

Is it Possible for Homework to be Engaging?

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This is a guest post written by Robert Sun, CEO of Suntex International.

For centuries, homework has taken the form of worksheets or problems to be completed in a textbook. The many downsides of traditional homework—the tedium, the solitude and the rote learning—are obvious. Yet there is a plus side to homework—it teaches students that skill development takes effort. In going after any worthy goal, there are times when the work is hard and you have to push through the grind.

In previous generations, when children had more time for free play and could pursue their own interests, they did not mind the idea of “the grind” because play is an intriguing combination of joy and hard work. Through play, children learn that hard work is part of the process of reaching a pleasurable goal. They are willing to persevere when they set the goals, when they take ownership, and are deeply invested in achieving the desired outcome.

Within joyful play, failing is simply an inherent part

of the discovery process; hard work overcomes failure and gets you to your end goal faster. Without that joy, there is little to counter the grind of the hard work needed to achieve that result.

In just one generation, the world of today has become a very a different place. Video gaming has proven itself to be a powerful activity that can engage and motivate – in fact, humans now spend three billion hours every week playing video games. This development has profound implications for the future of education.

With the development of technology and digital games, schools are beginning to realize the benefits of bringing digital gaming into their classrooms. They struggle, however, with the idea of adapting gaming to academics. But there are programs like First In Math that have harnessed the power of digital gaming and channeled it specifically into an academic skill – mathematics. First In Math allows a child to enter into a fascinating world of mathematics containing hundreds of immersive games designed to strengthen fluency, automaticity and critical thinking.

Once familiar with the content, a teacher can suggest areas for math practice that are highly engaging, provide immediate feedback, and give a child the freedom to make mistakes. Through this freedom the student begins to operate at the edge of his or her skill level where active learning occurs. Despite the hard work, the joy of learning prevails.

As I visit school districts, I’ve noticed that a new generation of teachers now inhabits many classrooms. Embracing technology is natural for these

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young professionals, and they are eager to incorporate effective digital tools into their repertoire in order to help kids learn more effectively.

Peter Thiel, technology entrepreneur, investor and author of "Zero To One," says it best: "Most people think the world's future will be defined by globalization, but the truth is that technology matters more. Technology is miraculous because it allows us to do more with less, ratcheting up our fundamental capabilities to a higher level." By leveraging what is perhaps the most transformative

technology of all for children and teens – video gaming – we have the opportunity to counterbalance the hard work of learning with the joys of discovery and accomplishment. Homework will no longer seem like drudgery, but a necessary and even welcome part of the educational journey.

Robert Sun is the CEO of Suntex International and inventor of First In Math®, an online program designed for energizing every child to learn, love and live mathematics.