

The game's the thing: prof catches kids' attention with 'Speare

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Before parents tell their kids to stop playing video games and do their homework, they might want to take a second look at what the youngsters are doing.

A computer game that aims to teach students literacy skills by exposing them to a high-tech version of Shakespeare was officially launched by a University of Guelph English professor on Monday.

'Speare, as Daniel Fischlin's game is called, lures students into learning about Shakespeare by requiring them to build a spaceship, which they then use to collect stolen knowledge — the bard's plays.

Players collect spheres containing bits of knowledge and link them in an attempt to restore peace to the galaxy. They are also fed information about Shakespeare and tested on it during the game. Their scores are tallied based on their performance on the game's literacy component.

"Kids love this game, and when we tested it, we found that literacy scores increased by an amazing 72 per cent after just one hour of game play," Fischlin said in a written statement.

The game, created with the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP), is aimed at students aged 10 to 15.

To complement the game, CASP has also built online learning modules for teachers and parents after soliciting input from school boards. Called the Learning Commons, the online resource and the lesson plans it contains can be used by anyone to employ 'Speare as part of an in-class literacy program.

"Our goal is to have 'Speare on every kid's and parent's desktop in the country," Fischlin said.