Chapter 4
Integrating Video Games and Scholastic Esports Into Preservice Teacher Experiences

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ABSTRACT

This four-year study explored a multiple case study about how four preservice teachers spent an entire school year with students, developed their teacher identity, designed lessons, played games, and coached scholastic esports. What started out as a culturally responsive gesture to include video games and competitive esports into the classroom turned out to be what both the middle school students and the teacher candidates needed to push their learning experiences forward in meaningful ways. Teacher candidates gained valuable experiences from the integration of video games and scholastic esports through a wide variety of teaching strategies. Teaching candidates answered five questions about their experiences using video games and esports in the classroom. Five major themes were identified through the reflexive thematic analysis: developing relationships, understanding games and scholastic esports, teaching in new ways, perspectives and attitudes about games and scholastic esports, and the integration of games and scholastic esports.

TEACHING WITH VIDEO GAMES AND ESPORTS

In the last decade, the entire world of education has drastically changed. Students have acquired a taste for digital learning and teachers must work to bring them activities and curricular vehicles that please their palate. It is the educator's job to prepare students for a future that is predicated on the ability to make sense of both the real and digital world. For teacher educators, they must proactively think about what skills, lessons, strategies, and values their students will need for their future careers (Portnoy and Schrier, 2019). This chapter will shed light on four preservice educators who acquired traditional didactic teaching strategies and integrated video games and scholastic esports into their curriculum. As many educators begin using video games and scholastic esports in the classroom, it highlights the need for teacher preparation programs to think about how they might introduce, discuss, and model what the integration of scholastic esports could look like for preservice teacher experiences and what could we learn from it?

In 2010, Miles began exploring the ideas, concepts, and theories of prominent scholars like James Gee, Janet Murray, John Dewey, and Louise Rosenblatt and realized he could incorporate mobile-based games, video games as literature, VR experiences, and esports into his middle school curriculum (Harvey, 2018). In 2014, Miles started a doctoral program focusing on literacy and technology and started working with preservice teachers in his own English language arts classroom. What started as a curricular bridge between common literary practices and video games became so much more for Miles and his preservice teachers, Jose, Marisa, Adrianna, and Cameron. In this chapter, the use of the word '*we'* represents the ideas and expressions on behalf of all the authors of this chapter who each spent roughly 650 hours or more working with Miles in the classroom. Miles spent over 2,600 hours in total with his teacher candidates over the last four years.

This multiple case study, started in 2016, examines the experiences of four preservice educators and their use of video games and esports in the middle school language arts and media literacy classroom. This study seeks to learn more about the experiences and reflections from those preservice teachers during their time in the classroom. Each preservice teacher spent an entire school year working with students, developing their teaching identity, designing lessons using a variety of multimodal literacies, and they all played video games with their students in class. Some used VR to support their lessons, some facilitated small group gaming circles with popular consoles, others guided whole-group gaming activities with popular gaming titles, and some helped coach the school's competitive *Rocket League* team.

With each new preservice teacher Miles worked with, education quickly evolved towards a more technologically savvy approach to get their middle school students and players to read, write, speak, and listen well. Each preservice teacher was introduced to different technology, different video games, new stories, and teaching strategies that pushed the boundaries about what it meant to implement esports and gaming into language arts and media literacy classes. This chapter will demonstrate the importance of implementing video games and scholastic esports into the preservice teacher experience.

The latest video games and technological resources of the day are waiting to be used as learning vehicles across disciplines and grade levels (Harvey, Deuel, & Marlatt, 2020). This chapter will focus on how video games and esports gave four teacher candidates the chance to explore a wide variety of teaching strategies to engage their students to help them develop their abilities to read, write, speak, and listen. In addition, it will highlight the voices and ideas of the four preservice teachers, two now in their own classrooms, one who is now a dean at the same school, and one who is still in their preservice teach-

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