

Chapter 17

Video Games in the Classroom: A Success or Game Over?

Anabel Vallejo
School Teacher, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mrs. Long's integration of video games in the classroom is a work in progress. She has observed how video games are a great way to motivate and engage students. On the other hand, she has observed how video games can lead to behavior and academic problems.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As we look around classrooms, it is impossible not to notice the effect technology is having in education. A typical classroom no longer consists of desks in rows and a chalkboard in the front. Movies are no longer shown using filmstrips. Cassette tapes and floppy disks are a thing of the past. The Net Generation grows up with modern videos, games, animations, music, and so much more virtual interactions than we previously imagined. The increase of the presence of technology in the classroom challenges teachers to rethink how they plan lessons and the techniques to use to optimize learning for the maximum number of students in the shortest possible time.

Like other abuses of technology among tweens that have been the subjects of frequent media attention, computer game playing among tweens has also become

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a controversy due to the depiction of graphic violence, sexual themes, profanity, and drugs in some games. Criticisms also include “excessive Internet use linked to depression”, “game addiction similar to drug addiction”, “increased the risk of attention problems”, and “risk of attention problems in children and young adults”. “Video game censorship” is a controversial subject. Proponents and opponents of censorship are often very passionate about their individual views. Does it sound right to modify students’ computer game playing behaviors with more computer games?

If you think stand-alone video games such as DS and Game Cube are high-tech, wait until you hear about the latest Internet-enabled version. In the next 10 years, camera-based technology and tracking are going to bring in even more evolutions in electronic gaming. Some game designers coined the term “Gamepocalypse” to indicate the moment when every moment of life is actually a game.

Educators explained that the faster-paced shows increased the risk of attention problems because when playing computer games, students prime the mind to accept that pace. Real life or class work does not happen fast enough to keep attention.

Despite criticisms, why do sixty-three percent of parents still believe games are a positive part of their children’s lives?

THE CASE

Mrs. Long is a third grade teacher. Her classroom contains five student computers, a document camera, projector, telephone, CD player and Internet access. The majority of her lessons contain some type of technology component; for example, a video, an electronic presentation, a website, or an online game.

One component of technology that has begun to integrate into her lessons is video games. For years, video games have targeted children. Children enjoy the constant challenge of the game and the sensation of victory after succeeding at a challenge. Since video games are so popular outside the classroom, Mrs. Long thinks that maybe it is time to seek the potential benefits they may offer *inside* the classroom. Video games are able to motivate and engage some students in a way that a teacher may never be able to accomplish. Video games are able to present information in a variety of ways that suits the need of different types of learners by using animation, graphics, sound effects, and the high level of engagement provided therein. Video games allow students to create and progress at their own pace. They provide a controlled learning environment where children can learn through making mistakes. With video games providing so many learning benefits for children, wouldn’t it be a disservice to our students to ban them from the classroom?

Brad is nine years old and in Mrs. Long’s third grade classroom. He has been retained once and maintains a C average in Mathematics class. He has a lot of

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