



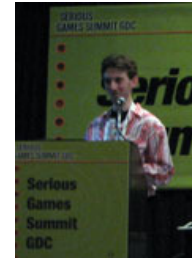
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►GDC: SJ Klein Asks For Serious OLPC Content

What if developers had access to a platform found in classrooms and homes of some two billion children across the globe? Keying the second day of the Serious Games Summit, SJ Klein from One Laptop Per Child explained the philosophy behind, and asked developers to join, the project hoping to accomplish just that.

Klein, who told the audience of his long history dreaming about education and changing learning opportunities that children have, has already been involved in championing new forms of teaching through the Open Education Project and Arsdigita University.

It was from that background that he became director of content for OLPC, the non-profit group launched in 2005 with help from the United Nations that hopes to bring inexpensive and open technology to the some two-billion children in the developing world in the form of a \$100 laptop.



Through the project, Klein said, he hopes to create peer groups for learning and tools to work together in rural communities across many developing nations, some with little to no electricity. By doing so, he hopes to change the way children learn around the world.

The project, he clarified, "has nothing to do with laptops, but laptops are the tool," a platform that lets people create and allows them to add to the existing technology.

"What's wrong with learning today, and why launch OLPC specifically to tackle learning?" Klein asked, saying he believed formal learning was a bit forced, doesn't work as well as it should, and sometimes students who want access can't find what they need to go forward.

He hopes, then, with the OLPC project, to bring back true peer learning, even when two peers aren't within 10 kilometers of each other, and to let kids discover what they want and share things that they make.

To accomplish this, the group has launched the XO-1, the ultra-low-power and low-cost [full specs](#) of which can be found on the project's website, as the first in an expected series of models meant to last 5 to 7 years.

Specifically addressing his audience, Klein said serious games can add serious weight to the project. "Games attract real attention," he noted, and inspire kids to wonder what more they can do. Through the machine, which will be completely open, transparent, and hackable, down to a 'show source' key on its keyboard for any program, Klein is providing what he sees as an outlet for curiosity, and a way for users to create new things.

"Kids without games can certainly learn," confessed Klein, "but the first way children learn is through gaming... by seeing how things work and remaking their world... Let's give them useful worlds to make."

Current game projects underway for the system include a version of *Tetris* by its co-creator, Vadim Gerasimov, and the group is also working with Don Hopkins, Chuck Norman and Will Wright to get *SimCity* released as open source to be included on the machine.

But more than that, Klein said, the project is looking for tools for re-creation. "Existing games are nice, and cute," but games for things like learning language are the "gem they're targeting."

Most importantly, Klein said in a direct plea to the serious game developers in front of him, the project needed frameworks and scripting environments -- tools with which children themselves could create their own content.

Currently, Python offshoot PyGame is modifying its code to work with the OLPC's stack, but right now, according to Klein, there are no game developers working on any dedicated projects apart from ports.

Klein's session for the game developer community at large will follow tomorrow, but he encouraged interested framework, scripting, and serious game studios to contact the project's [developer's program](#).

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