

GameSalad Creator In a Pflugerville High School Classroom

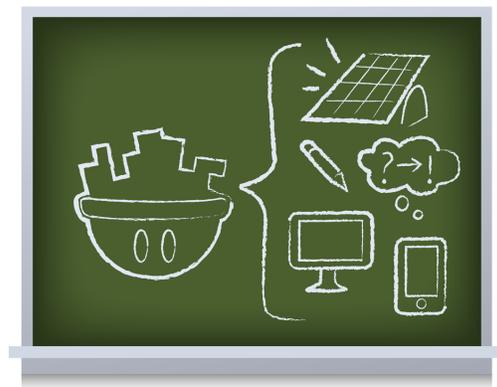
"GameSalad Creator is the fastest and easiest way for my students to design and create their own games in the classroom." - *David Conover*

Since 2011, David Conover has taught the Video Game Design class at Connally High School in Pflugerville, Texas. His students work with the Adobe suite of products, including Photoshop and Flash, and use assets from those programs in GameSalad Creator to produce educational games. David notes, "The great thing about GameSalad is the visual drag and drop approach to coding. We've got this great visual tool that allows students to explore the logic behind the game while they design the game from concept to completion."



Typically, his students form teams of four, and compete with other teams as they design their games. Each student takes on several roles, such as artist, producer, designer, developer, and musician, in order to explore the dynamics that exist at traditional game companies. As David explained, "You'll see students working in clusters, in large groups, in small groups – very much like the real-world environment, but it's done in a high school classroom." This approach often lets students explore multiple roles, as well as learning what it's like to work in a team with a boss.

In addition to working in these key roles, students get hands-on experience outside the classroom. David works closely with local universities and businesses to help his students learn what the real world is like. Typically, he'll pick a theme for the year, and the students create games around that theme. This past year, David chose the theme of solar energy. Students visited local solar panel manufacturers, raced solar-panel cars at the University of Texas, and developed games emphasizing the use of solar energy using GameSalad Creator.



“So my role is not just as a teacher; I wear a couple of hats. I take on the role of being a guide, and allow the students to explore the process of game design. It’s important for me to be able to bring in the community of professionals from the industry, entrepreneurs from the industry, people who are doing game design. I give them the tutorials, but the process isn’t always a straight line; you can come at it from various roles or points of view, and I try to create an environment that allows the students to make these personal connections to the outside world, as well as bring in the outside world and have them sit down with the students and share their wisdom.” – *David Conover*

One of David’s students, Raymond, has taken David’s class multiple times and has become an avid user of GameSalad outside the classroom. Raymond is currently working on multiple games with fellow students. One of his upcoming titles is about the local F1 racetrack that was recently built in Austin, and the other is about health and diet. Various facts about each subject have been integrated into the games to help educate players. He works with a team of other students, and plans to create his own company after graduating from high school to continue making fun and educational applications using GameSalad Creator. Raymond noted, “GameSalad offers a very easy way to do that – not only with the coding sequence, but with getting actors in there, and getting them to interact with each other. Overall GameSalad allows me to quickly make my games.”

