Getting Smart Releases Report Showing Connection Between Social and Emotional Learning and Minecraft

Study finds gaming can improve student SEL outcomes when supported by educators.

June 23, 2017 - A new report, How Minecraft Supports Social and Emotional Learning in K–12 Education, published by Getting Smart investigates the connection between classroom use of Minecraft and the social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes of K–12 students. Through interviews, a global survey and several case studies, the report provides an overview of SEL, insights on gaming in education and advice from educators on supporting a SEL program within a school.

Based on the responses gathered from a diverse group of educators representing 11 countries across four continents, the report is a deeper dive into the ways educators are incorporating gaming into their lessons via Minecraft: Education Edition to support their students’ SEL growth. Survey findings include:

- Nearly all teachers surveyed (97.7%) cited “problem solving” as the top SEL skill that their students learn from classroom Minecraft lessons and extracurricular participation in the game. Other top skills cultivated include creativity (95.5%), critical thinking (93.3%) and collaboration (91.1%).

- The majority of teachers also felt that their students’ decision-making (88.8%) and communication (86.6%) abilities were positively impacted by the time they spent playing Minecraft, whether working in small groups or individually.

- Just over half (51.1%) believe that Minecraft also enables students to build empathy skills. (This could be due to interactions with classmates, as well as with characters within the game.)

The report features interviews with Dr. Michelle Zimmerman, Renton Prep Christian School; Rody Boonchouy, Buck Institute for Education; and Jeff Gearhart, Brinnon School District. It also includes several school case studies providing an inside view of how gaming is supporting student SEL outcomes at Renton Prep Christian School.
International School in the Bellevue School District and Bryant Montessori from Tacoma Public Schools.

“It is clear from our research that Minecraft creates opportunities for transformational learning experiences,” says Caroline Vander Ark, Getting Smart COO. “However, we also found that the most critical component to connecting gaming and student SEL outcomes is the teacher. The educators we visited and spoke with were transparent about learning objectives, promoted student agency and independence and acted as learning guides.”

The Minecraft Education Team has a variety of workshops on site at ISTE 2017 June 25-28 in San Antonio if you want to learn more. If you’re #NotAtISTE this year, there will be live streaming content for educators around the globe. Visit this site to learn more: https://education.minecraft.net/events/iste.

To learn more, download the report, How Minecraft Supports Social and Emotional Learning in K–12 Education.

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