



# Journal of Blog Research

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## Issue 2: Gamification of the Reading Process as an Effective Method to Maximize Student Engagement

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## **Gamification of the Reading Process as an Effective Method to Maximize Student Engagement**

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The digitalization process has reached all aspects of our life and all generations. You can hardly amaze a preschooler with an ordinary alphabet with nice pictures, so it is time to look for new ways to teach reading that will interest the children.

A child's successful inclusion into the information society depends on realizing children's creative potential and developing their ability to perceive symbolic information. This ability is determined by the development of thinking, imagination, and the ability to express themselves through words during communication with others.

Our mission at Children Story Time is to help kids learn to love reading through engaging stories and fun games. We developed methods and activities that contribute to developing and increasing the child's interest in reading. Both fiction and games have tons of benefits for your young learner!

## **1. The correlation between reading and games**

Symbolic information is encoded in all the diversity of life, but most of all, it is encoded in language. For students to be in demand and recognized in modern society, they should be educated from childhood to think, express their thoughts in words, agree or argue, fantasize, and imagine. In other words, a child needs to be prepared to respond to the plurality and diversity of the world. All of these personality traits are best trained and developed during the reading process, and that's why it is necessary for children to develop a lasting interest in this activity. However, this interest does not always arise by itself and often requires considerable and purposeful effort.

Not all children excel in a traditional educational setting. Whether they have difficulty concentrating or struggle without individual help, it's not always easy for children to succeed in large classrooms. Tools like reading and educational games can help children bridge that gap and improve literacy. In addition, reading and games encourage children to use their imagination and get creative because both skills encourage and complement the other.

Reading requires children to stretch the limits of their imagination, and games help them find the motivation to understand new concepts while mastering the game's rules. When children read or play a game,

they pick up on essential skills in a fun, unique, and approachable way.

## **2. Implementation of technology in today's learning environment**

Technology has completely revolutionized education, which had no choice but to follow suit to keep up with the times and help children understand how to learn in the environments they will encounter in their lives. Children are getting learning tablets and notebook laptops as early as elementary school, perhaps even earlier if they are introduced at home. Modern education should be tailored to the needs of a future generation and their peculiarities. Innovative educational technology, such as gamification, seemed impossible until yesterday, but today it is successfully implemented in the educational process, making it more effective, interactive, and interesting.

There is no shortage of educational content on devices like tablets and computers, most of which can be very beneficial for children when used correctly. Knowing how to use technology appropriately in education is important, so students reap the benefits without overuse.

Here are some of the ways that technology is becoming prevalent in today's educational world:

### ***1. Technology at home***

Most parents purchase an iPad or similar style tablet for their children at some point, which can be a great tool for children to sharpen their reading skills if used for fun educational activities. If children are facing challenges with specific concepts at school, parents can easily find an educational app or game that they can download directly to the tablet for their child. They can play the game with their child or use it during independent play time as a fun, educational activity.

### ***2. Technology at school***

Gone are the days of handouts and paper tests. While many schools still take a traditional approach either because they value the importance of students learning and problem-solving on paper or because the budget doesn't allow the purchase of computers for

students, the trend is definitely moving towards a highly technological classroom. In recent years, more and more schools have been embracing technology in the classroom. Depending on the school philosophy and the funding available in the budget, many districts are issuing students laptops or tablets. Moreover, assignments are sent via email or loaded directly onto the laptop through specific educational programs. Classroom and homework are all done almost exclusively on their laptops.

### ***3. Technology for distance learning***

The distance learning period during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 has been a new experience for many students, teachers, and parents worldwide. It has become a necessary global phenomenon, changing education. Schools had to send the entire student population home for an unknown period and use technology to continue their online curriculum. Many online programs and applications made it possible, but it has also been a game of trial and error for many school systems. Although most schools have returned to full capacity, distance learning is still widely used. Some families continue with remote schooling full-time, while others just have to use remote platforms during high case numbers or quarantine periods. These remote learning programs are helpful because they bring the classroom into a student's home. While it's not perfect, having the ability to access classwork, tests, assignments, and games in one place have revolutionized children's ability to take their schoolwork anywhere.

### **3. Implementation of technology specifically in K-3 education**

The use of technology in schools plays a significant role in improving the quality and accessibility of education. Introducing new technologies in the educational process allows the use of advanced digital tools to support the educational process along with traditional teaching materials. However, when implementing technology into the education system, it is necessary to carefully assess the consequences of digitalization and adopt an optimal strategy to protect against possible threats. However, although it's a somewhat controversial topic to discuss screen time and usage for children, it's becoming more normalized.

