



NEWS RELEASE

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COMPUTER GAME TO TEACH CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS TO GRADES K-2 OFFERED FREE THROUGH EDUCATIONAL WEB SITE FOR TEACHERS

WASHINGTON, DC – A computer game designed to teach non-violence and conflict resolution skills to young children has found a home with Curriki, a nonprofit open-source educational Web site which will make it freely available for downloading by classrooms and families across the United States and around the world.

The computer game, called *Cool School: Where Peace Rules*, features animated school characters in situations that ask youngsters, ages 5 to 7, to select an action for resolving a potential conflict, such as others crowding in line, refusing to share or treating playmates disrespectfully. The premise of “*Cool School*” is in sharp contrast to violent and often popular commercial games that can inspire youngsters to emulate physically aggressive behavior.

Developed by the U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) in cooperation with child development programs at the University of Maryland, the University of Southern California and the University of North Texas, *Cool School* was tested at school locations in Illinois. It is being made available for free downloading to teachers and families via the Curriki Web site. Curriki is a nonprofit community of nearly 40,000 educators that offers free, open-source curriculum materials to teachers and schools worldwide.

Cool School: Where Peace Rules is an interactive computer game designed to teach children about conflict resolution in a lively, fun, entertaining, and developmentally appropriate context. “I enthusiastically recommend this program for all educators, teachers, counselors, and professionals working with children, because it uniquely enables children to teach themselves and one another about social skills, such as negotiation, compromise, and empathy,” said Professor Melanie Killen, associate director of the Center for Children, Relationships and Culture at the University of Maryland. “This game provides children with a positive alternative to the violent images that pervade the video game world. In contrast, this game teaches social skills, and allows children to learn about foundational social skills in a constructive, socially-positive, school environment.”

Cool School was developed by interactive gaming veteran F.J. Lennon, whose credits in the industry include projects for the Walt Disney Company, Sesame Street, and Mattel. *Cool School* evolved from the technology-based youth initiative program at the FMCS, which was a congressionally funded effort to combat school violence and bullying by teaching conflict resolution skills in at-risk schools.

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The FMCS youth initiative program was inspired by the volunteer work of federal mediators in schools and communities and their successes in teaching dispute resolution skills. At its height, the program operated in 10 cities and used computer technology to facilitate surveys, communication and brainstorming sessions among concerned community organizations and school groups anxious to reduce youth violence.

The computer game *Cool School* was developed in conjunction with the agency's youth initiative and has been praised by the teachers and schools where it has been tested, and also by its young players, who learn how to avoid conflict and to better communicate with classmates.

Cool School is now available for downloading from the Curriki Web site at www.curriki.org.

The U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, created in 1947, is an independent U.S. government agency whose mission is to preserve and promote labor-management peace and cooperation. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with 10 district offices and 69 field offices, the Agency provides mediation and conflict resolution services to industry, government agencies and communities.

About Curriki

Curriki: The Global Education & Learning Community is a nonprofit social entrepreneurship organization dedicated to improving education by empowering teachers, students and parents with universal access to free and open-source curricula. Curriki is building the first and only Internet site that offers a complete course of open-source instruction and assessment for K--12. The organization is creating a world-class educational environment that is community developed and supported. Founded by Sun Microsystems in 2004, Curriki now operates as an independent nonprofit organization. Visit us at www.curriki.org