Cultivating Community with a Pedagogy of Play

For our purposes, the pedagogy of play has been framed into four separate categories:

1. Playfulness
2. Quick Play
3. Gaming Play
4. 'Over'play

These categories can be integrated into a teaching/learning loop at any point.

Playfulness - Teaching Presence

Playfulness acts as a "thinking device" for meaning making (Parker-Rees, 2002, p. 54). By allowing fun and playfulness, teachers can utilise the power of the imagination to open up new horizons and find alternative ways to live their lives (Sansom, 2011). After all, playfulness is an attitude of mind that drives behaviour and ways of working and living (Skilbeck, 2017).

Vincent-Snow & Tong, 2019
[Seriously playful teachers: An intentional approach](#)

Faculty engage in 'playfulness' when they purposefully adopt it as an attitude/tone through the use of humour/cartoons, props, 'acting it out' simulations, and unusual sources of inspiration both for pedagogical approaches/assignments and as motivation for student engagement.

Examples:
- A science teacher brought a frying pan to class and fried up whatever was being dissected (to eat).
- A chemistry teacher uses a game to teach students about an instrument that measures light in a molecule; students identify and arrange themselves in the classroom to represent the instrument's parts, such as a light source, a filter, and a sample holder.
- Clues/Reminders of things that happened in class on tests (i.e. remember what happened to Pat when the positive and negative charges were not balanced!).
- Inserting a border of turkeys on the first page of a midterm exam (around Thanksgiving time).
- Replacing the words of a popular song to help remember a formula.
- Wearing funny hats to each Zoom session and encouraging your students to do so as well.
- Playing bingo to normalize vocabulary and/or concepts.

Quick Play: Social Presence (community building) & Teacher Presence (pedagogical strategy)

Play is typically considered a pleasurable, spontaneous, non-goal directed activity that can include anticipation, flow and surprise (Barnett & Owens, 2015; Brown, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Eberle, 2014; Gray, 2015; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Play is both objective and subjective, comprising qualities of observable behavior as well as qualities of felt experience.

Project Zero Working Paper, 2016
[Towards a Pedagogy of Play](#)

These quick games help students to relate to each other and build community, understand class conventions and feedback mechanisms, build on prior knowledge, establish personal

connections to course components. Quick play includes (although not limited to): Ice breakers, and add-on play (i.e. improvisation play, play breaks mid-class, play to reinforce concepts, tinkering, etc.).

Icebreaker examples:

Paper Ghost

Guess/follow-the-leader

Who Am I? (i.e. Celebrity version)

Adapted Pictionary (and/or with AI Allen)

Blind Drawing

Charades

Two Truths and a lie

Throw Me the _____ (ball, feather…)

Speed-Date / Friendship

Tell Us A Story

Write in the Chatbox: What is your favorite pizza topping / icecream flavour?

Show and Tell

Further Ice breaker resources:
- https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/teaching-tips-creating-positive-learning-environment/icebreakers-online-classes
- https://symondsresearch.com/icebreakers-for-online-teaching/
- http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/summer20/vol77/num10/Successfully-Taking-Offline-Classes-Online.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1ofQoB_qBMhGa0X91NqsrrsJJRR9to-zEV5dvyPCAfewBn3QlW8icwypA

Add-On Play Examples:

Tinkering: Play Doh sculptures, etc.

Doodling a concept

Group mural (can be adapted to using a Whiteboard online)

Online Scavenger Hunt

Crosswords

Word searches

Creating Avatars

Unusual scenarios/context

Multiple sources of Inspiration

Role Play

Personification of key concept

Game-based Play: Teacher Presence (pedagogical strategy) / Social Presence (Community Building) & Cognitive Presence (applying class components in a game context)

What exactly is meant by gamification varies widely, but one of its defining qualities is that it involves the use of game elements, such as incentive systems, to motivate players to engage in a task they otherwise would not find attractive… One definition defines a game as "a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 80). Consider as an example the gamification of math homework, which may involve giving learners points

and stars for the completion of existing activities that they consider boring. Game-based learning of the same math topic, on the other hand, even though it may also include points and stars, would involve redesigning the homework activities, using artificial conflict and rules of play, to make them more interesting and engaging.

