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Elementary and U of L students combine forces to design educational apps

Media are invited to attend a beta test session at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, June 12 at Coalbanks Elementary School

Developing a mobile app that's educational, fun and free of ads is the goal of a unique collaboration between the Faculty of Education and the Department of New Media at the University of Lethbridge.

Ryan Harper-Brown, a New Media instructor, and Dr. Marlo Steed, an education professor with expertise in educational technology, have created a course that brings students from both disciplines together with elementary school children to develop educational applications on mobile devices.

The U of L students connected with Dr. Gerald Probe, Mike Mountain Horse and Coalbanks Elementary schools to talk to Grade 4 and 5 students about the kind of apps that appeal to them.

"Our students came back and took those ideas and narrowed the focus to a particular subject and started to develop a plan," says Steed.

One group is working on an app where users go back in time to learn about the fur trade and another group is looking at a specific location through different periods of time. The third group developed a storyline where teachers get trapped inside textbooks and can only be freed when the user correctly solves problems or answers questions.

The collaboration has given the U of L students the chance to learn new skills, both inside and outside their own discipline.

"New Media students have gotten a taste of learning how to develop a piece of software or tool for a totally different user group," says Harper-Brown. "They're developing something for young learners so they have to understand how they learn and observe how these children

respond and interact with the app. They also have to pay attention to make sure that the story is clear and curriculum objectives are met.”

“Education students are learning about design, how students engage with digital programs and the importance of storytelling in curriculum,” says Steed. “If you’re designing an instructional activity that you want to be engaging, some of these same principles apply.”

Media are invited to attend the final classroom visit where U of L students will be testing the trapped-teachers app with the Grade 4 and 5 students on **Tuesday, June 12** at **9 a.m.** at **Coalbanks Elementary School** located at **249 Coalbanks Blvd. W.**

This news release can be found online at [educational apps](#).

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