The Game School: Developing Theories and Practices Around Gaming Literacies

Alice Robison
Massachusetts Institute of Technology & The Game School
alicerobison.org

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Follow theory-builders of 1st generation.

Are gathering evidence, collecting data using sociological and anthropological methods.

Take as their goal to “provide information about the epistemology, practices and interpretation of literacy practices over time” (Tyner).

xkcd.com/208
Contrary to recent NEA reports, literacy is not connected to large-scale social or cognitive consequences (Graff).

Written cultures are not superior to oral ones (Scribner & Cole).

What “counts” as literacy is a range of complex practices situated in particular contexts and cultures (The New London Group).

http://icanhascheezburger.com/2007/01/26/invisible-sandwich/
What Does it Mean if...

• Videogaming is the new golf?
• You’re not making connections in virtual spaces, or you have no reference for it?
• You don’t know how to visualize data, problem-solve with others, simulate processes, think with systems?
• You don’t know how to present yourself online?
• You can’t maintain relationships both on and offline?
• Can’t use the tools, parse the messages, synthesize the information?
The Game School

image © interactiondesign.com.au

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Developed by the Institute of Play (instituteofplay.org), NYC, led by Katie Salen (gamersmob.com).
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Will emphasize immersion in basic literacy practices in addition to “ways of knowing and doing,” such as the ability to think, read, and interact critically, to solve complex problems in mathematics and science, and to express oneself persuasively through language and media as authors, agents, and consumers” (Planning Document).
What Do Gamers Learn?

They must seek expertise and ask for help, to share expertise and tutor others (forums, boards, guilds).

That collaboration is crucial with both problem-solving and execution. Indeed, collaborative play is a designed objective.

They must thrive at fast decision-making and know how to prioritize in order to work collectively toward a common goal.
What Do Gamers Learn?

They learn to see the world as a designed space, as a series of systems. Can synthesize both macro- and micro-data in order for quick analysis. Are good at multitasking and continuous partial attention.

Phase by Harmonix Studios, Cambridge, Massachusetts
What Do Gamers Learn?

Real-time, immediate assessment and visual feedback.

They work toward an end-goal, a quantifiable outcome.

They are willing to experiment and keep trying, to fix things, take risks, failure is part of the objective.

flickr.com/photos/conexaogamer

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See themselves as heroes on a quest, identify with protagonists.

Experimental identities, strategies, solutions (guitar player, drummer).

Low-risk testing of living in an immersive space, role-playing (a bee in a bee’s world)
Games-Based Thinking

Gamers see themselves as heroes on quests, solving a series of ever-increasing puzzles and problems.

They work toward an end-goal, a quantifiable outcome.

They are willing to experiment and keep trying, to fix things, take risks. Failure is part of the objective.

They learn to see the world as a designed space, as a series of systems.

They are willing to seek expertise and ask for help, to share expertise and tutor others, just because it’s fun.

They learn that collaboration is crucial with both problem-solving and execution.

Gamers thrive at fast decision-making and know how to prioritize.

They often practice multitasking and continuous partial attention.
Game School Core Practices

Taking on Identities
Using Game Design and Systems Thinking
Practicing in Context
Playing and Reflecting
Theorizing and Testing

Responding to a Need to Know
Interacting with Others
Experimenting and Imagining Possibilities
Giving and Receiving Feedback
Inventing Solutions

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Ways of Knowing, Learning

- Systems-based thinking
- Interdisciplinary thinking
- User-Centered design
- Specialist language
- Meta-level reflection
- Network literacies
- Productive/tool literacies

- Need to know
- Need to share and reflect
- Occasion to share
- Context for ongoing feedback and evaluation
- Channels for distribution across internal and external communities

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Potential Uses of Gaming
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• Illustration--reflective systems used as contexts for meta-cognitive tasks. COTS and board games help reflect on decision-making

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• Code worlds--code systems such as writing as primary mechanic of game play (text adventures, text-based mobile games). Writing is mode of action, thinking, and expression.
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