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Proposal Assignment

**Executive Summary**

Video games are seen as a bad influence in the lives of those who play them. Many individuals have said and still say that video games will lead to “potential harm related to violence, addiction, and depression.” (Granic, et. al.)Video games can be used as a means of education though, going so far as to train the brain of the individual playing and even benefiting the player in other respects. They are not just a means of entertainment outside school and a negative aspect of players’ lives.For this reason it would be beneficial to introduce video game play into classrooms. By doing so students will not only benefit from the added gameplay in the classroom, but also the schools will benefit from the students’ benefits.

**Background**

 Video games are seen as having no educational value. They are cast aside and ignored. Many people deem them as a simple form of entertainment or a waste of time. The most common phrase heard in regards to individuals, like children and adolescents, playing video games is that playing them will “rot your brain”. Other downsides to playing video games include increased levels of muscle stiffness, inadequate activity levels, and desensitization to violence. Video games are just seen as a bad thing in many people’s eyes. Due to these downsides, although true but not altogether serious, video games are seen as nothing useful to the players. Video games hold educational value though. These games can be used to exercise the brain if not aid in its training instead of “rotting” that vital organ. They can be used in the classroom as well to benefit students.

Video games can be used to benefit the players and students in a classroom. Video games exercise portions of the brain that are otherwise idle or not worked as much when a student is in the classroom. Playing games like “Super Mario 64”, German researchers found, actually “that the gaming group had a rise in gray matter in the right hippocampus, right prefrontal cortex and the cerebellum -- areas of the brain responsible for spatial navigation, memory formation, strategic planning and fine motor skills in the hands” (Kuhn, et. al.). The researchers experimented with two groups. One was the “gaming group” and the other group did not play and games. The non-gaming group experienced no such brain activity. This is just one of many instances when a game has been seen as a benefit for the gamers. Another part of this study actually found “differences in brain structure of video gamers,” saying that these gamers’ brains experienced “volumetric brain increase”. Not only does playing video games as simple as “Super Mario 64” engage the brain, but it also enlarges the brain.

**Problem**

With mention of the games being bad for players that comes from the first-person shooter genre. These are normally violent games with blood and death rampant. These games also have a benefit to gamers. Those that play these shooting games like Halo actually “show faster and more accurate attention allocation, higher spatial resolution in visual processing, and enhanced mental rotation abilities”. These same skills and benefits were also concluded to be “comparable to the effects of formal (high school and university-level) courses aimed at enhancing these same skills” (Granic, et. al.*).* So here it is seen that playing these violent first person shooters is equivalent to the training one would get in a classroom setting. These games have educational benefit that is being missed. Because the games are seen as a waste of time or of having no educational value whatsoever it is important that this view change. Video games have educational value and can be used as more than entertainment. An important tool is being missed that shouldn’t.

**Proposed Solution**

 After having seen how playing video games benefits the development of one’s brain, going so far as to be equivalent to an upper division class (Kuhn, et. al.) it is important to see the benefit of video games. The benefit is so great that that implementing them into a classroom setting would not only benefit the students but also the schools they attend. The introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act established the role of standardized tests in the way schools are funded (Thompson). When a student does well on an exam the school benefits. In this society, test scores are everything and are even a deciding factor on how much funding schools get (Thompson). The more funding a school receives the better quality the school becomes.

By implementing video game playing in the classroom and outside the classroom students will not only benefit, but so will the schools. Playing video games enhances students’ learning and cognitive development. Even games such as Super Mario 64 benefit the students. First-person-shooters also benefit students. Playing such games as the latter actually equate to a high school or college course that is designed to train the brain the same way the games do. Not only does video game playing serve as a class substitute, but that would also benefit students financially. With the current economy and cost of schooling any way to get ahead without burning a hole through one’s pocket is a plus.

While many adults and parents of the students who play games may say this is a bad idea to encourage video game play it is understandable. Playing video games is distracting. It can take students away from their studies and cause them to fall behind. This is a legitimate concern, however, parents in particular can easily solve this issue. Parents are the ones in control in the household. A simple way to encourage gameplay and keep their students on track is by simply setting a limit on the gameplay. Televisions have a timer feature on them. Parents simply set the timer on the television and when the time allotted is over the student will stop their playing and go back to their studies. Not only will the student get a break from a homework load but they will also be helping themselves by playing the video game.

If video games are a required form of homework and class work schools will see an increase in their standardized test scores and students will develop better cognitive and learning skills. Playing video games also has other health benefits for students. School can be stressful for some and video games provide a good stress reliever. Being able to take a break from everything around oneself is not only relaxing but healthy. Video games can also be used to treat depression, a common trait in teens in school. Researchers in New Zealand conducted a study that had depressed teens playing a video game designed for therapy versus teens not playing the video game. Of the teens who played the game 44 percent made a full recovery while only 26 percent of those who did not play recovered from their depression (Merry, et. al.). So not only will video game implementation benefit students and their schools but also their mental health. A double win cannot easily be ignored.

**Conclusion**

 Imagine students being happy to do homework. Playing your favorite video game for homework is every students’ dream. Playing video games is fun and beneficial. It is a great way to take a break while also not losing out on any brain training. The opportunity to play on one’s Xbox, Wii, Play Station, etc. is always sought out by a student with homework. By implementing this sort of play into a curriculum and as homework parents won’t have to worry about students not doing homework. Their students will be excited to do so and will also benefit from it. A win-win for both parents and students.

Works Cited

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