

PLAY PLAY



LEARN

TEACHING THROUGH GAMES

Teaching through games is very different from just bringing games into the classroom. By carefully considering the amazing games now available as part of the renaissance of tabletop gaming, we can select existing resources that supplement and enrich instructional objectives in any classroom or library.

To make this work, you will need to consider four key selection criteria: (1) Is this a **real game**?

Our students and patrons are real gamers and they can tell the difference between a game and a worksheet with a

spinner. (2) How does the game **align with the curriculum** standards being addressed?

The alignment might be through the thematic content of the game, or the mechanisms that are used during game play. (3) How will the game **fit into the class or program time** allotted? Or, if the game takes more than the 42 minutes of the average high school class, can it be modified to work across multiple days? (4) Finally, what is the **return on investment** for my use of this game? 20 minute games can provide a low level of return, but if you are going to invest multiple days on teaching and playing a game it had better provide an amazing learning experience.

We aren't "playing games" in school, we are using games as curriculum-aligned instructional resources that can be manipulated by an expert to create intentional learning moments.

The beauty of tabletop games is that you can start with a small program on a tight budget and grow with success. There is no upfront hardware, so all money spent goes for content. Tabletop games also have a more positive association for parents, administrators, teachers, and others who might be reviewing the program. Board games typically don't have the baggage that video games might bring to the table.

Board games also shine in terms of social interaction and engagement between learners.

To justify a new gaming program, be

sure to consider the intended outcomes. Will the program **provide enrichment, reinforce content area learning, enhance social skills**, or address a different objective? All of these are valid and effective uses of games, but will require a different approach for selection and deployment. You will need to balance theme and mechanisms to ensure that players are leaving the table having experienced a specific and very intentionally crafted instructional moment. Establish the goals and then select and deploy games that will lead to successful completion of those objectives.

Now go forth, and Play Play Learn!

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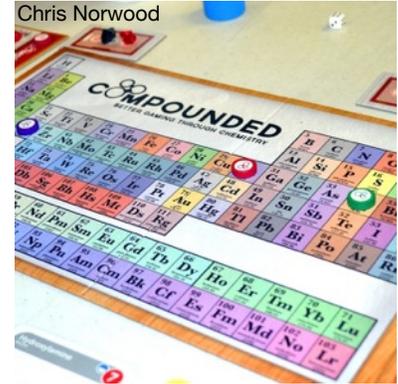
TEACHING THROUGH GAMES EXAMPLES



Freedom: The Underground Railroad
 Cooperative game exploring the rise of abolitionism in America.
Players: 1-4 **Grades:** 6-12 **Time:** 120m



1775: Rebellion
 Relive or rewrite the history of the American Revolution.
Players: 2-4 **Grades:** 6-12 **Time:** 120m



Compounded
 Use elements to create compounds; keep score on the Periodic Table.
Players: 1-4 **Grades:** 6-12 **Time:** 45m



Can't Stop
 Press your luck, but be aware of risk and reward for your investment.
Players: 1-4 **Grades:** 6-12 **Time:** 30m



Chicago Express
 Will you cooperate or compete in this capstone economic game?
Players: 1-5 **Grades:** 9-12 **Time:** 60m



Robo Rally
 Program your robots, but watch out for bugs introduced by the factory!
Players: 2-8 **Grades:** 6-12 **Time:** 90m

MORE GREAT GAMES TO PLAY AND LEARN



Orchard
 Cooperative game to help very young players learn to take turns and fail.
Players: 1-4 **Grades:** Pre-2 **Time:** 15m



Secret Code: 13+4
 Get mathematical as you work to crack codes with math operations.
Players: 1-4 **Grades:** 3-6 **Time:** 30m



Snake Oil
 A social game for creative thinking and persuasive public speaking.
Players: 3-? **Grades:** 3-12 **Time:** 30m