

Break the Ice with Meeples!

Choose the Meeple(s) that best describe where you are, what you know, or how you feel in regards to gamified instruction.

Discuss with your group:

- Who's just getting started with learning about gamification?
- What are you most excited or concerned about?
- Has anyone in your group tried gamified instruction before?
- If so, what worked or didn't?

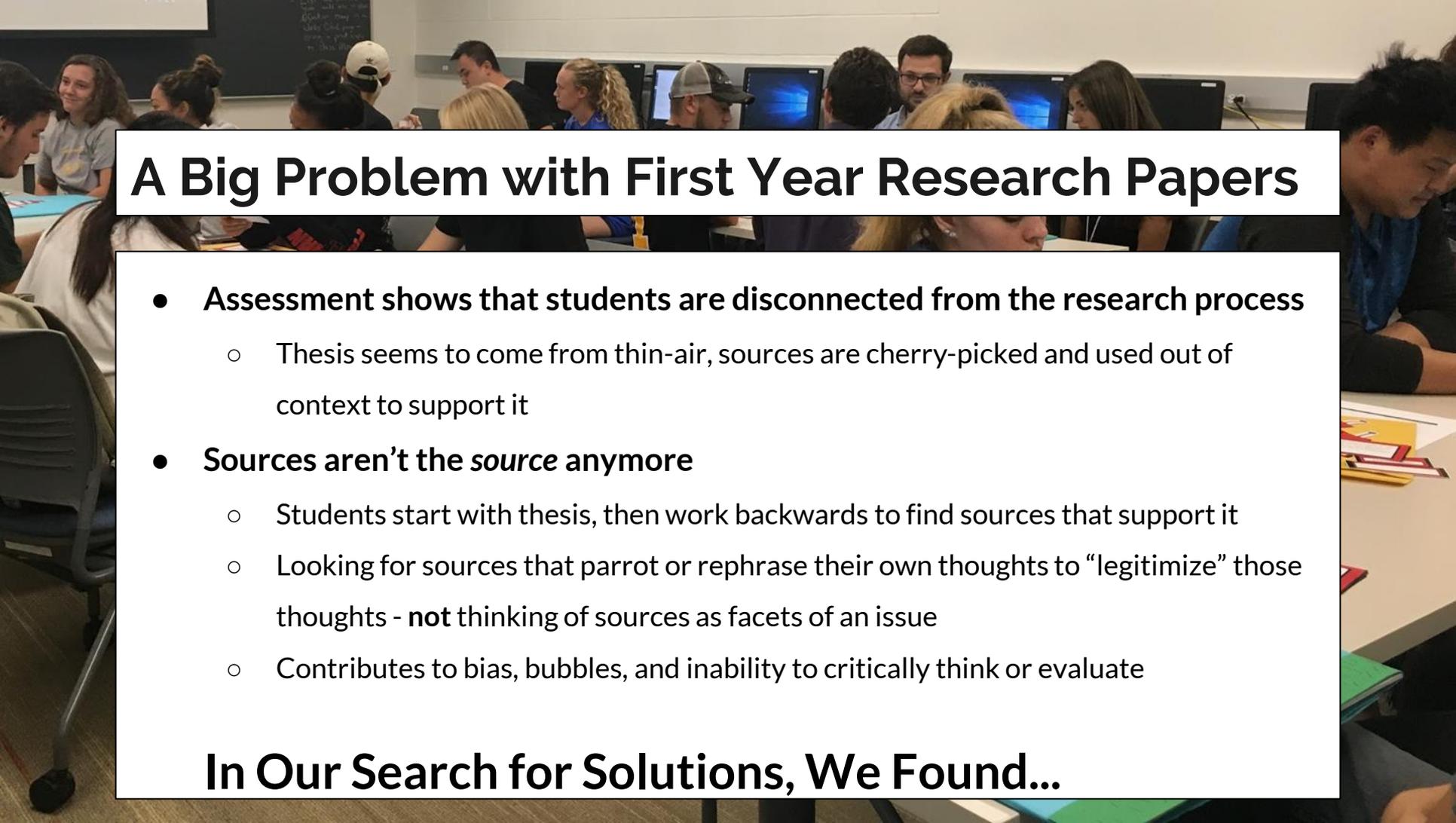
Argument Architect

*Developing a Research Boardgame to Teach
Thesis Development and Source Evaluation*

Presented by

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A Big Problem with First Year Research Papers

- **Assessment shows that students are disconnected from the research process**
 - Thesis seems to come from thin-air, sources are cherry-picked and used out of context to support it
- **Sources aren't the *source* anymore**
 - Students start with thesis, then work backwards to find sources that support it
 - Looking for sources that parrot or rephrase their own thoughts to “legitimize” those thoughts - **not** thinking of sources as facets of an issue
 - Contributes to bias, bubbles, and inability to critically think or evaluate

In Our Search for Solutions, We Found...

