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### **LEARNING GAMES NETWORK LAUNCHES *QUANDARY* TO DEVELOP ETHICAL THINKING THROUGH PLAY**

*Free, online game poses challenging dilemmas as players shape the future of a new civilization*

**5 September 2012, Cambridge, MA** — The Learning Games Network, a non-profit spin-off of the MIT Education Arcade and the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Games+Learning+Society Program, today launched *Quandary*, a unique game that encourages players to think ethically as they lead a human colony struggling for survival on fictional planet Braxos. The game's goal is to provide an engaging experience for players aged 8-14 to strengthen foundational skills that help them recognize ethical issues and deal with ethical situations in their own lives.

"We aimed to achieve something unique with *Quandary*," said Scot Osterweil, Creative Director of the Learning Games Network. "Although many games have design elements that engage players in critical thinking, perspective-taking and decision-making, we've purposefully developed *Quandary*, in both its design and content, to directly address these essential competencies."

*Quandary*'s captivating graphic novel style invokes a world where pre-industrial technology meets fantastical science fiction as human colonists attempt to build a viable outpost on a distant planet. Faced with a series of age-appropriate ethical dilemmas, players must make difficult decisions in which there are no clear right or wrong answers but important consequences – to themselves, to others in the colony and to the planet Braxos. In one instance, players must deal with a dangerous predator that is both helpful and harmful to the new colony, while in another they must tackle the formation of cliques in the society. *Quandary* provides a framework for how to approach ethical decision-making without telling players what to think.

"*Quandary* aims to help children develop their moral compass," said Marina Bers, Associate Professor at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University. "It engages kids in ethical thinking and prepares them for playing positive future roles in society."

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Quandary was developed by a team of experts across the fields of child development, social and emotional learning, moral development and game design. Scholars from Harvard and Tufts University devised a prototype that was tested for viability. Designers at the MIT Education Arcade and the Learning Games Network refined the game, which was produced by FableVision, an award-winning storytelling, digital media production, and learning company.

Scenarios, game mechanics and usability were tested through extensive prototyping and play testing to ensure age-appropriate content and game play. The result is an engaging and challenging experience that expands the usual closed moral narrative choices offered in many games.

“Now more than ever, teens and pre-teens need help to recognize ethical issues and to handle the complicated ethical situations they encounter in their day-to-day lives,” said Shelly London, a retired corporate executive who conceived the idea of an ethics game while a fellow in the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative, a program for senior leaders who want to move from their primary career to a life of service. “Gaming has great potential to enable young people to actively experience ethical dilemmas, to make decisions and to see the immediate consequences of their actions.”

Quandary is free, online and accessible to all, but specifically aimed at 8-14 year olds both in and out of the classroom. The game website supports players, parents and teachers with online forums, guides and discussion ideas.

Play the game, watch the trailer, and access the support site at: [www.quandarygame.org](http://www.quandarygame.org)

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**Learning Games Network**

*The Learning Games Network, a non-profit spin-off of the MIT Education Arcade and the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Games+Learning+Society Program with studios in Cambridge, MA and Madison, WI, bridges the gap between research and practice in game-based education and is committed to the development and distribution of games informed by research in the learning sciences, creative design, and technical innovation. For more information visit: <http://www.learninggamesnetwork.org>.*