Teaching Tip Tuesday
Gameful Pedagogy

What is Gameful Pedagogy?

Taking inspiration from well-designed games, **Gameful Pedagogy** emphasizes the creation of a learning environment in which there are many pathways to success, incorporating student autonomy and choice while providing and environment in which failure is not fatal. It allows students to recover from setbacks and emphasizes a growth mindset. Although the enactment of this pedagogy varies, it is generally characterized by grading schemes in which students begin with 0 and add points through completion of assignments. Assignments have high point values and rigorous grading. All students typically complete a core set of assignments that allow them to demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. However, if their performance falls short of mastery, they can earn additional points through completion of various optional assignments that also allow demonstration of mastery of learning outcomes. Implementation of this approach has led to increased student motivation and engagement, and higher overall performance compared to traditionally graded courses.

Key Features of Gameful Pedagogy

- **Transparency fosters student success.** In order to make meaningful choices, students must have a clear understanding of all choices and course expectations. This transparency benefits all students, making the targets to hit clear.

- **Promotes student autonomy through meaningful choices.** Students can choose how they demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes, in an atmosphere that encourages metacognitive reflection. They must monitor their progress toward learning goals and plan their learning approach.

- **Facilitates use of instructor feedback.** Because the goal of learning outcome mastery is tied to good course performance, as students strive toward the learning goal, they must consider and reflect upon instructor feedback.

- **Encourages growth mindset and academic risk-taking.** Because there is room to fail at a specific task and still perform well in a course, with multiple options for recovering points, failure is normalized as part of learning. With each failure, something is learned, and the next task becomes easier. In this environment, students are often willing to take risks on more challenging assignments, rather than gravitating to the "sure things."

Implementation Considerations

- Incorporate added time for course planning.

- Plan to explain the reasoning and structure of the course to students

- Prepare for frequent grading to provide needed feedback.

- Develop rubrics for each assignment that assess achievement of specific learning outcomes.

- Collect student feedback about your initial gameful design. The development of a course may take many iterations.

Ajlen, R. B. Plummer, E. Staub, and E. Zhu. 2020. Motivating students to learn: Transforming courses using a gameful approach. CRLT Occasional Paper No. 40, pp. 1-11.

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