive**

“CO2FX is a web based multi-user educational game which explores the relationship of global warming to economic, political and science policy decisions. The game is driven by a systems dynamics model and is presented in a user friendly interface intended for the high school user.” Supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

### **Climate Challenge**

“A game where you are president of the European Nations. You must tackle climate change and stay popular enough with the voters to remain in office.” From the BBC.

### **Wasteland Adventure**

“Time: 3010 AD. After humans destroyed the ecosystem. The earth lost the ability to heal and the environment continues to get worse. The fresh air and clean water are polluted. People have to wear breathing masks lest the toxic air rots their lungs. Human beings encounter a next critical crisis. The son of a scientist, BOBO is very interested in the garbage that has polluted the earth. He collects all kinds of usable garbage to make into his toys. However, BOBO has an evil self. Sometimes he will become lazy. One day BOBO falls asleep in the garbage...”

### **World Without Oil**

“WORLD WITHOUT OIL is an alternate reality event, a serious game for the public good. It invites everyone to help simulate a global oil shock. People participate by contributing original online stories, created as though the oil shock were really happening. The game’s masters rank the participants (“players”) according to their contributions to our realistic portrayal of the oil shock. The game also places value on player-created communities, collaborative stories, and collective efforts.

Each contribution helps the game arrive at a larger truth. No team of experts knows better than a given individual what effect an oil shock would have upon that individual's life, or what action he or she will take to cope. Personal reactions to our simulated oil shock, placed in context with many other points of view, will help us all realize what's at stake in our oil-fired culture."

### **Stop Disasters!**

"The on-line game aims at teaching children how to build safer villages and cities against disasters. Children will learn playing how the location and the construction materials of houses can make a difference when disasters strike and how early warning systems, evacuation plans and education can save lives." From the United Nation/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Multiple languages. Good teacher resources

### **Stop Whaling Game**

"Steer the Greenpeace inflatable boat around the seas and intercept the dangerous harpoons from the whaling ship. To make the whaling ship stop whaling, you must try and get your activists on board the whaling ship. Good luck!" From GreenPEace UK

### **Food Detectives Fight BAC**

"The Food Detectives Fight BAC!® game gives kids a fun way to learn about foodborne illness. More and more, foodborne illness is making news headlines. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), foodborne illnesses in the United States affect millions of people and cause thousands of deaths every year. The CDC says 300,000 people are hospitalized every year." From New Mexico State University.

### **The Incredible Adventures of the Amazing Food Detectives**

"There has been a mysterious outbreak of unhealthy habits hitting too many boys and girls. If we don't solve these cases, and fast, kids might not make the right food and exercise choices as they grow, and that could be trouble! All junior food detectives will get secret training on how to eat right and exercise. You can investigate fun games like Whack A Snack, Soccer, and Zap the TV. Plus you can print out classified clues on ways to be healthy, then share them with your parents, teachers, and pals." From Kaiser Permanente. Good teacher resources.

### **McDonald's Video Game**

"Making money in a corporation like McDonald's is not simple at all! Behind every sandwich there is a complex process you must learn to manage: from the creation of pastures to the slaughter, from the restaurant management to the branding. You'll discover all the dirty secrets that made us one of the biggest compan[ies] of the world." Multiple languages. Offline version available. From La Molle Industria. <http://www.molleindustria.org/>

### **Food Force**

“As team rookie you have six missions to complete. Each mission represents a part of the process of delivering food aid to an area in crisis. The final mission shows you how food aid can help people rebuild their lives in the years following a disaster.” United Nations World Food Programme. Multiple languages. Good teacher resources.

### [Fatworld](#)

FATWORLD is a video game about the politics of nutrition. It explores the relationships between obesity, nutrition, and socioeconomics in the contemporary U.S. The game’s goal is not to tell people what to eat or how to exercise, but to demonstrate the complex, interwoven relationships between nutrition and factors like budgets, the physical world, subsidies, and regulations. Existing approaches to nutrition advocacy fail to communicate the aggregate effect of everyday health practices. It’s one thing to explain that daily exercise and nutrition are important, but people, young and old, have a very hard time wrapping their heads around outcomes five, 10, 50 years away.

### [WolfQuest](#)

“Learn about wolf ecology by living the life of a wild wolf in Yellowstone National Park. Play alone or with friends in on-line multiplayer missions, explore the wilderness, hunt elk, and encounter stranger wolves in your quest to find a mate. Ultimately, your success will depend on forming a family pack, raising pups, and ensuring the survival of your pack.” From the Minnesota Zoo and eduweb under a grant from the National Science Foundation.

### [Harpooned](#)

“Harpooned is a free game for Windows. It is a Cetacean Research Simulator, where you play the role of a Japanese scientist performing research on whales around Antarctica.” See also the YouTube trailer for Harpooned. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR4KN6EfX6M>

### [Re-Mission](#)

The result, a game called Re-Mission (featuring Roxxi, the intrepid nanobot), is a challenging, 3D “shooter” with 20 levels that takes the player on a journey through the body of young patients with different kinds of cancer. Created by leading video game developers and animators in collaboration with scientific and medical consultants and HopeLab staff, this state-of-the-art game is designed to be cool and fun, while helping players to increase their personal knowledge about cancer and improve their confidence in their ability to manage their cancer. Watch the trailer

## **Desktop/Paid**

### [PeaceMaker](#)

“PeaceMaker challenges you to succeed as a leader where others have failed. Experience the joy of bringing peace to the Middle East or the agony of plunging the region into disaster.

PeaceMaker will test your skills, assumptions and prior knowledge. Play it and you will never read the news the same way again.” \$19.95 (Arabic, English, Hebrew)