

## Farber, Research Statement

How are educators using games in their classrooms to give students agency, while also teaching 21st Century skills of empathy, systems thinking, and design thinking? This question has motivated my research about educators who are experts of game-based learning, and now informs my current inquiry into teachers who view themselves as learning designers. This includes findings from my recent book *Gamify Your Classroom: A Field Guide to Game-Based Learning* (Peter Lang Academic, 2014; 2017), and my work with Games for Change in developing a series of student game jams supported by the HIVE Digital Media Learning Fund. My forthcoming research pertains to the social practices of educators who use game-based learning in everyday praxis. This work is in *Game-Based Learning in Action* (Peter Lang Academic, in preparation). James Paul Gee, Regents' Professor at Arizona State University is contributing the foreword.

The promises of increased learning outcomes and student engagement from using games to teach is set against the backdrop of larger and lingering questions in the 21st century: What is the purpose of school? Does school exist just for children to grow intellectually? I argue that experts in game-based learning communities of practice seek to change schools by making the experience more hands-on as well as playful.

My dissertation research was rooted in a set of beliefs around what good learning is, based on John Dewey's ideas of experiential learning, and included a Vygotskian pedagogical framework. It was an ethnographic case study that examined how games are used in classrooms of expert teachers in game-based learning communities of practice. The review of literature related was divided into subsections: research on game-based learning, the differences between play and games, and how teachers use games. This study encompassed a constructivist worldview, and the data were analyzed using grounded theory.

A book adaptation of my dissertation is under contract in Peter Lang's New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies series as a book. Similar to other books in this series (e.g., Rebecca Black's influential book on fan fiction communities of practice), it is being restructured to reach a wide audience of pre-service educators. I have also submitted a manuscript to be considered for publication in the journal *E-Learning and Digital Media*.

My current project pertains to a recently awarded grant with Games for Change, a nonprofit organization based in New York City. We were awarded \$100,000 from the HIVE Catalyst grant, which enabled Games for Change to adapt and incorporate the Moveable Game Jam model into its annual Student Challenge, a citywide competition in which middle and high school students create digital games about real-world issues impacting their communities. This project created 20 new activities and a revised, user-friendly, and expanded guide for educators, which I am coauthoring.

All students need to master the skills required for success in school and the workplace. Although games and game design is an engaging method for students to learn these skills, many underserved teens lack opportunities in school or out-of-school to benefit from this type of dynamic, connected learning experience. My current work seeks to enable teachers to give students an opportunity to connect their passion for games with civic issues and technology education.