



How to Energize Your Students with Games and Play

Blog: [Game On? Brain On!](#)

Twitter: [@lportnoy](#)

Email: l.portnoy@northeastern.edu

Website: lindsayportnoy.com

A little bit about

- Cognitive Scientist
- Associate Teaching Professor at Northeastern University in Boston
- President of her local school board

"Teachers are the MOST creative, flexible, dynamic people on the planet." Lindsay Portnoy

When do we learn?

- We learn when we are curious and we play
- Play is engaging in the world around us
- Play is inquiry and creative
- We are all gamers!
 - Games let you take risks without failure

Rules: What are we okay with?

- Flexible approach to learning
- Gaming is the context in which you experiment with the world around you.
- Interleaving: Layering concepts over one another
- Keep discovering right content without fear of failure

Gamification

- Trying to buy compliance through games
- Game-based learning is learning through play and exploration
- Apples to Apples is a great example of learning through play
 - Many learning concepts can be layered into the play session
 - "Who is the judge of this?" creates empathy as you explore
- 3 Corners Exercise
 - Pick a side you agree with
 - Flexibility to move around as you give evidence and justify your thoughts
- Pictionary in another language is a great game to play to foster risk taking and practice relevant skills in the moment.
- [Among Us](#)- Prepare for a trip into space but beware of sabotegers
 - You need 21st Century skills to play the game
 - Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, & Creativity
 - Social Deduction game

Teachers are the MOST creative, flexible, and dynamic individuals on the planet!

- Everyone is a gamer
- 21 Level Ups in the book [Game On? Brain On!](#)
- There are different ways to use games to enhance learning skills
- Questions to ask:
 - What are they playing?
 - Who are they playing with?
 - Why are they playing it?
 - What don't you play and why?
 - How are students engaging in the game?
 - How can playing this game make me a better person?
- It's not what you play, but how you play

Games to Inspire Learning in the Classroom

- History of Monopoly
 - [Lizzie Magie](#) the original creator of Monopoly
 - Originally played with two sets of rules: to monopolize and to benefit everyone
 - Changing the rules of the game changes the outcome and the way you approach the game
- Recreate your own game and embed skills and content you are learning
- [Settlers of Catan](#) supports historical knowledge and behaviors of that time

- Who is represented in this space? Who is missing?
- Low stakes to open the door to bigger conversations with your students
- Understanding strategy and self-monitoring yourself during the game are metacognitive skills engaged during the game.
- [Ticket to Ride](#)
 - This is a cross country-train adventure where you get to build a train route across the country.
 - There is a forced choice
 - Adding constraints is good
- [One Night Ultimate Werewolf](#)
 - Take the premise of the game and modify it for the content you are teaching in your classroom
 - History, Politics, and English are examples of content areas for 1st steps
- [Apples to Apples](#) Teachers can create their own game
 - Use the content you are teaching
 - A player judges which adjective and noun fit best
- [Uno](#)
 - A game of categories
 - Create your own categories connected with your content
- [Would you Rather](#)
 - Allow students to explain and justify their choices
 - Promotes student choice
- [Tenzi](#)
 - Dice game
 - Teach probability, Statistics, and ratios
- Create Your Own Game
 - Materials: index cards, markers, and scissors
 - Invite your students to join in and create

Impactful Teachers

- Listen to their students
- Act on what you learn
- Flexible in teaching
 - Pivot to a new way of learning that might be more impactful for your students
- Games allow for connection
 - Connection important during remote learning
- Understand that kids will do a LOT for their squad
- [Boss Levels](#)

- How can you use an existing game?
- How can you hack a game that already exists?
- How can you create something new?

"We are socially connected and physically distanced." Lindsay Portnoy

How-To

- Existing Games
 - Uno or Apples to Apples
 - Easy to categorize content
- Hacking a Game
 - Change the characters to fit your content
 - Change the time period in history
- Create a New Game
 - Original rules of Monopoly
 - Change the rules and see how it changes the game

Related posts on the Ditch That Textbook blog:

- [Themes, Teams, and Side Quests: A Superhero's Guide to Gamification](#)
- [Gamification: How Clash of Clans Changed My Class](#)
- [10- Research-based Insights on How the Brain Learns](#)
- [How to use the WHOLE Brain to Learn](#)

Resources:

- Books for Purchase:
 - [Game On? Brain On!](#)
 - [Design to Learn](#)
 - [Get Into the Game](#)