

# Game-based Learning

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – FALL 2016

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I had the amazing opportunity through SSLA to go to the ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) Conference in Denver, Colorado this past spring. Though it was somewhat overwhelming to start – the endless possibilities between sessions, playgrounds, blogger café, keynotes, and the Expo – I came away with a wealth of new knowledge and ideas to explore in all the classrooms I work in.

A common theme throughout the many sessions I attended was engagement through game-based learning. Using games in your classroom to teach the outcomes of the curriculum is game-based learning. As I discovered, there are so many ways this can happen. From Minecraft and Pokémon Go to Kahoot!, Quizizz and even Brainpop. Gaming has become a popular way to teach and learn in fun environments easily adaptable to the needs of all students. It has been long thought that video games and gaming culture is the cause of this disinterested and disengaged generation of students. It's refreshing to see a new attitude develop that says "If you can't beat em – join em"! Meet students where their interests lie – games!

### Minecraft

A hugely popular game of building worlds and surviving in pre-fabricated ones. It is available on many different platforms (tablets, computers, game boxes, phones...) and so many of our students have played it or do so on a regular basis. There were a few Minecraft sessions at ISTE and Microsoft (who bought out [minecraft.edu](http://minecraft.edu)) had a display devoted entirely to it at the EXPO. While my son plays it – I knew almost nothing about it going into the session. Most of the ideas I had surrounding this in the classroom were structures, building, math, science (circuits). I quickly learned that the possibilities are almost endless as an ELA teacher and her Grade 8 & 9 students presented the session. She has her ELA students build replicas of the Globe Theatre and write a short skit to perform on the stage. The students took over the session and through a series of tasks, taught us how to use Minecraft. This is where teachers have the most trouble – we want to be the experts first to be able to use this in the classroom. The students know how to do this and are not inhibited to try. A great lesson in problem solving! By having the students run the session and become the teachers it demonstrated to me why this is so successful – they are only limited by their imagination not by what parameters I as a teacher can impose on it. The less we do that the better! There are many communities online that offer valuable resources to help in ideas for planning. The [Minecraft Education Edition](http://Minecraft Education Edition) website has lessons, resources and community options to help in all things related to using this in your classroom. I found a lesson

idea in almost every subject and grade level. Each lesson plan also had a discussion area where people could post how they used it in their classrooms, different ideas, what worked or didn't work with the plan idea.....so much good information! In order to use it in the classroom there are a couple things to consider. The Pocket Version for a tablet (iPad) is about \$10 for the app. That's expensive when purchasing for a class set. It can be used in almost any class – so the benefits could outweigh the cost. The Microsoft version has great potential. It has controls for teachers, you can have students build individually or as groups, they can save and potentially log in at home or other locations as well. It requires an Office 365 Education license and accounts, and Windows 10 or Mac OS X.



Individual build

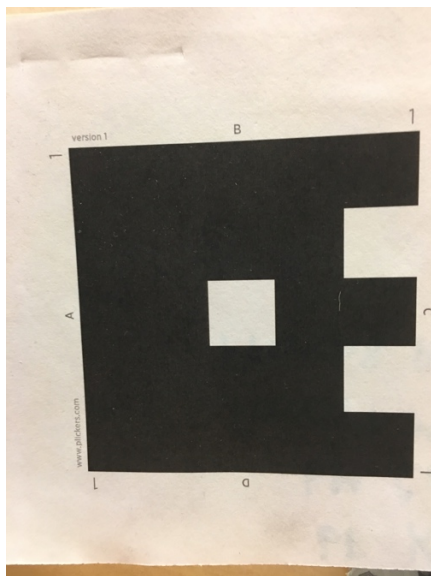


Group build

### Class Quiz Games

A popular and easy way to use game-based learning in the classroom is with quiz apps and websites. They create a fun atmosphere for the students while allowing easy assessment for the teacher. Two quiz sites that have become quite popular lately and were showcased in many of the sessions I attended at ISTE were [Kahoot!](#) and [Quizizz](#). Both are free and require the teacher to create an account. Once you are set up, you can either create your activity or choose one someone else has already made. The students go to a website and enter in the PIN number for your quiz and participate in the activity. There are options to save and export results for assessment. Both sites offer ideas for lessons and activities. I like them both, and have used them for different activities. With Quizizz you can create your own memes that show up when students answer a question – so they find it humorous to see my picture and a thumbs up when

they get it right, and thumbs down when they get it wrong! [Plickers](#) is a site and app that is interesting and unique. It uses cards with a symbol on it individual to each student when you create your class on the site. The four-sided symbol has an A, B, C, D side to it and the student holds up the card with their choice for an answer at the top (so if they want C they make sure the C is at the top). The teacher scans the room with the app on a device and it records their answers to the question. You can see immediately who got it right or wrong and it also allows for saving and exporting the results. It takes a little time to set up and print the cards, but once you have them it's easy to use and the students enjoy it. Both Kahoot! and Plickers are tasks available in the [SSLA Badges](#) PD opportunity. If you haven't signed up for it – SSLA members can learn for free! Watch the video, use it in your classroom and earn a badge! Easy!



Plickers card



Plickers results screen on device

Brainpop and SMART have also jumped on the game-based learning bandwagon with quiz options and game activities to spice up your lessons. Use these activities for assessment for, as and of learning. I have used them to determine background knowledge, to do a quick check for understanding, as an exit ticket, or just as a fun activity.

I learned so much at the ISTE conference, I was absolutely exhausted after my four days in Denver! It was the most engaging and worthwhile conference I have ever attended! It's no longer a conference just for tech-minded teachers, it's simply an education conference as tech in our classrooms becomes the norm. It's an amazing opportunity to learn tried and true ideas and lessons using technology from regular classroom teachers. I came away with so many good ideas I didn't know where to start! A sign of an awesome conference!