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Today's show is sponsored by Smart Learning Suite (<http://cctea.ch/10MT-smartlab>), an excellent tool to create more engaging lessons. I'll tell you more about Smart Learning Suite and a free webinar they're sponsoring with me on Thursday February 9th at 4:00pm about Differentiating Instruction with Technology (<http://www.coolcatteacher.com/free-webinar-differentiate-instruction-technology/>).

MICHAEL:

"And you see this bonding happening in your class when you do gamification the way that I'm talking about in *Explore like a Pirate* (<http://amzn.to/2l1GT7M>). It really builds a family."

VICKI: *The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every weekday you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.*

VICKI: Hi teachers, it's *Five Idea Friday*. You're sitting there planning those lesson plans and you need some ideas. Well, here, we have today with us one of my favorite authors, Michael Matera. His book, *Explore like a Pirate* is beside my desk and I reference it all the time. So Michael, give us an idea that we can use now.

MICHAEL All right. So the five ideas that I think you should take away from this podcast and start using right away would be, number one, **you need to choose a theme**. Pick a theme right away and build your whole game around it. A lot of teachers stress on how to pick a theme. I just say, take one that's already out there. It could be from a book, it could be anywhere, and I get a lot of my ideas from movies as well as – I also look at a lot of images and just stare at an image and come up with, like, if you're going to do a medieval game, go look on Google and find some images and that will get you started with your theme right off the bat.

VICKI: Well, you do *Realm of Nobles* and, of course, Ron Clark (<https://twitter.com/ronclarkacademy?lang=en>) kind of has a Harry Potter type twist (<https://mrsbowley.wordpress.com/2012/09/30/the-ron-clark-challenge-sorting-students-into-houses/>) and I was looking up Shakespearean insults (http://www.pangloss.com/seidel/shake_rule.html) because I kind of have a little bit of a medieval theme as well.

MICHAEL Nice.

VICKI: Yeah. You can look up all kinds of cool stuff. What's idea number two?

MICHAEL Idea number two is use something that I call adventure paths (<http://explorelikeapirate.com/adventure-path-building-confidence-through-challenge-based-learning/>) in your class. I did a vlog on it, if you would check out the show notes, there will be a link to it.

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These are additional things kids can go on top of your normal course style curriculum and I do them all different ways. Some of them are mysteries, some of them are break-out-box type of things, some have requirements to get on them but kids are always looking forward to this. And what it ultimately adds to your class is actually a more challenging curriculum that kids can aspire to – but when you put it out there it's this, like, adventure path things that they could choose to do. It's amazing, the response and the difference you get from the kid than when you just say you're advanced, do this advanced work.

And when you invite some other kids into it, it doesn't have to be just your advance kids.

VICKI: Give me a quick example.

MICHAEL Right now, we're doing Greek unit and what we did was they found the adventure path that was on my website and it kind of explains how to get in. And to get in they have to memorize three Greek myths and they have to find the Sphinx which is this hidden image we hid around the school and it happens to be on the English teacher's desk. If they see it, he's the Sphinx and they have to recite these three myths to him. If they do, and he says they truly know the myths, because he's teaching the myths in their class, then he gives them a password to go onto the next section of my adventure path and what they'll have to do is write their own myth. And then if they get through that, then they'll have to make a commercial about their myth.

VICKI: Cool. Love it. Okay, what's idea number three?

MICHAEL Idea number three is mini games. If you're not ready to totally dive into gamification, in my book there are details like – I think 25 to 30 different mini games. So I think, like, Jeopardy but if you want to spice up your class let's not always plan Jeopardy for review day. Like I said, there's 30 different mini games you can use right off the bat, one of which we're going to **give away here on the show called Mystery Box.** (<https://explorelikeapirate.com/product/mystery-box-game/>)

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I developed it and you can get it on the website and hopefully one of you guys are going to win it, but it really spices up the class.

VICKI: Awesome, mini games are so much fun. And having a variety, not just the same thing all the time. Okay, what's our fourth?