Children are exposed to technology and screens from a very young age. Parents and educators realize that children will encounter technology throughout their lives, so weaving it into education as early as kindergarten makes sense. For this reason, most educators and childhood development researchers agree that finding ways to embrace technology in early education is key.

Introducing children to age-appropriate games and programs is crucial to get the most out of their use. The technology used in a k-3 classroom vs. middle or high school classroom is different and should be adjusted to the student's age group.

Here are some ways that technology is used in a K-3 setting specifically:

### ***1. Make learning fun and dynamic***

For K-3 children to begin their first successes in reading, they need a program that attracts their attention with fun but still educational games. Thus, the games, music, bright colors, and all sorts of visual effects attract children's attention.

Also, the program should have a step-by-step level of difficulty so that the games become more challenging as the various levels are passed. This way, technology creates an immersive experience for children, so they can pick up on basic, age-appropriate concepts in a way that feels like fun instead of learning.

### ***2. Help children become interested in reading***

Many children don't have much interest in reading these days, especially because watching a cartoon or movie is easier and faster than reading a book. They don't have to put their own effort into processing and digesting information because everything is ready and prepared for immediate consumption. In addition, technology offers us fun features that a regular book just doesn't have.

Parents and caregivers can download various early reading programs and games on laptops or tablets, which help emerging readers in grades k-3. Moreover, these games provide different features that can help children expand their reading independently by selecting the most appealing option.

### **3. Teach children to follow instructions**

Confidence is an essential building block in the early years of elementary school, and technology can play a significant role in this phase. Another great thing about teaching young children in the k-3 space to use technology is that it can help them learn how to follow a set of instructions. This is a valuable skill that teaches independence and can help with behavioral issues as well.

Teaching children how to navigate and follow instructions makes them feel accomplished and empowers them to take on more complex processes in the future. When they feel the rush of independence from being able to complete a task themselves with minimal help, they begin to crave that confident feeling and ask for more.

### **4. The importance of technology games integration for successful reading**

The game is a special kind of task, which is always accompanied by interest. It is a useful exercise, a kind of gymnastics, mobilizing students' mental strength because students need to perform a certain intellectual activity to solve it. Games discipline the mind, teach clear logic, and develop the ability to draw conclusions. And most importantly, it is "dominated by emotions," which makes the process of participation in the game a pleasure for children. This contributes to the emergence of positive emotions from the learning process and creates a creative and friendly atmosphere in the classroom, promoting enthusiasm for the reading.

Parents and educators should not fear the idea of helping their children learn to read on their tablets or using an educational game. This is especially important if children are resistant to the curriculum or unable to understand the concepts during reading segments at school.

Studies show that reading and games can and should go hand in hand with early childhood education since they provide children with a diverse way to learn and express themselves. If children have difficulty reading, are resistant to the activity, or have any delays or learning disabilities, sometimes learning to read through games can make a big difference.



## **Effective applications used in building 2D and 3D games**

Technologically savvy teachers or parents can build 2D and 3D games themselves to help children learn to read more efficiently. While it may require some advanced skills to make, there are plenty of applications they can use to build educational games. Unreal Engine and Unity are the two most popular platforms for creating educational games with app and game developers. Both applications because they are user-friendly and flexible.

## **5. Gamification approach to education**

Gamification in education refers to using game elements during the learning process. The term should not be confused with the game because gamification is aimed primarily at achieving results. For children in elementary school, it is something like a bitter pill in a sweet glaze. The teacher does not need to repeat the lesson material long and monotonously, and it is much more convenient to deliver it in the game form. The children digest the “bitter pill” quickly, and the learning process brings the fun.

The main reason for the increased attention to gamification is new possibilities. Therefore, it becomes not an addition to the lesson but an integral part of it.

### **Gamification of K-3 education**

Gamification covers various activities, including breaking the classroom into teams to tackle a project, using a points system to encourage performance, and promoting healthy competition amongst students. The traditional school creates an artificial environment that often contradicts children’s interests, limiting their perception of the classroom walls, and they usually lose even the desire to ask questions. Gamification eliminates this paradox and makes learning interactive, involving everyone in the process. In addition, since many kids are playing games (especially video games) more than ever, by taking advantage of this opportunity, teachers can bring some of the fun aspects of a game into their lesson plans.

