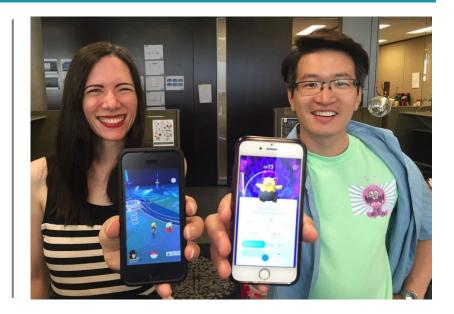# Gotta Catch 'Em All: Using Pokémon GO in Your Classroom

By: Edward Tse | July 21, 2016

Have you been bumping into trees? Or tripping on the sidewalk? Or seen others doing it more than ever lately? Chances are that you or those around you are trying to catch 'em all in Pokemon GO – the augmented reality game that "encourages players to search far and wide" to collect the little monsters. The internet has been buzzing about it. Pokémon GO integrates gamification and physical movement to people get up off the chair and out into parks and public areas.

In her CBC Interview, University of Saskatchewan associate professor of computer science Dr. Regan Mandryk describes how "you have a smartphone and through the camera you can see the world, but superimposed on that view of the real world are little virtual objects you can collect."

There's been a bit of controversy though. Not everyone has been receptive to the augmented reality game with some shops and residences posting negative notes to passing Pokémon Trainers. Yet for educators there are many educational benefits to this movement – namely in skills related to kinesthetic learning.

Kinesthetic, or tactile, learning is when we use our bodies to interact with information or our environment – "hands on learning," in other words. Kids do this all the time – touching everything they can see as a means of understanding it.

Educators Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn wrote that "Children enter kindergarten as kinesthetic and tactual learners, moving and touching everything as they learn… many adults, especially males, maintain kinesthetic and tactual strengths throughout their lives." Teacher and SMART Exemplary Educator Allen Brooks describes the practice of getting up and walking around in Pokémon GO as "getting oxygen to the brain."

So how can teachers use the excitement around Pokemon GO to balance learners' need for fun with their learning objectives? Here are four simple ideas of how teachers might use Pokémon GO to improve learning in the classroom:

Use it as a history lesson.

Develop a project-based learning activity on the history of augmented reality and GPS. Start with Ivan Sutherland's 1968 Head Mounted Display and ask students to write a timeline that links to today's mobile augmented reality systems (e.g. Microsoft's Hololens). Then have them present their discoveries to the class with SMART Notebook.

Use it as a science lesson.

Ask your students to think creatively about how augmented reality or GPS applications can solve real world problems. Try Shout It Out in SMART lab to get the answers flowing!

Use it as show and tell.

Post a challenge to your students can capture screen shots of the various places that they had visited with Pokemon GO. Ask them to describe details of the location and why each place is significant to them. A large, shared canvas like SMART amp is ideal for this.

Use it as a conversation starter.

Have a conversation about the origins of place names. This is another opportunity to bring in some history of the places where students live. Try Match 'Em Up in SMART lab to have kids connect locations and names.

In the end, associate professor Dr. Carman Neustaedter has a great recommendation: "Don't get so immersed in Pokemon GO that you forget real life is around you." Instead use it as a launching pad to bridge the natural world to the digital one.

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