

## Games and Learning: What's the Connection?

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### Abstract

This article reviews how the relationship between computer games and learning has been conceptualized in policy and academic literature, and proposes a methodology for exploring learning with games that focuses on how games are enacted in social interactions. Drawing on Sutton-Smith's description of the rhetorics of play, it argues that the educational value of games has often been defined in terms of remedying the failures of the education system. This, however, ascribes to games a specific ontology in a popular culture that is defined in terms of its opposition to school culture. By analyzing games produced in school by 12- to 13-year-olds in the context of a media education project, the article shows how notions of what a game is emerge from conventionalized and historical relations within a setting, and that the educational value of games can therefore be re-thought in terms of the situated significance of "game" rather than games causing learning. The students' production work is analyzed using a discursive, semiotic methodology and focuses on changing principles of design across time. Changing notions of "game" and "play" are therefore highlighted and analyzed in terms of how students position themselves in relation to the teacher, researchers, and their peers. The significance of the study for conceptualizing the relationship between games and learning is reviewed in the conclusion.

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