Dear Mrs. Mac George,

I have recently noticed that Clayton is becoming less and less engaged in our classroom activities. Clayton has always done his best in class and his love for learning has always shown through by his constant interest in the content being taught. For the past few weeks, Clayton has failed to complete all of his class work or turn in all of his homework. I just wanted to express my concerns about Clayton’s involvement in our class. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to improve Clayton’s participation and interest in his academics.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jenkins

Case Study: Video Games
By: Kati

The effects of video games and grades in school?

Clayton is 13 year old eighth grade student. He is very outgoing and intelligent. Clayton loves to learn and has always been an A student. His parents have always encouraged him to do his best and are very involved in his learning. Within the past year, as Clayton has taken up the hobby of playing video games, but this has created a problem in his academics.

It’s Friday, Clayton arrives home from school around 4:00. As he walks through the backdoor, his mother greets him with a hug and his favorite snack, cookies and milk. They begin to talk about the day and Clayton’s mother asks, “Did you learn a lot at school today? What kind of things are you all learning about?” But Clayton answers a different answer than usual, and replies, “Oh...not too much, something about geometry.” This was not a normal response for Clayton, and his mother began to become concerned. “Do you remember what you learned about geometry?” His mother asks. “No, I know we played jeopardy!” Clayton replies. Clayton then abruptly changes the subject, “Ok, well, I am going to go and play some of my video games!” Clayton’s mother is taken back by his comments and allows him to run off to his room.

Clayton’s mother continues to think about what he had said, and tries to think of what the problem could be. A few days later, Clayton’s report card arrives in the mail. His mother is astonished by the grades that are on his report card, C's. This was very uncharacteristic for Clayton and his mother knew she had to examine the problem more closely to find out the real issue that was affecting Clayton’s academics. Attached to his report card, was a note from Clayton’s teacher, Mrs. Jenkins. The note read:

Teacher Letter Sent Home

Dear Mrs. Mac George,

I have recently noticed that Clayton is becoming less and less engaged in our classroom activities. Clayton has always done his best in class and his love for learning has always shown through by his constant interest in the content being taught. For the past few weeks, Clayton has failed to complete all of his class work or turn in all of his homework. I just wanted to express my concerns about Clayton’s involvement in our class. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to improve Clayton’s participation and interest in his academics.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jenkins
Parents Need To Pay Attention

Clayton’s mother begins to pay more attention to his behavior and procedures both academically and in his everyday lifestyle. As she observes, she realizes that most of his free time is spent playing his video games. When Clayton tells her that he is doing his homework, she used to just accept the answer with no questions asks. But this time, when he tells her, she decides to peer into his room just to confirm that he really is doing his homework. What she finds him doing is not his homework, but playing video games. Clayton’s mother leans over to him and asks, “Clayton, why aren’t you doing your homework? That is what you told me you were doing?” Clayton shrugs and cannot produce a reply but his mother knows that she must provide some kind of consequence for his behavior. “Clayton, I cannot allow you to play your video games anymore this week. For the next few days, we will work on your homework together to make sure that you keep your grades up.”

Parent/Teacher Conferences are Beneficial

The next day, Clayton’s mother proceeds to contact his teacher, Mrs. Jenkins. When his mother asks Mrs. Jenkins about his involvement in class, Mrs. Jenkins tells her that his involvement has been declining within the past few weeks. Mrs. Jenkins had attempted to engage Clayton in learning in through many different approaches but had been unsuccessful. Mrs. Jenkins and Clayton’s mother begin to discuss ways that they can make Clayton interested in school again. Mrs. Jenkins asks Clayton’s mother what he enjoys doing in his free time, as she then replies, “He loves playing video games most of all, but he also loves playing baseball and playing with his brother.” Mrs. Jenkins replies, “Maybe that’s it! Maybe is we could involve video games into our classroom activities, then Clayton will become more interested and engaged in what we are doing!” Mrs. Jenkins had heard of incorporating video games into the classroom instruction to motivate the students and was interested to try it for all students since most students this age did enjoy playing video games.
The next week, Mrs. Jenkins came to class prepared with a math lesson incorporating a video game called Time Engineers. This is a game that not only teaches math, but could help with science and history. This game involves time traveling through 3-D interactive environments. Students travel in a cool time machine to three different time periods and encounter typical engineering problems to be solved in order to build pyramids, irrigate farm land, command a WWII submarine, raise and lower medieval drawbridges, and much more. Having this game for the students to play, allows them to do something that they enjoy and are interested in and it differentiates the instruction for Mrs. Jenkins class without having to differentiate the curriculum.

Mrs. Jenkins came up with two ways to incorporate this game. One way is to allow the students to take turns playing the game throughout the class time and throughout the week. The second way that she incorporates the game is through whole class involvement. Mrs. Jenkins projects the game onto the big screen projector to allow all of the students to see. She then brings up the problem on the screen and allows the students to write down the problem, and work individually or in groups to solve the problem.

During class, Mrs. Jenkins sees that Clayton is loving the game. He is involved and adding in his answers and is actively engaged in the lesson. When he comes home from school, Clayton expresses his excitement to his mother, explaining that they are having the chance to play video games in school. Clayton’s mother is so relieved to see that Clayton is back into involvement in his academics. As time passes, Claytons motivation and grades in school begins to return to normal.

Clayton’s mother realizes that she needs to be more aware of when Clayton is playing video games. She decides that limiting Clayton’s video game playing time at home would be best, but playing educational video games is okay to play as much as he wants since she got the Time Engineers game for Clayton to play at home. When Clayton plays his non-educational video games too much, it makes him lose some of his motivation and he loses sight of the importance of his academic success. Clayton and his mother now work together after school to get his homework finished. Clayton’s mother’s involvement allows him to keep his focus and they can work together to make sure that he is the most successful that he is able to be in school.
Video Games Can Be Helpful!

Mrs. Jenkins continues to incorporate video games into her classroom. She researches many different games that the students can play and learn at the same time. Overall, it has allowed the students in her class to become more motivated in the classroom because they are doing something that they enjoy, especially the struggling learners. Video games have proven to increase motivation and improve skills in the classroom.


Discussion Questions

- What type of video games can be beneficial in student learning?
- How frequent should students engage in learning through video games?
- Should parents monitor the amount of time spent with video games?