

New report explores the use of digital games in the classroom during the learning process

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A new report from the A-GAMES project, a collaboration between New York University and the University of Michigan, examines how teachers are using digital games in their classrooms to monitor student learning and provide ongoing feedback.

The overall study is designed to help game designers as they develop [educational games](#), researchers as they frame future studies of games and [learning](#), and educators as they think about the role of games in everyday classroom practice.

"At a time when the interest in the use of games for learning purposes is increasing, and when school districts are adopting games for use in the classroom, we need more insights into how teachers use digital games in the classroom, and how they use them to assess student learning, so we can provide designers with essential input to build the next generation of learning games," said Jan Plass, co-director of the Games for Learning Institute and the Paulette Goddard Professor of Digital Media and Learning Sciences at NYU Steinhardt.

The study was conducted in two parts, the first of which was a nationwide survey of 488 K-12 teachers. The survey offers a "mile high" picture of what teachers are doing with digital games related to formative assessment, a set of practices to gauge student progress toward learning goals, and to adjust instruction to meet students where they are. Formative assessment, which occurs during the learning process, differs from summative assessment, used to measure student learning at the end

of a unit or term.

In the web-based survey, teachers were asked about their digital game use, formative assessment practices, and the intersection of the two. Key findings from the survey include:

- More than half of teachers (57 percent) use digital games weekly or more often in teaching, with 18 percent using games for teaching on a daily basis. A teacher's comfort level with using games for teaching is strongly related to how often they use digital games in the classroom, i.e., the more comfortable teachers are, the more likely they are to use games frequently.
- A higher percentage of [elementary school teachers](#) (66 percent for grade K-2 teachers and 79 percent for grade 3-5 teachers) use games weekly or more often for teaching, compared with middle school (47 percent) and high school (40 percent) teachers. This is consistent with the larger market presence of games for younger learners.
- More than a third of teachers (34 percent) use games at least weekly to conduct formative assessment. The way teachers who responded to the survey use digital games for formative assessment is related to their overall formative assessment practices, suggesting that using digital games may enable teachers to conduct formative assessment more frequently and effectively.
- The most common barriers to using digital games - reported by more than half of the teachers - are the cost of games, limited time in the curriculum, and lack of technology resources, such as computers or the Internet.

"The most exciting finding in this study is the relationship between [game](#) use and formative assessment practices," said Barry Fishman, professor of learning technologies at the University of Michigan School of Information and School of Education. "Formative assessment is thought

of as one of the most important classroom practices to support [student learning](#), and our study indicates that [teachers](#) who use games for formative assessment conduct assessment more frequently and report fewer barriers."

More information: To view the full report, visit gamesandlearning.umich.edu/agames/

Provided by New York University

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