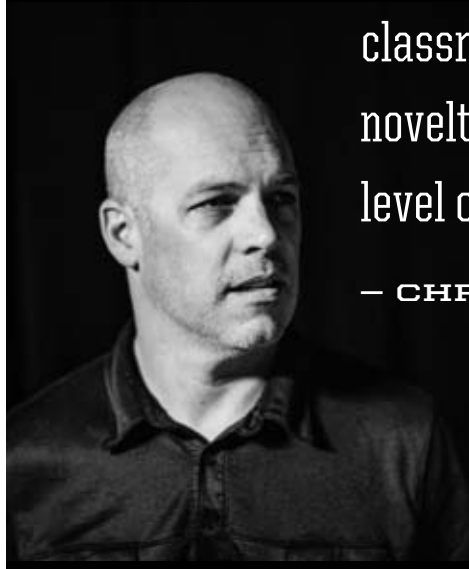


‘There’s a novelty in engaging students through technology,. When I’m observing groups of students and we hand out the iPads or give them access to a computer lab, the kids are excited – they’re excited in the classroom, too, but it brings a sense of novelty and allows them to attain a different level of engagement through instruction.’

— CHRIS DOABLER



PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

“There’s a novelty in engaging students through technology,” Doabler says. “When I’m observing groups of students and we hand out the iPads or give them access to a computer lab, the kids are excited — they’re excited in the classroom, too, but it brings a sense of novelty and allows them to attain a different level of engagement through instruction.”

In Doabler’s project, teachers and students can use iPads or other platforms to visually represent key math concepts — say, sorting and counting objects by color — and reinforce foundational skills, using technology to enhance, rather than replace, the role of the teacher.

“Children these days are involved in more technology than any other generation,” Doabler says. “It’s part of their everyday lives. That’s something we’ve tried to exploit within our work.”

Hank Fien, director of CTL, works on a project called NumberShire, a research-backed video game that Fien and his colleagues continue to test in schools around the country. The game uses storytelling and woodland creatures to accelerate learning in math.

Fien says that, as a whole, the education gaming industry needs more rigor and evidence-based

methodology to show which games help students learn and which don’t.

“From my perspective, the education gaming space is very noisy,” Fien says. “If we, as a field, can really pay attention to efficacy, that could be a signal in the noise, and if we can demonstrate that well-designed games can improve learning, which requires patience and hard work, the promise of ed tech and gaming could be realized.”

Both Brown and Doabler see a future that includes more technology in the classroom, but they agree that like everything in education, it will move slowly, and however it manifests, it should supplement, not replace, the role of a teacher in math instruction.

“Game design is a medium,” Brown says. “It’s a way of expressing things and, if used correctly, it can be super powerful.”

But, he continues, “we don’t want parents to think that teachers are no longer valuable. It’s a teacher’s tool, and I think if we lose sight of that and think games will solve everything, we’ve missed the mark.” ■

Learn more about Doabler and Fien’s work at ctl.uoregon.edu. Visit kickstarter.com/projects/oreganik/chess-heroes to check out Brown’s Kickstarter project, which ends Oct. 1.

TED BROWN RECENTLY LAUNCHED A KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$20,000 FOR THE GAME. IF HE MEETS HIS GOAL BY OCT. 1, HE SAYS HE PLANS TO OFFER THE GAME TO SCHOOLS FOR FREE THROUGH STEAM, A GAME-DOWNLOADING PLATFORM.







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