MICHAEL Number four is using game mechanics in class. So mechanics are how the game sort of operates, what are the rules of the game? And seriously, I don't care if you're a gamer or not, you have played some game, whether it's an app on your phone, a board game, and just stop for a moment and think about, "*What were the choices that game allowed you to do?*" Whether it was Monopoly, making sets of property or if it

was Angry Birds, like having a limited number of birds to knock down the tower. You know, there are all these various mechanics that we could embed into our course design. And when we do, it not only unlocks the potential of the students, it also unlocks our own creativity.

The lay out of my course now is so different than it ever has been and the kids are enthralled in it, they're loving to explore it. And we just keep trying these different mechanics that I pull from games.

VICKI: It's not just points, is it? Give us one or two other things besides points because people who just say, "Oh, I've done points on game-based learning. I'm like, "Oh now, you're missing the point here."

MICHAEL You totally are missing the point. So the brand of gamification I'm talking about – I like to think about *Explore like a Pirate* is like way beyond, just points or behavioral management. I mean, we're truly talking about an immersive learning environment. And one example would be **the time-based mechanics**. So you could have something like – I always joke that happy hour is a good example of the time-based mechanic. So being at the right place at the right time gets you a certain benefit. So you could do something like that in your class, like, you could have a bonus if somebody does something in the last five minutes of your class every day and you could structure a game around that, just that mechanic alone.

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I mean, this is a tried and true game design mechanic that billion dollar games are based around. Like Clash of Clans is a time-based mechanic where you have to go in and log in and collect your resources every day.

VICKI: Awesome. So what is the fifth?

MICHAEL The fifth is **build challenges**. I absolutely love build challenges, what they do for the students as well as myself. So I bought some Lego sets and another building block set called Kapla blocks and just gets kids to creatively think about what they read or what we're discussing. When you ask them to construct what we read, it changes everything. So I do the traditional where they have to write a summary of what they read or something like that but it really takes the learning and almost turns it 180 degrees, when you ask them, "Now build a scene from last night's reading and then explain the scene." And then they're sitting there with these Legos, or Kapla blocks (<http://amzn.to/2l1LSVU>) are things like Jenga blocks, they're just laser-cut wood blocks.

So they then have to construct a scene out of that. It really challenges them. And you should see the team work that gets involved in that, how amped up the class gets in that and then the fact that – you called it, like, a challenge, right? It's a team challenge. There's also a ton of collaborative work that happens. **And you see this bonding happening in your class when you do gamification the way that I'm talking about in *Explore like a Pirate*. It really builds a family.**

VICKI: And remarkable teachers out there, I just want to tell you that I am so all in. I was telling Michael before we started taping that this is one of my favorite books. I've used *Realm of Nobles*, I don't mind copying from the best.

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So it's like *Realm of Nobles* and we have houses and we have challenges. And I was looking up Shakespearean insults for some of our random events of the day because we love to use ClassCraft (<https://game.classcraft.com/share/wDGcv6FpAWAyrBhe>) for kind of our gamification. But I literally have kids running to all of my classes. They're running, they're getting started, and they're excited. And I teach grades 8, 9 and 10. And if you can get grade 10 excited about stuff, you can get any grade excited.

So the book is *Explore like a Pirate*. We're also going to be giving away *Explore like a Pirate* and a *Mystery Box*. Now, the way to win that is to go today on iTunes, leave an honest review and leave your Twitter handle or your Instagram handle, let us know how to reach you and we're going to draw two winners today, one for each of those. So thank you so much for listening, remarkable teachers. And get out there and put this in your lesson plan today.

Today's sponsor, Smart Learning Suite, has some fantastic ways to differentiate instruction. Next Thursday, February 9th at 4:00pm Eastern, I'll be sharing my tips for differentiating instruction in the classroom with technology on a free webinar sponsored by Smart Learning Suite. Check the show notes to register for this free webinar. My favorite tool in the Smart Learning Suite is Smart Lab. This is a cool fun game-based learning tool. Download your 45-day free trial today at cctea.ch/10mt-smartlab or by clicking the link in the show notes.

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