Afternoons with Alice

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Abstract

The University of North Dakota Computer Science Department, working in conjunction with the Grand Forks Public Schools After School Program, has created a trial program introducing Alice into their elementary school after school program. While the after school programs work with K-5 students, the focus of our research is to work primarily with students in grades 3-5.

The after-school programs are well staffed. Each school has at least one certified elementary teacher and enough college students to ensure a 15-1 student-to-faculty ratio. Regardless of the number of the faculty, there will generally be a lack of educators knowledgeable in the use of Alice. To address this problem, tutorial materials have been developed to assist both the faculty and the students in the development process of creating virtual worlds.

The tutorials are designed to help students through every step of the process: starting Alice, loading and saving worlds, basic functionality using the primitive methods, creating methods, among other topics. The tutorials have been created such that a minimal amount of interaction with the faculty is required for the student to successfully create their projects. The tutorials have been designed to be used by everyone, from the novice to the experienced student.

The presentation will describe our process for introducing the students to Alice. We will show what worked, what didn’t work, how we plan to improve our successes and how we will attempt to correct the areas that need improvement.