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Today we have a conversation with Matt Farber about game-based learning and his use of Twine in the classroom. This is episode 67.

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

VICKI: Happy Ed Tech Tool Tuesday. Today we have Dr. Matt Farber, @matthewfarber he teaches social studies in New Jersey and he is one of my favorite game-based learning experts. He has a revision for his new book *Gamify Your Classroom*. <http://amzn.to/2pDNniB> So Matt, today we're talking about having game-based learning in our classroom. What are some ways that you think we should do that?

MATT: Learning must be driven by play, right? Play as Vygotsky, the child psychologist, wrote, Play brings learning to the zone of proximal development. That's what makes people learn. You have to be playful. Playing around with knowledge, playing around with information. And it's not necessarily all loose children running around with no structures at all, it's an illusion of giving instruction, it's an illusion of choice. One of my favorite models is 20% time. That to me is a greater to gamify the classroom as any other. And for listeners who are unfamiliar, 20% time is when kids get 20% of the week or one day of the five days to peruse a passion project based on the theme or based on something they want to learn more about.

(Editor's Note: See 9 Fine Ways to Do 20% Time - <http://www.coolcatteacher.com/9-fine-ways-better-20-time/>)

And that's what games really, they're that intrinsic motivation to continue onward. VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

VICKI: So you have something you do with games in your classroom, to teach social studies. Do you have an example to share?

MATT: Well, what I do is I use games as a model. There are many different ways you can situate games in the classroom.

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There are games to introduce content, review content, to teach content. But my thinking and my observations of experts who use games in the classroom are that they don't always do that. What they do is they use games the same way you would use at field trip. So as if you were taking a class to the museum of National History to study dinosaurs and then come back, de-brief the class and then have the class have projects and project-based learning assignments that stem off of that.

So in this sense, the game in the classroom is not just delivering content but it's creating a meaningful experience or shared experience for the entire class to draw upon. Because it's not always feasible to go in Miss. Frizzle's magic school bus.

VICKI: So give us an example. Sure.

MATT: So one example I use is an essential question of revolution. So I my class, where had the American Revolution, we just concluded that unit. So what I do is I first give the class the essential questions, like what are revolutions and what are causes and what causes revolutions? The regular sets of questions you would have in your lesson plan. And I have students who use Post-it and they come up with words and they put them on Post-it and then have to answer the essential question.

Then I give them large construction paper and I have them – round two, we call it – put the Post-it clustered together in similar themes at their tables. And then they circle those themes and they share with the class what they think the essential questions mean and then I hang them around the room with painter's tape. By the way, using large construction paper and painter's tape is much cheaper than going and buying that giant 3M paper with the sticky Post-its on the back – that's a little classroom hack there.

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So from there then we have the class play games. So for the revolution they may play Mission U.S. <http://www.mission-us.org/> which has mission, it's from PBS and there's a mission there that has to do with being in the American Revolution. Now, they may play other games that have to do with being in the Revolution. We may even play a game like Coup <http://amzn.to/2pDSMq2> which is a card game where you have to social deduction to figure out who is who. And then we could talk about Nathan Hale and the spy network that took place in the revolution.

So that's that. That's the game as a model or the sheer experience. From there, students then get a chance to create their own games. And this is a big like fan fiction. What will be the best Harry Potter book that follows book A, for example? So in a game-based learning classroom I use different tools, I can use card games where they change the games or I can use Twine. And Twine is one of my favorites. It's at twinery.org, it's free, it's professional grade. And actually what it does is it creates a JavaScript language but you don't have to know any coding at all. All you do is use the square brackets that are on any computer, you put two square brackets, open and close, and you put your word in the middle. And that becomes hypertext.

Looks just like a choose your own adventure book. And what I have is students create these Twine stories from the second person point of view. So this adds a

layer of empathy. So sure, you can get some empathy from playing and role playing in a video game. But to me that's not quite enough. Sure, you want to have teachers debriefing and having students contextualize the experience, but still, I don't think that's enough. To really get a sense of empathy, we have to start designing something. The design process, the design thinking process starts with empathy. Empathy for the end-user.

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So this is an opportunity for students to take their sheer experience from playing an educational video game or even a commercial video game and then creating their own experience. In Twine, we use second person, so a simple start might be you see a door and you see a path. And the word door and path would be within those double square brackets. And that becomes a choice. And twinery.org will automatically make two branches. One will be the first choice and one will be the second choice, the pass.

That's all I tell students. I put the double bracket on the board and I have them go at it. The consequence of this is that we go through content very fast I'm about a month ahead of where I normally am. They finished the book. They finished all the battles. They go through, they pick which battle they want to put in. A lot of them will go the next level and they embed pictures, they embed sounds. I have a student this year who went home and taught himself CSS and JavaScript and he created an inventory in the Twine game which is really hard to do. I have not been able to figure that one out.

VICKI: Wow. So who plays these adventure games? Should they play each other's games, is that what they do?

MATT: That's exactly what they do. So what they do is I give them a T-chart, I use Google Docs which is just really easy for this sort of assessment. What really happened in one column and what happened in this person's game. And then we do it under the guise of play-testing, because kids love play-testing or beta-testing. It's a little different than peer reviewing. Here, you're giving feedback on the experience itself. So students are making these Twine games for others to experience. The end result, I publish online so others can see it as well. but they basically go from table to table or I put all the final product on one Google Doc and they click through it and they give feedback to the other students about what happened in each story.

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VICKI: There's so much we could dig into here. And we're really out of time. So our big tech tool for today is using Twine. In 30 seconds, Matt, what are some other ways you think that educators could use Twine in other subjects?

MATT: Sure. You can use Twine for role play, for example, in science. What if you made a story from the point of view of a red blood cell and what are those interactions?

Because what games do really well are model systems. And there are systems in English language arts as far as character webs, systems and science, and there are systems of how things interact in math. So if you can show students that model and give them the chance to work with that model, you will get a lot of meaningful learning going on in your classroom.

VICKI: We're going to have a giveaway <https://gleam.io/dsSWp/10minute-teacher-giveaway-contest> of Matt's revision of his book, Gamify Your Classroom, a field guide to game-based learning. So check out the show notes, enter our competition to win a copy of Gamify Your Classroom, the new version. And Matt has such a wealth of information to share. His Edutopia articles <https://www.edutopia.org/users/matthew-farber-edd> are fantastic and he just does so many fascinating things in this classroom. And I'm actually going to be digging into Twine and might figure out a way to use this at the end of my school year this year. So thanks, Matt.

MATT: You're welcome. Thank you.

VICKI: Hello Remarkable Teachers, would you please help me do something? I'm trying to help more people find out about the Ten Minute Teacher Show. To do that, if you just could take some time to go to iTunes or to Stitcher or to leave a review. It really does help. Thank you so much.

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