While being encouraged to play computer games during the school day does not seem productive and beneficial to learning, *Spent* is a productive use of time and tremendously educational to students.

As assistant principal at West Middle School, it has been brought to my attention that an 8th grade Social Studies teacher has encouraged and assigned class time to her students to play *Spent*.I have been made aware that parents do not agree with playing a video game during class. With that being said, I have taken the time to play *Spent* to find out exactly what it is that is so appealing to teachers.

*Spent* is an online game that can be found at playspent.org. The game is sponsored by Urban Ministries of Durham whose task is to help neighbors in need of clothing, food, and shelter. *Spent* is an interactive game about enduring what it is like to be a low-income worker as a single parent. Players are each given $1000 to live off of for a full month and the goal is to make it to the end of the month with money left over. Each day, they are faced with a challenging decision. Players must choose between predicaments such as paying for a $350 flight to attend a close family members funeral, taking time off work to drive to the funeral, or skipping the funeral for a day of work’s pay. The game comes to an end either when players run out of any money that they had for the month or when players have remaining money but must pay rent the next day, which will leave them with no money.

I have found the game to be a beneficial resource for students. However, I fully understand parental concerns. According to Wecker (2012), “there is a range of benefits of using serious games in the classroom. Interactive games that teach urban politics allow students to interact with a real life environment without ‘screwing the real world up’” (p. 2). This is exactly what *Spent* demonstrates. Although students in 8th grade do not have to worry about being homeless, paying rent, or taking care of children, it is only an interactive game that allows them to create a virtual environment for themselves.

Squire (2005) found that “the important question is not whether educators can use games to support learning, but how games can be used most effectively as educational tools” (p. 2). This statement coincides with the game that is being played in the 8th grade Social Studies classroom. The use of different learning styles is strongly encouraged and playing an interactive game where students are required to put themselves into the shoes of others and make real-life decisions is a great way to express a logical learning style. According to Squire (2005), games in the classroom increase motivation. *Spent* is a game where students are learning in an entertaining way.

In conclusion, I surmise that playing *Spent* in the classroom is valuable for the students. Time during the school day is not going to waste, and it is not a sign of unproductivity. With approval, teachers will continue to be allowed to condone educational interactive computer games.

Wecker, M. (April 9, 2012). College Students Find ‘Serious’ Video Games Educational, Fun. *US News.*

Squire, K. (August/September 2005). Changing the Game: What Happens When Video Games Enter the Classroom? *Innovate Journal of Online Education, Volume 1, Issue 6,* 135-140.