

Kids' love for video games can improve classroom learning, study finds

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Kids' love for video games should be harnessed by teachers to improve classroom learning, new Australian research has found.

The study looked at the 'gaming' habits of 318 girls and boys in Year 3 (seven and eight years old) from 14 Queensland schools across the Government, Anglican, and Catholic sectors.

The findings, "Boys' gaming identities and opportunities for learning," were published by the academic journal *Learning, Media and Technology*.

Lead researcher Australian Catholic University's Associate Professor Laura Scholes, from the Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, said there was a lack of understanding about the benefits of video games for children.

"Gaming has a controversial image, but the research shows it's the type and quality of the games, and the amount of time spent playing the games, which matter most," Scholes said.

"Teachers can use video games like Minecraft to build teamwork and STEM-related maths and science abilities.

"Gaming has been found to improve many skills including creativity, problem-solving, literacy skills such as reading and writing and high-level digital skills."

However, Scholes cautioned that more creative approaches to teaching were often stifled by pressure on teachers to teach for tests, like NAPLAN.

"It can be difficult for teachers who have not played games such as Minecraft to see how it might fit into the national curriculum or how to assess and evaluate the learning outcomes," she said.

"The pressure of NAPLAN testing leads to many teachers having to

justify their use of video games to teach subjects like maths, science and literacy."

The research also found that gaming gives boys a sense of pride, [self-esteem](#), and social connectedness with their peers.

"That improved self-esteem crosses over into many areas of boys' lives and when boys are denied access to gaming it can marginalize them among their peers," Scholes added.

"Boys can also have more challenges than girls when building [social groups](#), so gaming is a way for them to develop social networks."

The study showed that boys enjoy gaming to greater degrees than girls and their digital skills were described as higher than girls.

Scholes added that parents should continue to check the recommended age of their children's video games, as well as managing the amount of time spent playing them.

More information: Laura Scholes et al, Boys' gaming identities and opportunities for learning, *Learning, Media and Technology* (2021).
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