Here are some of the benefits of gamification in K-3 education:

### ***Simplify challenging concepts***

Some topics may be more difficult for young children to understand.

If teachers notice that many students are struggling with a specific lesson or topic, turning to a game can help many students break through and understand. Teachers can use the gamification approach and game rules to achieve realistic goals to transform boring tasks into exciting and challenging tasks into simple ones. By learning the rules of the game and trying to “win” or earn points, students will be encouraged to grasp a new concept they may not have been able to learn during a previous lesson. In early education, gamification is easy because playing comes naturally to kids. It plays on some of the natural inclinations of children in that age group so that they will become more engaged in classwork almost without realizing it. Students are often surprised to find that they can easily grasp concepts during a game they previously struggled to learn.

### ***Encourage group learning***

Gamification is introducing elements of fun and play back to the classroom, which is especially important for a young audience. When children are in their early school years, they may learn how to work with and relate to their peers for the first time. When teachers incorporate games that put students in a team setting or encourage healthy competition, they help students develop a positive relationship with one another. They learn to rely on each other, ask for help from one another, and work well together. These team-building skills are essential for children to continue succeeding both in and out of the classroom.

### ***Tangible progress through game levels***

Young children in the K-3 age group are visual learners, and they thrive when they see a visual representation of their progress towards a goal. They like to see what they are learning every step, and reminders of their progress and achievements mean a lot to them.

Games that have levels or ways of tracking points when certain tasks are completed are great for this age group. They give young learners a sense of their progress in a visual way, which keeps them motivated to keep working towards the goal. In addition, playing the game through levels motivate children to learn and reinforce fundamental skills and concepts without even realizing it.

## **6. Advantages of educational gameplay**

Learning through play is an integral part of a child's development since play comes naturally to them. It is not only a way to have a good time, but they learn best when they're having fun. Teachers are finding that the desire to play is still strong even as students transition into the phase where they are part of the more "formal" education system in K-3. By transforming lessons into games, teachers can capitalize on that natural inclination to play while teaching the curriculum they need to cover in the classroom.

Here are a few of the most significant benefits of the educational gameplay:

### ***1. Encourage children to learn***

Gameplay is a great option for children who might struggle with paying attention in an educational setting or who like to express themselves creatively. It gives them a chance to stay motivated and engaged for longer and have fun while learning new concepts at the same time. These games help children master difficult skills like reading because they capture students' attention and encourage them to come back and continue to play.

Some children just might not connect with physical books for one reason or another, which creates resistance to reading over time. Helping children to learn about different ways to read might make all the difference in helping them gain interest and eventually aptitude in the subject. Being flexible and adaptable to their changing needs and interests will help. Young readers love to explore with adaptive educational gameplay because this method empowers them to reach their full potential by beginning their educational journey with literacy.

### ***2. Constructive feedback on the child's progress***

The gameplay offers quick and specific feedback on a child's performance. Sometimes it can be challenging to constructively provide feedback to children so they can understand and accept. The feedback, which are already incorporated into a game, takes a lot of the pressure and undesirable connotation away.

Players immediately know how to improve when they get something wrong in a game. This is very different from a traditional classroom,

where a teacher might be unable to monitor each student's performance. Sometimes feedback is given to the entire class based on the performance of only a few students. The feedback might not be relevant to every child and is certainly not. In gameplay, the feedback is based on the individual learner's performance, which makes it more relevant to their own progress.

### ***3. Student-centered learning through gameplay***

Each child learns at their own pace and way when they are ready, so it is important to give them time. Educational gameplay makes students learn at the rates that come naturally to them without feeling embarrassed or upset if they are behind their classmates. In a traditional classroom, teachers have a curriculum they have to follow regardless of whether students have mastered the content. However, all students may not master the concepts at the same time. When the curriculum doesn't allow ample time for all students to grasp the material, that is when achievement gaps can happen. Gameplay is a student-centered way to learn, where everyone progresses at a different tempo. In an educational game, the student's progress is individualized and based on their own needs. They can only progress when they are ready, which prevents them from missing out on crucial skills and concepts.

