



## Educator Musing: McGraw-Hill and 360Ed Partnered To Create A Spark

- Posted by [Carlos Mendoza](#) on June 30, 2011 at 10:44pm
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*“Today’s world is very different from the world baby boomers like me grew up in. Is it a wonder, then, that by high school, very often both good students and bad ones, rich ones and poor ones, don’t much like school?”*

*James Paul Gee – Author of What Video Games Have To Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*

*“Research and experience have already shown that games can be applied very effectively in many learning contexts, and that games can engage learners in ways other tools and approaches cannot.”*

*[2011 Horizon Report](#)*

[McGraw-Hill Education](#) announced that [Spark](#) would launch in August for high school biology and Algebra I, with more math and science courses to follow. This was their most exciting announcement during [ISTE Conference 2011](#). Spark is a cross-platform compatibility software that uses the power of social networking, educational games, and mobility to engage students in learning content and developing critical thinking skills. Spark is a suite of online courses that provides access to McGraw-Hill content in a compelling and connected framework. It may be the best example of what online 21<sup>st</sup> century education is supposed to be about.

McGraw-Hill Education is a leading provider of educational materials. They provide print and online solutions for schools - think standardized tests, textbooks, and online assessments.

McGraw-Hill Education chose to make the announcement in Philadelphia at the [International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\) Conference 2011](#). ISTE’s annual conference and exposition is the source of excitement for education technology professionals each year. The exposition consists of 500 global educational technology companies and organizations demonstrating their products and services to improve learning and teaching. Think of it as the Comic Con or E3 Expo of educational techies. I wish that I were there.

McGraw-Hill Education partnered with [360Ed](#) to create Spark. 360Ed is famous for partnering with Florida Virtual School to create the first online video game (Conspiracy Code) that students may play to honestly and officially receive high school American History credits. The sequel, Conspiracy Code: Mindbender is a full high school course for intensive reading.

In both Conspiracy Code and Conspiracy Code: Mindbender, students play the role of teenage secret agents Eddie Flash and Libby Whitetree on a mission to save the world from Conspiracy Inc., a powerful secret organization. Students use avatars to follow clues and complete missions. The SiTi learning management platform keep track of their progress and provide a host of social networking communication tools for teacher and students to communicate. It's reported to be fun with learning all the way.

360ED updated their next-generation learning management platform, SiTi, to better facilitate collaborative online education. SiTi provides the framework for any online course and is capable of delivering media-rich content with social networking and other interactive features. Students collaborate using chat, wall posts, messages, and announcements in a safe secure learning social network.

Spark, much like Conspiracy Code, has advanced achievement and avatar customization systems that allow students to personalize their online experience and reward their achievements – like a video game.

[Lee Sheldon](#), University of Indiana at Bloomington assistant professor, set the blogosphere on fire March of 2010 by replacing the use of grades with experience points for his Telecommunication Department game design courses. He also repurposed assignments as quests, exams as fighting monsters, and writing papers as crafting.

Online Game-based education is changing the face of education.

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Thanks!