

Illinois Online Conference Critique
PowerPoint Games
Presenters: Michael Barbour and Jim Kinsella
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Presentation Techniques

Michael Barbour and Jim Kinsella conducted their presentation on PowerPoint Games. They began the presentation by discussing the differences between PowerPoint Games and Web Quests. They also presented many statistics about the hours students spend playing video games or other digital media.

One topic covered was how this type of activity benefits schools because most already have PowerPoint. They also covered how to setup a game and what sections should be included. There were three typical setups presented. We watched a demonstration including one teacher-created game and two other student-created games. The presenters illustrated how they worked and how students would use them.

We were given the website at the University of Georgia where many PowerPoint games are accessible to educators. Also on this site are handouts on how to create PowerPoint games and how to create higher order of thinking questions. These resources are a great way to see how others have used PowerPoint games to get students interested in new topics. The site given was <http://it.coe.uga.edu/wwild/pptgames/index.html>.

The technology used in this presentation included PowerPoint as well as the Internet resources given by the presenters.

Effectiveness for Audiences

We found the presentation to be effective in demonstrating the uses of PowerPoint games and the benefits of this type of computer use. These games would be simple to apply in most school settings for a number of reasons. One reason is that schools already have access to PowerPoint and do not need to purchase new software. Also, most teachers already know how to use PowerPoint and do not need to go through training to learn a new program. Along with teachers being familiar with PowerPoint, students are also often familiar with PowerPoint, which means less class time training on how to use the software. Finally, many people would like to use PowerPoint for more than simply another presentation.

The presenters gave out a basic format to follow when creating PowerPoint games or having students create games. Having this basic layout allows for ease of use by all involved. The creator simply needs to figure out what questions should be asked and the information necessary to include. These games have been used with students as low as third grade, which suggests that the difficulty in creating a game is quite low.

A few questions were asked of the presenters during the presentation. One had to do with how to ensure that the questions asked of the students are quality questions. The presenters suggested looking at Bloom's Taxonomy as well as training students on how to ask higher level questions, not simply yes or no. They also discussed some of the drawbacks to using PowerPoint games. Some of these included keeping students on topic and not just playing games or surfing the web. Although these may occur, the presenters had found that most students really enjoyed making the games and easily stayed on topic. They also suggested managing the time allowed for students to create these games. Students could spend a long time, but it is

important for them to use the game for its purpose and not spend all their time simply creating the game.

Usefulness of Information

The presentation incorporated many positive and useful pieces of information. However, there are some potential obstacles and viewpoints that were not addressed. The start of the presentation included interesting and pertinent information in regards to students' relationship with digital media which was clearly referenced and current. The presenters used these statistics to imply that the PowerPoint games would be a good fit for students' media-gearred minds. However, the information failed to recognize how the media discussed moves rapidly engaging even those with short attention spans, whereas the slower paced PowerPoint games potentially may not.

The presenters compared the use of PowerPoint games to the use of WebQuests. They made a valid point indicating that a drawback of WebQuests is they are more teacher-centered and portrayed the PowerPoint games as being more student-centered. However, they neglected to recognize that the use of either activity type can be teacher-centered or student-centered depending on the application.

It was evident that the presenters were very excited about using the PowerPoint games in the classroom and had a great deal of experience doing so. Their examples of different types of PowerPoint games were very useful and were created by students demonstrating the true possibility of others using them as well. However, it seemed that the presenters' experience was limited to their familiar learning environment. They did not touch upon how

to use the PowerPoint games in other types of learning situations such as those with limited computer access or minimal computer skills.

Despite overlooking some important perspective, Michael Barbour and Jim Kinsella gave an interesting and worthwhile presentation. It gave new perspective to a commonly used program that is found in most schools today. Their idea could be easily implemented into the classroom and opened the door to using PowerPoint in more innovative ways with students.