Use of Gaming Strategies as Teaching/Learning Tools in Nursing Education

Carol Eliadi, EdD, JD , NP –BC
Edith Claros, PhD MSN RN

Overview

Games are a regular part of students’ lives no matter their grade level. Students report playing games throughout the day on their computers, the Internet and on their cell phones. Using the technology/tools the students find in their worlds can help students feel more comfortable in class, which can help them open up and interact. Although some teachers may use games as part of their teaching strategy in the classroom, most do not and those who do may not be using them to their potential. Making learning fun motivates students and helps them to pay attention and stay focused on content in a safe and low risk learning environment. 21st Century students have grown up using technology. This is very different from the way their professors grew up. The average age of nursing faculty is 57 years of age, which might explain the gap in the use of gaming technology as a teaching modality. The World Wide Web has had a significant effect on the way that students today think and learn. Students are used to thinking on multiple tracks at one, and have little patience with linear reasoning or delayed gratification. Using games in the classroom for teaching is one way to shift to a more appropriate learning format for students of the digital generation.

Objectives

- Reader will understand the use of games as an effective teaching/learning strategy
- Reader will understand strategies for the successful implementation of gaming in the classroom
- Reader will discover the benefit of being able to assess learning from a nontraditional modality

Benefits of Gaming

- The consequences of poor performance are minimized.
- Games are played in real time and allow the student to assess their weaknesses before they are formally tested.
- Promotes interactive learning in the classroom.
- Students are more likely to come to class prepared.
- Allows multiple concepts to be included in one question and answer choices minimizing the need to utilize Power Point slides.
- Changes the traditional classroom environment to a more relaxed learning atmosphere.
- Promotes social learning.

Strategies for Using Game-Based Learning

- Define the objectives (what you want to be accomplished).
- Determine the game (Jeopardy, Kahoot, Top Hat, Quizlet Live, etc.).
- Design the rewards (immediately available and useful).
- Evaluate the game (fun, ease of play, how long the activity took, integration of learning objectives into the game).
- Administer a pre and post-test on the material to be learned before and after the game.

MCPHS University Experience

- In 2016, faculty integrated Kahoot as a predominant teaching modality.
- Each week the faculty developed 10 to 15 questions that aligned with the course objectives and assigned content.
- Students utilized their cellphones to answer the questions.
- Faculty led a class discussion with the purpose of elaborating on the topic while providing opportunity for students to interact, enhance knowledge, ask additional questions, articulate, debate and defend points of view.
- Faculty provided direction and maintained the focus of the class.
- Faculty reported that students actively participated and were motivated to attend classes.
- Students provided positive feedback regarding utilizing gaming strategies as effective teaching/learning tools and incorporated gaming strategies into their own class presentation assignments.

Summary

Making your classes more interactive can help your student want to come to class and to take part in the class. Giving them a more active role will give them a sense of ownership, and this can lead to students taking more pride in their work and responsibility for their grades. Faculty can adopt a variety of games for academic purposes. Studies show that on average, using academic games in the classroom is associated with a 20%-point gain in student achievement. In classrooms reflecting gains through the use of gaming, faculty recommendations include:

- Using inconsequential competition. Students like to compete so long as the stakes are not high.
- Targeting essential academic content. If the game does not focus on important content, the result will have little to no effect on student achievement and can waste valuable classroom time.
- Debriefing the game. The point of the game is to provide opportunities for students to examine important content in a lively and enjoyable venue.

Faculty conducted research indicates that games can have a significant effect on student achievement when teachers use them purposefully and thoughtfully.

References