

Playing to Learn: Teaching Language, Culture, and Diversity Using Video Game Narratives

Saturday 2 September 2023 11:00 (40 minutes)

Narrative-based video games offer an opportunity to redefine how students learn; in some cases, they can supplement or even replace textbooks as a medium of instruction. Many games involve communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. With some preparation, many pre-existing games can be used to not only teach and practice language, but also history, social studies, and various other subjects to all ages or levels of education. Students preparing for foreign exchange language study can play a character who is visiting a foreign country with realistic dialogue to practice. Why only describe I'upiat Alaskan Native culture when you can hear stories told by actual I'upiat while playing a game based on their folklore? Empowering and giving underrepresented populations their own voice to tell their own stories in a way that is more widely accessible, informative, and entertaining makes their stories more accessible to students. By drawing upon the experiences of educators developing video game-based lessons for various student ages and subjects as well as my own classroom and homeschooling experience, I will show how the use of video games as narratives benefits not only language (including second and foreign language acquisition) but also literature, social studies, as well as STEM disciplines.

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