



Literacy Connects

A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue XLIII



Games: Motivating Students to Learn through Fun, Competition and Cooperation

Playing learning games is an excellent way to motivate students. As we play, we learn. Not only do students have fun learning and reviewing content material, but they learn how to cooperate and negotiate with others; games are also a powerful way to create healthy competition in the classroom, impacting our need for power and freedom (*see Literacy Connects XLI for more on student motivation*).

Not only will games increase motivation, but they are an excellent way to engage and activate the brain. Using games that students are already familiar with provides the brain connections for a better understanding of content. They use the most basic level of active processing, creative rehearsal, and they appeal to a wide range of modalities. Every time we recall information from long-term storage into working memory, we relearn it. Finally, games increase levels of feel-good amino acids in the brain, like dopamine and norepinephrine. In the right amounts, these biological “uppers” improve working memory and cognition. Games fall under several categories and can be used for various types of learning:

Hook and linking games require players to match words to definitions or identify opposites or similar pairs. These are great for vocabulary development and for review.

- Pictionary
- Scrabble
- Concentration
- I Spy
- Password
- Wheel of Fortune
- Balderdash

Games that require students to generate questions or provide answers can be used as a way to access background knowledge and to review concepts already studied. These activities will help teachers determine what students already know and what they have learned.

- Jeopardy
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire
- Trivial Pursuit
- Who am I?
- Bingo
- Go to the Head of the Class
- Team Tournaments
- Jot Thoughts

Physical games provide a change from the “sit and get” learning approach, help meet the need for movement and freedom, and energize students by stimulating blood and oxygen levels in the brain.

- Trading Cards
- Commercial Breaks
- Add-ons
- People Search
- Team Interviews

For detailed descriptions of games and power point game templates: Go to RPDP.net—English Language Arts—Middle or High School—Literacy Connects Resources folder.

Visit the RPDP website (www.rpdp.net) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects*.