Dungeons and Dragons in Education: A Usability Study

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Dungeons and Dragons in Education website
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Homepage
Game-Based Learning page
**Affective:** Focuses on the emotions and beliefs of the learners. This aspect is very important as it helps to create an engaged learning environment, which can be achieved through meaningful experiences.

**Behavioral:** This focuses on learning motivation and engagement with the material. It has been observed that games have a way of engaging learners and keeping them interested for longer periods of time due to the incentives, whether it be in the form of rewards, medals, points, or trophies.

**Cognitive:** This aspect focuses on how learners think, process, and remember. It is about how information is processed. This is considered an important factor in procedural learning, through being engaged in various representations of learning. For this, game-based learning is a powerful tool in helping students understand and remember information through interaction with the game's content.

**Social/Cultural:** Inclusion of social engagement with peers. There is a focus on learning through participating in groups and using collective knowledge to accomplish a goal. Integrating cultural and social aspects influences the learners' self-concept as well as their perception of others.

When implementing game-based learning, it's important to consider the **WHY**, **WHAT**, and **HOW**. These three questions are key:

**Before planning:** Consider **WHO** your learners are and **WHAT** gets them interested. Game-based learning is often used as a means to engage students in class activities.

However, rather than thinking about the **WHAT** of playing a game and how it helps students learn, think about the **WHY**. Ask yourself, **WHY** are they playing this game and **WHY** they are supposed to learn. Think of objectives the students are supposed to meet and incorporate them into the game design.

**Why use game-based learning?**
Game-based learning, in its core, is geared towards teaching through repetition, failure, and accomplishment of goals. Students work towards a goal, choose actions to complete objectives, and experience the consequences of their actions in a controlled, safe environment. Incorporating games into the classroom allows students to explore and apply concepts they have learned in a low-stakes setting.
What is Dungeons and Dragons?
Dungeons and Dragons is a tabletop, role-playing game. Games are run by a GM (Game Master) and involve players collaborating.

The game involves battles, strategizing, collaboration, and lots of imagination.

What do you need?

- Polyhedral dice
- Character sheets

How do you play?

Step 1: Create a world. The GM will create a general storyline for players to follow.

Step 2: Players and GM create characters. It is important to know the world setting of the story in order to create characters that feel like belonging.

Step 3: Play the game.

- Step 3a: The GM sets the tone and sorts things out, giving clues about where the characters are and the general plot of what the world is like and possible goals to accomplish.

- Step 3b: Players decide their actions to move the story along.

Gameplay ultimately rests on players making actions and decisions that move the story along. Every decision and action has a direct effect on the story and could potentially change the outcome.
Why D&D? What is the point?

Dungeons and Dragons and other narrative-playing games give learners the opportunity to explore and apply learned concepts, increase interest, and develop critical thinking and communications.

Using the method of teaching encourages students to be self-motivated and self-driven by presenting the learning material as something enjoyable through participating in goal-oriented gameplay.
In this section, you will learn how to be a Game Master (GM) and understand the benefits of game-based learning games for Dungeons and Dragons in the classroom.

What does it take to be a GM?
The GM is responsible for guiding the players on their journey and creating the world for the players to immerse themselves in. This, of course, means planning is needed.

Planning a D&D session is similar to planning a lesson.
- Consider your learning objectives:
  - What do you want your students to learn?
  - How do you want them to demonstrate this knowledge?
- Write down the materials you will need:
  - Maps, short readings, pictures, videos, etc. (See next page for preparation materials)
- Plan to incorporate ideas and prompts (fun and engaging)
  - Always keep an open mind
  - What do they need to learn? How do they become the character? How will the players succeed upon their skills and gain experience?

![Diagram of a lesson planning model]

1. Identify objectives
2. Content concepts
3. Learning strategies
4. Evaluate & improve
5. Design assessment
6. Resources 

![Resources and aids]
- Create a story:
  - Your job is to get your students actively involved in the adventure you have planned for them, and to lead them to collaboratively tell the story.
  - You also want to "nurture the wood".
  - Check resources for pre-generated materials, and modify them if your lesson permits.
  - D&D is very flexible and is not limited to what’s written out of it.

- Give your students choices:
  - It is important to allow kids to understand that failure is not the opposite of success but rather a part of it.
  - As the GM, encourage students to take risks, try new things, and have fun making our way.

- It's important for students to understand that failure is not the opposite of success but rather a part of it.

- Remember to emphasize variables and collaboration:

- Variables and collaborative effort:
Tips and Strategies

English
- Have students create backstories for the characters they will be writing about, including their jobs, hobbies, relationships, etc.
- Have students play journalists and research events that happened during the war and have them write about what they found or what happened.
- Develop a set of rules and instructions for sessions, have students demonstrate their understanding and creativity by playing a game.
- Have students write about what they learned from the game and the meaning of the words.

Math
- Develop math problems for students to solve during their session (e.g., How many times did the player score vs. the opponent?)
- Develop a strategy to complete a game (e.g., How many times did the player hit the target vs. the opponent?)
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Social Studies
- Develop characters and settings appropriate for the time period of the game.
- Develop a strategy to complete a game (e.g., How many times did the player hit the target vs. the opponent?)
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Science
- Develop a strategy to complete a game (e.g., How many times did the player hit the target vs. the opponent?)
- Incorporate science elements into the game (e.g., rock, paper, scissor)

Collaboration/Communication
- Have students work in pairs to accomplish goals.
- Have students work in teams to complete tasks.
- Have students work in groups to complete tasks.
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Additional Resources Page