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Pilot Program Incorporates Video Games into Classroom Learning

By [Leila Meyer](#) • 03/13/12

Teachers in seven school districts the United States are taking part in a pilot program that uses Microsoft's [Kinect for Xbox 360](#) to teach math, language arts, history, geography, science, and physical education, and also to help special needs students.

Kinect for Xbox 360 is a controller-free method of playing video games on an Xbox 360 console using the full body. To kick a ball in a game, players kick their leg. To jump in a game, players jump.

Microsoft has assembled a library of 200 ready-to-use classroom activities there were designed by pedagogy experts and align with [Common Core State Standards](#). The activities are based around a small number of Xbox 360 games, such as Kinect Adventures, Kinect Sports, National Geographic Challenge, and Sesame Street: Once Upon a Monster. Teachers can browse through the activity library on the [Kinect in the classroom](#) site to identify activities by subject area, age range, and associated Kinect for Xbox 360 game.

One of the math activities for students ages 11 to 13 uses the Darts game, which is part of Kinect Sports. Students work in pairs with a starting score of 501 and the goal of reaching 0 by subtracting points. As they play, students construct an equation that starts with the number 501 on one side. On the other side of the equation, students add the number of points they score on each turn. When they score double or triple points, they reflect the multiplication of their score in their equation. For example, to indicate a double score on 24 points, students would write 2(24). When the game is over, students confirm that both sides of their equation equal 501.

"The real reason we feel so good when we get our blood pumping is that it makes the brain function at its best," said John Ratey, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at [Harvard Medical School](#) and author of [Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain](#), in a prepared statement. "Physical activity sparks biological changes that encourage brain cells to bind to one another. For the brain to learn, these connections must be made, so including physical activity in the classroom creates an environment in which the brain is ready, willing, and able to learn."

School districts taking part in the pilot program are [Los Angeles Unified School District](#) in California, [Chicago Public Schools](#) in Illinois, [Houston Independent School District](#) in Texas, [Scottsdale Unified School District](#) and [Flagstaff Unified School District](#) in Arizona, and [Fairfax County Public Schools](#) and [Loudoun County Public Schools](#) in Virginia.

Further information about using Kinect for Xbox 360 in education is available on the [Kinect in the classroom](#) site.

About the Author

Leila Meyer is a technology writer based in British Columbia. She can be reached at leilameyer@gmail.com.

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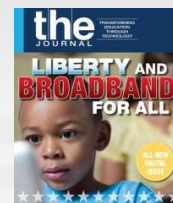
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This a great idea. I am an advocate of using games. I am wondering if there is any evidence about getting the blood pumping though. The recent research shows that kids are not getting their blood pumping when they play these games. These games typically involve standing in one place, and there is a huge bottleneck in who can play, and who must spectate. In my own studies on Dance Dance Revolution (<http://vgalt.com/2009/10/11/dance-dance-education/>), kids will rehearse with the player, but this is not typical. Hopefully these pilot programs have lots of space and a culture that promotes rehearsal and collaboration. Looks like an innovative idea!

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