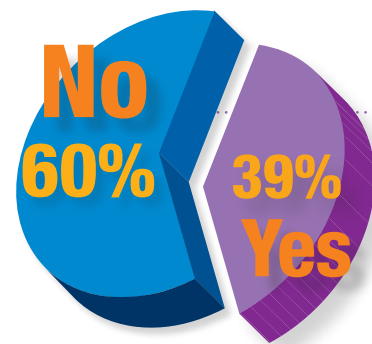


READERS respond

POLL RESULTS

Has the Gender Gap Closed?

Poll results suggest that there is some polarization among voters on this topic. The majority of respondents felt the gender gap has not closed, but nearly 40% suggest it has.



Because of the overwhelming response *L&L* received about the April poll question, “Do you think games can be used to teach?” we have decided to publish another sampling of the hundreds of e-mails we received. Readers responded 10 to 1 in defense of computer games as teaching tools; many included specific conditions.

Use, Choose Games Wisely

The question is not whether games can teach, but what they teach. Our students are already learning from games, but the content is decided by the entertainment industry, not by educators. Games may not encourage “true thinking skills,” but they exist, and need our input. Games are here. Are we?

*Amity Currie
Marist College
Poughkeepsie, New York*

Games Should Engage

Games absolutely CAN be used to teach, but as with any instruction, how it is designed, implemented, and evaluated greatly impacts its effect on learning. Entertaining learners should not be confused with engaging them, so perhaps we should evaluate educational games with “edugagement” rather than “edutainment” metrics.

*Kelly Morris
Doctoral Student, Educational Technology
Concordia University
West Montreal, Quebec*

No Drill and Kill Games

The serious games movement is important to this discussion. Drill and kill games cannot teach. Perhaps, in

limited use, they might reinforce, but they cannot teach. Well-crafted simulations can and should be developed to support the teaching and learning process. Serious games can be part of a constructivist learning environment and contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding. That knowledge and understanding should be exercised, tested (no, not a multiple-choice test!) and built upon. Effective simulations, a great teacher, and an interactive learning community are a wonderful combination for expanding knowledge.

*Penelope Walters Swenson, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Education
California State University, Bakersfield*

Teach About Games

[Yes, but] only if we teach the kids to create the games as well. How does the game function? Make the kids question that. Help the kids understand the process of that particular game they are interested in. How do we help kids understand problem-solving skills? We do not want the same drill and kill games of the early 80s!

*Dr. Manorama (mano) Talaiver
Director
Institute for Teaching Through Technology &
Innovative Practices
South Boston, Virginia*

Make Learning Habitual

Games are becoming more complex, strategic, graphically compelling, and perhaps even addictive. Wouldn't it be great if learning was habit forming? The immersive quality of technology can give students experiences of inquiry in 3D in ways that will help them understand at a deep level. If we design worlds so that the exploration is really time travel, or simulations of systems, we could create a generation of expert historians, economists, sociologists, and scientists.

*Margaret Riel
Pepperdine Univ. & SRI-International
Encinitas, California*

Coming Next Issue in *L&L*

Four Steps to Success

Vanessa Domine details her practical and insightful four-step program for successful technology integration and meeting the variety of standards facing educators today.

Beyond the Stars

Full-dome video is a planetarium technology that is finding its way into school systems. Find out how inflatable domes and portable projectors can teach astronomy, molecular chemistry, and other science subjects.

From Toy to Tool

Imagine asking students to bring their cell phones to class! Rather than banning phones, explore methods for using them to create blogs, collect and store data, and develop exciting multimedia projects.