

By: Robin Oja Games Editor

## [Environmental Learning MMO Launched by IBM](#)

*PowerUp, the game that encourages youngsters to save the planet*

I am always really glad to see, when I hear about the development of a game, that it only wants to [educate the youth](#) and goes beyond what the market really wants: blood, violence and nudity. Unfortunately, this kind of games (the learning ones) are bound to live a short life and few really manage to reach their target. But, since the [MMO](#) games are enjoyed by youngsters, as well as adults worldwide, they might be the answer. And that is exactly what IBM is trying to do - take advantage of vast online worlds, bring together thousands of players and teach them a thing or two. Basically, this game, titled PowerUp, is an environmental learning MMO for kids that challenges its players to save a fictional (but not so unreal) planet from an ecological disaster. The game features three missions for solar, water and wind power that must be solved, either by players alone or in groups, before various environmental crises destroy the planet. And this might be the key of success: multiple players working together. And don't think that PowerUp has some hidden "goals": it is free to play and it was not done just to make it possible for IBM to say "We care!" No, it was a game that took 16 months to be developed and it took into consideration the opinions of 200 teens in the Connecticut Innovation Academy. So the game is really developed by IBM to support educators in engaging children on environmental issues. IBM international foundation president, Stanley S. Litow, said: "Innovation is the key to competitiveness in today's globally integrated economy, but just when we need it to skyrocket, interest in math and science has been declining in the United States. American competitiveness demands more interest in math and science by students. Virtual worlds and 3D are an unexplored resource in education. We asked our best researchers to incorporate the use of this technology into traditional educational curriculum." The game will be accompanied by classroom lesson plans associated with the topics presented in the online experience and the interaction between players is limited to phrase-based avatar chat, to ensure safety.