

TO: John Doe, Principal

FROM: Jaime Adams, Technology Advisor

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SUBJECT: Gamification in our School

Recently there has been great concern about the gamification of learning. Educators worry that games distract from learning rather than adding to it, and “teachers still find it difficult to integrate this approach and tools in their current teaching practice” (Martinez, 2013, p. 1). While the causes for concern are numerous, Johnson writes that “gamification has been an integral part of the consumer experience for some time now; companies have incentivized their loyal customer base for decades with frequent flyer-style programs and other cumulative reward systems” (Johnson, p. 38). However, there is growing concern as to how this gamification will fit into the education system. Will these games become the distraction so many teachers fear? Will teachers be given the tools they need to build games into their lesson plans? As the NMC Horizon Report (2014) points out, gamification is a growing educational form that will only continue to gain momentum as Generation Y enters the workforce. Whether we agree with the gamification of learning or not, this form of learning is here and we need to know how to use it effectively.

Johnson further points out that “gamified learning environments in practice can motivate learners to engage with subjects in an emotionally stimulating way” (Johnson, 2014, p. 39). Students are learning math, science, reading, writing, and so much more through games that they would play in their free time anyway. In addition, “video games teach critical thinking, problem solving skills, and perseverance while building metacognitive skills” (Shapiro, 2014, p. 1). Why not try to meet students in their virtual world rather than try to force them into an environment they are unfamiliar with then expect them to learn there? To me, it only makes sense to adopt some sort of gamification program so that we “can stimulate large gains in engagement, productivity, creativity, and authentic learning” (NMC, 2014, p. 38).

So how do we produce an effective gamified environment? Since we have only a few teachers that are interested in using technology in the classrooms, I suggest that we start with this small group in order to ensure adoption success. For the first section of teachers, we must ensure that they are able to be successful with learning how to use games appropriately within the classroom. As Martinez (2013) advocated, students need to understand the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, and trialability of each game they are presented with (Martinez, p. 5). By giving the teachers training in each of these areas with each of the games provided, they will begin to be able to incorporate more and more games into their lesson planning.

After the core group of teachers have been able to integrate games into their lessons, I propose that we use these teachers as mentors for the other teachers within the school. Adoption will only happen if teachers are seeing positive results. This means that we will need to track the progress of our initial groups of teachers in order to provide facts and figures to the larger audience. Further, I propose that the mentor teachers use staff meetings to perform model lessons in order to engage the entire staff. I believe that through this slow growth process and mentoring, our school will be able to seize “the potential for game mechanics to transform the daily workflow into a rewarding, fun, and memorable experience” (Johnson, p. 38).

## References

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