

Video Games- Are They Effective Teaching Tools?

If video games are on your shopping list this holiday season, recognize that they serve as a teaching tool, whether we want them to or not. Did you know that video games use the same techniques that really great teachers use? A lot is known about how to be an effective teacher, and we know a lot about using technology to teach. Video games use many of these techniques.

Two psychology researchers (Douglas Gentile and Ronald Gentile) studied three groups of youth in grades 3 through 12 and found that students that play multiple violent games actually changed to have greater hostility and aggressive behaviors. Students who played multiple violent video games actually learned through those games to produce greater hostile actions and aggressive behaviors over a span of six months. Controlling for age, race, sex, total amount of time spent playing video games, and prior aggressive behaviors, the research found that the amount of rated violence in the games played predicted increased aggression. Violent video games motivate learners to persevere in learning and mastering skills to navigate through complex problems and changing environments- just like good teachers do.

Because learning occurs from video games, regardless of whether the effects are intentional or unintentional, the Gentiles added that this 'should make us more thoughtful about choosing games for children and adolescents to play.'