### ***4. Develop essential life skills***

Sometimes traditional school curriculum falls short on real-life application of the study material that helps children relate the concepts to their own experiences. However, educational games provide a clearly defined relationship between the concepts to be learned and the real world. When children can see how the game relates to their real life, they can more easily grasp the importance and gain interest in the concepts that are being taught. The players are not only accessing the content but also learning how to follow directions, make decisions, and find new information. This requires players to not simply recall information but to use it to solve problems and develop critical thinking, which will serve them in years to come.

## **7. What age does reading matter most for children?**

A child who likes to read is a pride for parents whose children have

already mastered this skill and cause for concern in families where the child doesn't read or shows no interest. However, there is no universal answer to the question, "When should a child learn how to read?". They will do it when they are ready. Here again, there is no specified age because some children already read fluently at four, and some are not ready even at 7-8. The best way to teach children to read is to motivate them because every child wants to master writing and reading. If a child is not encouraged to read, all attempts to make a child will fail, and age have nothing to do with it.

The most suitable way to reading motivation is to look for something they will enjoy. Reading to babies and toddlers before they enter kindergarten is more for exposure and creating a routine around reading. Finding a way to work reading into the daily routine at least once a day is a great way to foster the interest early.

### **Cultivate a love for reading**

Today's children live in an informationally overloaded environment, and even in a family where reading is a common hobby, a child may be indifferent to books. This is because reading takes up a lot of children's time and even energy. Moreover, reading is a specific intellectual process during which we need to make some mental effort. However, efficiency in various activities depends on how fast students read and absorb information. That's why students who can read quickly can learn better than other peers. And if children read quickly and with pleasure, they don't have to spend much time on homework.

The love for reading develops gradually. It may take a lot of work for parents and teachers to instill this love. But if the child falls in love with reading, it is a huge step to successful learning at school and further self-development. With the right approach and genuine interest from parents and teachers, it's possible to foster a love of reading at any age.

### **How much time should a child spend on reading?**

The most suitable amount of time for children to read each day varies from child to child. What matters the most is that reading should not be forceful. It should happen naturally. You can already read him lullabies and nursery rhymes as soon as the baby is born.

These are the basics. There are poems for newborns, which you can include during bathing or changing clothes. Psychologists even say it is helpful to read to children during pregnancy. Most experts agree that 15-30 minutes of reading per day is a great baseline, with the option to increase if the child particularly enjoys reading. Even just 15 minutes spent reading a few fiction books before bed is a great way to make reading part of the family routine.

### **Reading on a tablet vs. reading a physical book**

There are pros and cons to reading a physical book and reading on a tablet or other electronic device. While they are not the same, young children should be introduced to both types of reading. It doesn't really matter which type a child chooses; what matters is that they read. Toddlers and very small children prefer a picture and to feel paper, while preschoolers and school children may prefer to read through electronic devices, which is very convenient, especially when traveling. In addition, reading a physical book encourages hand coordination, shows children how words look on a real page, and make them read without the help of technological tools like narration or highlighting.

## **8. The role of reading fiction in children's development**

Fiction is a great way for young readers to gain new experiences. Fiction develops children's thinking and imagination, integrates their emotions, and develops the ability to subtly feel the form and rhythm of the native language. The opportunities are endless for children to explore their imagination and the world through reading fiction. Although it's perfectly fine for children to prefer other activities to read, it's important to regularly expose them to age-appropriate fiction books.

Fiction is an effective means of mental, moral, and aesthetic education for children, which has a tremendous influence on the development and enrichment of the child's speech, emotions, and imagination. Fiction evokes love and lasting interest in all children through its dynamism. Children experience fear, dramatic moments or a sense of relief and satisfaction with the fictional characters when justice is won.

Here are just a few reading fiction benefits for children's development:

### ***1. Foster empathy and emotional intelligence***

Fiction opens and explains to the child the life of society and nature, the world of human feelings and relationships. Its educational, cognitive, and aesthetic value is enormous because it expands the children's knowledge about the world around them. Exposure to fictional stories increases a child's empathy. Empathy is an important skill for children to learn to understand their own emotions and learn how to interact with others throughout their lives.

Children who read fiction get the unique opportunity to understand what others think and feel. The story can drop them into situations they may never have experienced or show them what something is like before they experience it, giving them valuable knowledge. That knowledge and comfort with sometimes big, confusing emotions can spread into other areas of children's lives and increase their emotional intelligence. This is helpful when children are learning to regulate their own emotions and how to relate to others' emotions as well.

