

10 Ways to Use Gamification in the Classroom

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Whether it's Fortnite, Minecraft or the Super Mario Brothers, as a teacher you probably have noticed that your students love video games! With the wide range of ways to play from consoles to the computer, more boys and girls than ever before are joining today's gaming culture. By transforming your course and making it more like the games they love, student engagement can soar to new heights. Let's take an in-depth look at the role of gamification in the classroom and discover exciting new ways to gamify your daily routine!



What is Gamification?

You might be wondering how to convert your class into a video game, and perhaps that sounds a bit unrealistic. Rather, the definition of gamification refers to the process of integrating the mechanics of gaming into your routines and lesson plans. In the end,

your course doesn't turn into a game, but teachers can use certain attributes like point systems and badges to create healthy competition.

Believe it or not, gaming elements exist everywhere in society. For instance, drug stores, department stores, and fast food sandwich shops often have point systems that award a free meal or bonus money upon the completion of a goal. Usually this means spending some amount of money to earn a reward. This in turn increases motivation to keep spending just to earn points or rewards!

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Companies using these methods are striving to build a loyal customer base, while increasing revenue and profits. Since these concepts have been around for a while, companies understand the effectiveness of points and rewards! Because these strategies work so well, it can be an invaluable tool in education, especially considering the challenges teachers have today with classroom management and engagement.

So how might an educator go about gamifying their classroom? It's important to take a look at specific goals before employing strategies.

Goals of Gamification in Education

The obvious goal in any teacher's room would be to increase student buy-in and motivation to learn, as well as increasing retention. Many students struggle with a wide range of issues including learning disabilities, and developmental delays. Some kids come to school daily after facing a multitude of hardships at home.



Gamification techniques could then be used as a means of intervention in the following 3 basic areas:

Cognitive

Video games require quite a bit of complex problem-solving skills. Even basic arcade games found on smartphones require the player to think deeply about strategies to advance to the next round. In doing this, users try out a variety of ideas, eventually figuring out which work. This type of experimentation is exactly what a teacher wants students to utilize when problem-solving during lessons.

Furthermore, gamification strategies reward the process by advancing players level or giving awards like badges, points, or sometimes bonus in-app items that can be used in future levels. This increases motivation while keeping the user engaged. Transfer this to the classroom, and any educator can see how gamifying their lesson plans can translate into a huge boost in cognitive skills!

Social

As all educators know, kids come in all shapes, and sizes, and that includes those who are especially shy or introverted. Some students struggle with class discussion or activities, but gaming could help these children come out of their shells!

Video games require players to assume new roles given different scenarios. This asks the users to see a conflict from another's point of view and make quick decisions. Because an individual can detach from themselves while absorbed in the world of a game, shy players often become leaders. This element could vastly improve achievement when students who struggle with confidence in school are suddenly participating with vigor!

Emotional

When someone plays video games, they experience a vast array of emotions from excitement to disappointment. Most importantly, nearly every player experiences frustration stemming from failure. Play any game, and you might notice that your character can die repeatedly! While these instances vary, most allow users so many lives or tries until resetting the game to a previous level. This can get annoying, but it keeps the stakes relatively low, motivating users to try again.

When used in the classroom, gamification can significantly improve motivation by likewise keeping the stakes of failure low. This allows students to take educational risks without ruining self-esteem or confidence, motivating children to persevere.

Engaging Ways to Gamify Your Classroom



Students as Co-Designers

Classroom examples of gamification include allowing the players a voice! After presenting the syllabus or reviewing classroom procedures, work together with your class to create an agreed-upon set of goals, while allowing students to feel that they have a choice in class design.

Give second chances. And third, and fourth...

Video games allow players limitless attempts. Even after a character uses all the health or amount of lives given to the player, the game may reset, and users can just play again. Of course, this isn't to say that teachers must give countless attempts, but allowing students ample opportunity to fail knowing that they can try again and succeed is powerful encouragement.

Instant feedback is necessary and not impossible

All educators know the importance of timely feedback, and you may be wondering how it can be instant! Video games offer immediate results, and a teacher can too! Utilizing blended learning strategies like online polls, quizzes and discussions, students can receive ample and instant feedback from both peers and instructors.

Make assignments into a quest or mission

Kids need a purpose and classwork should be meaningful for them. Renew their purpose for completing specific tasks by reframing your assignments into missions, much like a game. To do this, forget about assigning singular tasks, and create a grouping of assignments that advances for each task that is completed. One way to incorporate this idea is to use rotation stations, moving kids from one center to the next to complete an overall lesson objective or goal.

Progress must be visible

Most gamers are aware of point bars, health gauges or a rewards system. Try to create such a tool for your classroom, which can be as simple as a progress meter on the whiteboard! Whatever method you use to monitor student's goals, make sure that all have access to it.

Offer rewards

This is self-explanatory, but offer age appropriate bonuses like stickers, badges, or a trip to the class treasure chest.

Use an achievement management system

Go beyond merely offering rewards and improve classroom comradeship by giving the whole class a reward when an individual or small group achieves a predetermined level of points. Some other examples include implementing "power ups" or other class-wide awards.

Utilize educational technology

Your school might have contracted with a learning management company like Blackboard, Schoology, or Google Classroom. Use those programs to your full advantage, and even if your district or campus has not jumped on board the blended learning bandwagon, make full use of free-to-use technology like Class Dojo, Flipgrid, Padlet, NoRedInk, and more!

Students should have a voice

Just like it's important to offer timely feedback for students, give your kids a way to offer you feedback as well! The gamification of learning means that the game developer (the teacher) should know how to tweak the program. Create a system that allows students a voice. As children earn points, badges, and rewards, monitor how it's going with the input of your players.

Embrace failure

As mentioned above, one major advantage of gamification is the ability to forge resilient learners through experimentation without the risk of high stakes failure.

Depending on resources available to you on your campus, gamification might not be wholly possible. However, it's always easy to incorporate some of the above ideas to make your lessons and routines more like the games your students know and love. As you do so, you'll notice a considerable boost in effort and achievement as your kids become more engaged than ever before!

