Learning Through Play, the Old School Way

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In Fall 2013 the author created a game to help students learn about information ethics based on the board game Candy Land. The topics of the game were simple. It provided immediate feedback, was fast-paced, competitive and encouraged discussion. Elements of humor and sarcasm were included in scenarios and answers to keep students engaged and amused.

Case Study: Background

Old Dominion University (ODU) is a mid-size university, enrolling just under 25,000 students. As part of the general education requirements for all undergraduates, ODU students are required to take an information literacy course. The information literacy courses are designed and offered by individual colleges. The Department of STEM & Professional Studies within the College of Education offers multiple sections of STEM 251G (Computer Literacy: Communication & Information) to fulfill the requirement, and the Education Reference Librarian assists with the class.

The Library component of the STEM 251G class includes two library instruction sessions for each section, one addressing information retrieval and research evaluation and the other addressing information ethics.

The Pilot
During the Fall of 2013 students were given extra credit for attendance at the information ethics workshops. Five sections of STEM251G classes. The workshop was offered twice, on two different times and days. Three to seven students attended the two sessions. Students played in groups of four or five.

The author observed that students were very willing to discuss the scenarios with their group members and were passionate about sharing their thoughts. Students were engaged in the game, asking questions about specific scenarios and expressing negative at some of the answers.

The Second Episode
During the Spring of 2014, instructors required students in the five sections of the course to come in the information ethics workshop. A total of 101 students attended. The format of the game remained the same with some slight tweaking to specific questions and scenarios. Assessment was done by informal observation and by asking students to write down one thing they learned about information ethics to be turned in at the end of class. The author observed that students were willing to talk openly about the points. The immediate feedback provided throughout the game encouraged the students to engage in conversation with the librarian and with each other.

It’s Really Nothing New

Games hold much promise for reaching students how to conduct library research and develop info skills.

- Education have been using games in the classroom for years, as many elements of gamification are based on well-established research in educational psychology.
- In early grades, teachers use games to teach numbers, multiplication, colors, patterns and more (Eisenberg, 2006).
- Librarians have been using elements of gamification in training for centuries (Kapp, 2012).

The pedagogy of Games

Smith (2007) created a two-week environmental puzzle about Beowulf. Smith (2007) added a ‘Bird Tae’ to the game. Libraries at the University of Michigan redesigned the game to ensure that students play with a student initiated approach (Ad年初, 2010). For example, they gave students a copy of the beginning of class and had them write down questions about the topic. At the end of class, students were asked to answer the questions.

Time For Games!

Games don’t have to take up a lot of time. Incorporating a short activity into a multimedia lecture can help to keep students engaged.

- Requiring students to physically take a game test to address different learning styles and retain attention

How Did Students Learn?

- How to cite class notes
- Books of paper
- Necessity of citation
- Copyright
- Ask questions about specific scenarios
- Librarians have been using elements of gamification in training for centuries

What Did Students Think?

- Filled the game format, it made it more innovative and encouraged social interaction. I like my group mates.
- It is more fun to learn while playing. While I like it, even though some might think it’s childish.
- The game was a creative way to get the information in an effective, while keeping everyone’s attention.
- I thought the game format was very effective.
- Games taught better in regards to interaction but made me feel like a participation.
- More interesting than sitting through a lecture or slide show.
- I thought it made it more fun and made everyone be involved and interactive. I liked it.
- Definitely thought this was a good way to do this. It was a good reminder of what is right and wrong.
- I liked the game.
- It was a fun way to learn and interact with other classmates.
- I liked the game. It made learning fun and you can also collaborate with other people in your group.

How Did We Compare? We Don’t!

- Many students don’t have the time, skills or resources to create digital games that can compete with the games that Millennials play in their everyday lives. Non digital games are more accessible, are easier to implement and self address most of the learning qualities of Millennials.

- Millennials are used to playing highly visual, technological games created by corporations. (Burke, Glen & Hudd, 2011).