

## Web watch

### TEACHING ON THE ATTACK

On 22 May 2008, the [Federation of American Scientists](#) (FAS), in collaboration with Brown University, the University of Southern California and Escape Hatch Entertainment, launched [Immune Attack](#), a three-dimensional computer game that aims to teach senior-level high-school and first-year university students about the inner workings of the body's immune and circulatory systems.

The challenge of the game player is to tackle a unique immunodeficiency in which the immune system is present but not functional. The player must therefore navigate a nanobot through blood vessels and connective tissue to re-train macrophages and neutrophils how to respond to a bacterial infection. The game is free to download, and the website also provides an encyclopaedia of immunological facts, a lesson plan, multiple-choice questions for students, and alignment with United States and international curriculums.

The game has so far been tested in 14 high schools across the United States, and the reaction from teachers has been positive. According to Michelle Lucey-Roper, director of the Learning Technologies Program at FAS, "The challenges in Immune Attack give those who might not otherwise be interested in biology the chance to learn in a fun, hands-on manner". However, others have voiced concern that relying too much on video games as a teaching method will leave students ill-prepared for higher education, where reading textbooks is still of most importance ([ABC News](#), 13 June 2008).

Nevertheless, FAS president Henry Kelly thinks video games have enormous potential: "The minute you get swept up in the thing, you sort of forget that you hate science." ([ABC News](#)). The FAS has been working on the concept of using video games in the classroom for the past 7 years and hopes to convince the federal government to allocate resources to this field of research.

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