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Creating Learning Experiences for the Playful Classroom

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Abstract

This panel brings together practitioners to discuss the unique challenges and opportunities in creating playful learning experiences for the classroom. Participants from BrainPOP, Cracking Wise Interactive, Classroom, Inc., Curriculum Associates, and Teachley will share their approaches to bringing games and other playful experiences into schools, both from a pedagogical and a practical point of view.

Introduction

Despite excitement about the potential of playful learning to truly impact the ways schools teach and students learn, developers who want to make products for schools are often disconnected from the daily realities of teachers, students, and administrators. Even developers that take an active interest in testing and distributing their products in schools may find themselves facing many obstacles to doing so, from inability to access classrooms for product testing to figuring out how to build a distribution network. This panel presents an "on-the-ground" perspective from a group of experienced practitioners who are each working in different ways to create playful learning experiences that impact teacher practice and student experience. Panelists will share their best practices for working with schools, as well as highlight design considerations that may significantly impact adoption and success of playful learning in the classroom.   The Panelists The panelists for this presentation represent a cross-section of professionals in the playful learning space, with experience across curriculum design, game development, user experience design, marketing, and distribution. Each panelist has collaborated with at least one other panelist on a project intended for schools. Panelists are:

- Kathy Yu Burek, Educator Experience Lead, Classroom, Inc.

- Kara Carpenter, Co-Founder, Teachley

- Allisyn Levy, VP, GameUp, BrainPOP

- Anne Richards, President and Founder, Cracking Wise Interactive

- Christine Zanchi, Director of Student Innovation, Curriculum Associates

Discussion Topics

The panel will be an opportunity to share both panelists' and attendees' experience working with schools, teachers, and students, and to discuss the wide range of factors that need to be considered in developing products for the classroom. Potential areas of discussion include the following.

Design

Creating meaningful experiences for teachers and students; following evidence-centered design practices; personalizing instruction for diverse learners; designing playful non-digital tools and approaches

Working with teachers and students

Playtesting products in development; conducting focus groups; working with diverse groups of teachers with different approaches and priorities

Professional development

Using games and game-like learning to support transformation of teacher practice to create more learner-centered classrooms

Technology

Understanding the amount and quality of devices and wireless access in today's classrooms and the impact of the digital divide on the ability of products to truly reach students who need them

Adoption and implementation Changing perceptions around play in schools; finding time in packed academic schedules; getting buy in from students, teachers, and administrators; reaching district leaders
  Assessment and impact Designing methodologies and reporting structures for formative assessments inside the play experience; measuring results in terms of skills and standards; conducting surveys of teachers and students; tapping into product data for richer and more meaningful reporting and feedback
  School design and scale Working with alternative distributors to reach greater scale and impact; designing schools that embrace playful learning as a holistic, integrated experience   Although it will not be possible to cover all of the above topics, each panelist will draw from their work to speak to areas that are particularly relevant to them. In addition to audience Q&A, panelists will be encouraged to ask one another questions and debate best approaches as appropriate.   The Session Plan Each participant will share a brief (5-7 minute) presentation on the specific work their organization is doing. This will be followed by a discussion — including audience Q&A as well as questions from the panelists for each other — exploring different approaches to implementation and design, distribution, and professional development and teacher training, among other topics.   The goal is a discussion that will not only help attendees get a broader perspective on the design, development, and distribution of playful games and

tools for the classroom, but also identify key best practices and encourage collaboration between both individuals and organizations.

Post-Panel Report

This panel was presented at GLS 12 on August 18, 2016. Rather than making formal presentations, panelists played a game called "GLS FEUD!" built around key issues involving games in the classroom with the attendees. Questions were posed to the group and the panelists and all participants had one minute to write down their preferred answer from a set of four possible answers (or submit them via Kahoot in the case of the attendees). Answers from the panelists, audience, and a group of nineteen teachers who had been surveyed prior to the panel where then revealed, prompting a group discussion about each topic.   The Kahoot that was used for this session is publicly available at: https://play.kahoot.it/ – /k/27ea06af-fada-4154-90ae-a0aa22c97841.

Attendees' responses from this session are available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3V61Zjk3iiIeGc0c2kzY2dYYTg/view?usp=sharing   The results of our teacher survey done in preparation for this session are available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3V61Zjk3iiIeTVqZGxrZS1NQk0/view?usp=sharing