(Plass, Homer & Kinzer, 2017)
Foundations of Game-Based Learning

Plazer, Homer & Kinzer (2017) describe the magic circle of game-based play, where challenge – response – feedback are the overarching structure for the game. Game design elements such as incentive systems, aesthetic design, narrative and/or musical score can be used to enhance the learner's motivation and experience.

Game-Based Play Examples:

Choose Your Own Adventure: Interactive games on PowerPoints and/or branching scenarios to work out logic models and/or order of operations.
Board Games (adapted to online learning)
H5P interactive videos (on Moodle)
Brag tags / Badge Systems
Quizlet / Kahoot
"JeoParody"
Flash cards

Further Game-Based play resources:
- https://quizlet.com/85663408/rules-of-play-game-design-terms-core-concepts-to-master-flash-cards/
- https://thinkspace.csu.edu.au/gblcompendium/part-1-motivation/inside-the-magic-circle/

'Over'Play: Teacher Presence (Pedagogical Strategy) / Social Presence (Community Building) & Cognitive Presence (examining/deconstructing/reconstructing class through atypical and multiple)

Inspired in part from the theatre of the absurd, 'over'play starts and ends with logic, but uses deconstruction techniques in atypical ways and in doing so, often combines elements of ideation (dreaming big), illogical speech/treatment of the subject (to return to a point of logic) and the Brechtian concept of 'distancing' to engage with course components new ways.

The goal is to force viewers into a critical, analytical frame of mind that serves to disabuse him or her of the notion that what he is watching is necessarily an inviolable, self-contained narrative. This effect of making the familiar strange serves a didactic function insofar as it aims to teach the viewer not to take the style and content for granted…

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distancing_effect)

- Consider S.C.A.M.P.E.R. principles: Substitute – Combine – Adapt – Modify – Eliminate - Reverse
- Borrowing Conventions: Rap & Poetry Creation/Graphic representation of poems
- Creating a Commercial to sell _____ to divergent target clientele (ie. Explain and sell a poetry textbook to a physics teacher)
- Six Thinking Hats Exercise
- Alter-Ego: How would _____(Sherlock Holmes / Wonder Woman) go about this?
- Group Sketching / Free-draw – Before and after introducing a concept (to identify what is already know and what needs reinforcement)
- Mind-Mapping - Post-It Notes (digital or actual): What could go wrong – what could go right
- Role play & Interpretative Dance
- Using metaphor to make connections between unrelated concepts.
- Improvisation geared at examining constraints (in theories, formulas, systems, etc.)
  - ✓ "Bad Idea" session – students work in groups to come up with the worst possible ideas and vote on a winner!
  - ✓ Wishing: I wish I could _____ or class component could_____
  - ✓ This is how ___ will be in 1000 years
  - ✓ And then…(say the first thing that comes to mind, in partners)
  - ✓ Jibberish presentations

Asynchronous Play: Social Presence (Community Building)

The following is a list of activities that you can coordinate with your students outside of class (incorporated as part of the homework hours or as an assignment).

- Pen Pals & Post Cards
- Write about a 'blind date with a book' (or a character from a book)
- Grow Seeds – Grow a plant / avocado / germinate lemon seeds (name your plant)
- Keep a nature journal /gratitude journal / sustainable happiness journal
- Scavenger Hunt
- Coloring Contest
- Create a forum: post pictures of (i.e. problems in your community) and your classmates will post possible strategies/comments to deal with them.
- Daily Fitness Challenge (i.e. 2 minutes of burpees!!)
- Make a Snowman Photo Album
- Create a photo vision board – photo document of your goal
- Beanboozled Challenge – Eat something disgusting and post your response
- Desk Dancing Challenge – Upload your videos to the classroom forum
- Share your hidden talents with the class (either as a forum post or other)
- Life Hack Challenge: Share tips and strategies with your classmates