### ***2. Improve vocabulary and master the language skills***

Reading books to children is one of the essential conditions for mastering the language. Over time, by expanding the vocabulary (based on the formation of ideas about the environment provided in the fiction book), children start to understand speech and language better, stimulating their development. Studies show that reading to children daily (and later reading with them once they become confident, independent readers) can expose them to millions more words in their lifetime. They are more likely to be excited by the challenge of adding new words to their vocabulary rather than avoiding difficult concepts.

Fiction explicitly exposes children to a wide variety of languages. They can relate to the way that the characters in their stories are feeling or the things they are doing. In turn, they can recognize these situations when they happen in their real life to make parallels between the story and their life. This can make it easier for children to understand the different situations they encounter throughout childhood and beyond.

### **3. *Improve academic performance***

Since reading activates the brain, it is one of the crucial methods for improving the performance of all academic levels, from elementary school to higher education. Regular reading improves students' vocabulary, writing skills, language proficiency, and learning motivation. A strong foundation of confident reading impacts students in all academic subjects. For example, reading can make children better writers, improve focus, memory, and problem-solving, and give them a broader vocabulary to express their ideas. When children can read confidently, they feel much surer of themselves socially and in a school setting. They don't have to worry about being called on to read aloud in class or embarrassed when they can't read a sign while out with their friends.

### **4. *Become a lifelong reader***

Reading is a wonderful hobby for children, young adults, and adults. There are no downsides to enjoying reading. Children who read fiction when they're young are likelier to develop reading as a habit. Not just as a child but throughout the rest of their adult life as well. When exposed to age-appropriate fiction books early and often, they will become accustomed to diving into different worlds and fun stories through the words (and sometimes pictures) on the page. That's the transition moment when reading becomes less of a chore and a pleasure.

Children get a chance to expand their minds, escape their world, and so much more between the pages of a book. Instilling this love in children can do nothing but help them get ahead in life.

## **9. Ways to encourage children to read more**

It's important to note that family values play a significant role in developing interest in reading because parents who read and appreciate books are more likely to encourage their kids to read than parents who don't. Of course, reading should never be a punishment or a boring duty for a child but a fun and exciting experience. Many parents struggle with finding ways to help their children enjoy reading more. It might feel frustrating if reading time is a point of contention in your home, so it's helpful to find ways to encourage your child to fall in love (or at least "like") with reading.



Here are some efficient ways to support children to develop an interest in reading:

### ***1. Find just-right books***

Whether children love cats, sports, princesses, or anything in between, there are countless books about just everything under the sun. By discovering children's preferences in certain topics, it is much easier to find books they will be interested in. Children usually become attached to the characters, especially if it reminds them of something else they enjoy. Once they realize that they enjoy reading about things they are already interested in, they might come to enjoy reading more in general.

### ***2. Visit a local library or bookstore***

First of all, a child learns to love books. Especially, this applies to children who do not like to read. In a library, a child can check books, choose the one they like best, and consult with a librarian who will unobtrusively suggest which book will be interesting to read. The process of choice will already bring pleasure, which means that children will want to read the book they choose.

In addition, since books are given for a certain amount of time, children also learn responsibility this way. Visiting the library teaches them to treat things with care, not to tear or destroy books, and return a book on time. To choose a just-right book, children need to concentrate on being attentive- all of this can be taught at the library and bookstore.

Make these trips as regularly as you can and ask your child to tell you why they choose the books that they do. Ask them what appealed to them about the book they chose. Was it the colors? The characters? The fact that it rhymed? These are important clues that you can use to find ways to make reading more enjoyable.

### ***3. Participate in reading challenges***

Many children are motivated by friendly competition. Look for reading challenges at the library or school, or even consider making your own if you can't find one you like. When children earn points or prizes for minutes spent reading or the number of books they read in a certain period, it can be a great motivator to read a little bit every day. Whether it's because they want to earn a prize or compete against

their classmate, the competition aspect makes it fun.

#### ***4. Be a good role model***

There are already generations of parents who do not read themselves, and one of the main rules is to start with yourself. Demonstrate to your child by personal example that reading is a great way to have a wonderful time. Children are watching everything that everyone around them is doing, especially their parents. If you want your child to read more, that might mean you need to crack open a book yourself. Whether they think it's "cool" only if you do something or they want to act just like you, it sometimes takes seeing the behavior regularly modeled for them to sink in. They will start to see that reading is a fun part of life when you model the behavior for them.

#### **Meta Description**

Learn why reading and games are important building blocks in early childhood education.

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