

## SCHOOLS USING VIDEO GAMES TO TEACH KIDS LIFE SKILLS

written by Steven Herrera | September 27, 2019



Over the past four decades, computers have increasingly become a part of the learning process in schools. Meanwhile, video games have mostly been a form of entertainment enjoyed outside of the classroom. Now, the line between computers as a learning tool and video games as a form of recreation is blurring as Nintendo games are being introduced into the computing curriculum of some schools in the United Kingdom.

The initiative, known as Digital Schoolhouse (DSH), is a not-for-profit organization supported by Nintendo and backed by the UK government. The program was created by UKIE (UK Interactive Entertainment), the only trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry. The goal is to use video games to help teach computing and other life skills to youngsters. The games are played on the Nintendo Switch console, so students have the flexibility to learn any time, either in the classroom or at home.



One game available through the scheme is Super Smash Bros. Ultimate—a fighting game in which players can choose from among several popular characters, including Pokemon. This competitive multiplayer game will be the focus of a national eSports competition called Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Team Battle, which Digital Schoolhouse said would help youngsters develop teamwork skills. Beyond the game, students are able to see the relationship between education and the professional video game industry.

Although Nintendo is the lead partner, several others have joined Digital Schoolhouse since it launched in 2014, including Sega, Sony, Ubisoft, and the Warwickshire County Council. Kalpesh Tailor, Head of Communications at Nintendo UK, told GamesIndustry.biz that the program will “...help inspire the next generation of young minds across the UK.” GamesIndustry.biz indicates that the play-based learning program is projected to reach 32,000 students this academic year.

The intention of the learning program seems to be working. A story in Screenrant.com noted that in 2018, more than 5,000 students participated in a multi-school eSports tournament held by Digital Schoolhouse. Over 90% of those students reported that their involvement in the tournament made them more interested in computing.

As Digital Schoolhouse grows in popularity in the UK, is it a good idea for other countries to implement similar programs? Experts believe there may be a lot of untapped potential to use video games to help with kids’ problem-solving skills. Kids can get very absorbed in games, and this program seems to be a way to meet them on their level.



There has been a long-standing debate among educators and politicians as to whether video games have value in the classroom. While many people believe that the fictional characters in video games can deliver lessons of empathy and consequence, others argue that the on-screen violence and sedentary lifestyle are enough to exclude games from an educational environment.

The truth? While there is research stating that video games do not promote gun violence, and they aren't bad for kids, per se, there just isn't much data on video games in education yet. It is up to the educators to develop the appropriate curriculum around the video game content and translate how the gameplay relates to the real world. Parents can take note of the many avenues within the eSports industry, and can encourage kids to pursue those opportunities.

Different people have different learning styles, but aligning the teaching of life skills with video games may prove to make life easier for students and educators alike. Students may be more engaged with the learning method and teachers may not have to work so hard to persuade students to participate. While video games may not replace traditional educational systems, they can be used to reinforce the learning of soft skills such as camaraderie, sportsmanship, and teamwork. Ultimately, the goal is to inspire youngsters to work together to solve problems in real life, rather than to get hooked on playing video games in isolation.

Schools Using Video Games to Teach — Sources

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