Gamification: the use of *game design elements* in *non-game contexts*.

Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011).
From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining "gamification".
doi:10.1145/2181037.2181040



Why Go with a Game?

- **Greater Engagement!**
 - A game could grab students' attention--And a *board game* would allow for physically active engagement (and hopefully better recall)
- **Wanted students to explore the research process, not be led through it.**
 - A non-linear game structure would let students see the benefits and drawbacks of starting research in different places, compared to a linear approach
 - It's hard to mimic iterative research in a lesson, but games let you fail, loop back, start over, and try new approaches.
 - The option to repeat a game for additional prizes encourages students to search for more than one winning strategy

Design Guidelines

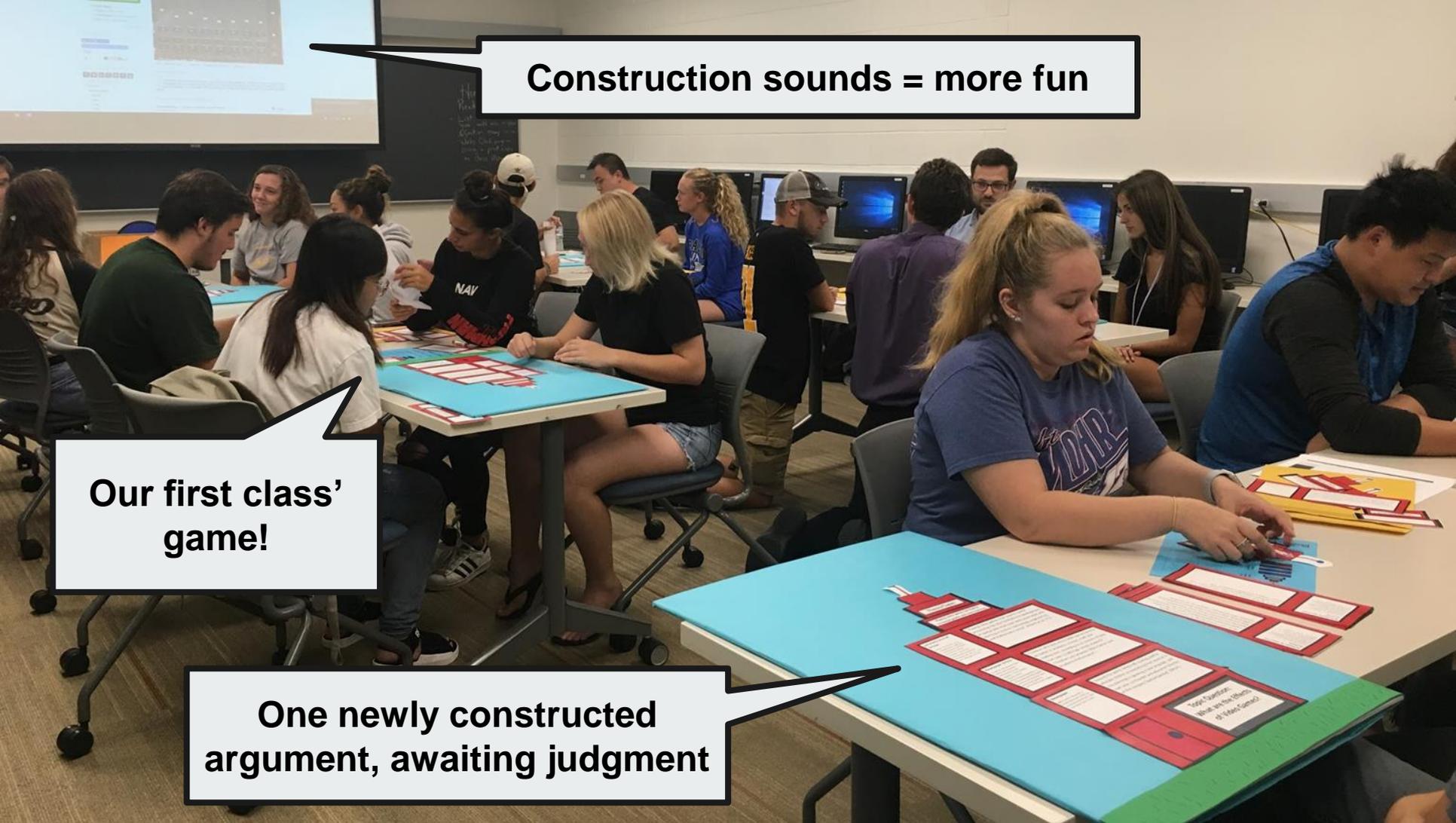
- **Intuitive**
 - Easy to understand, familiar and positive metaphor, minimize the time and energy students spend learning rules
- **Scalable and flexible**
 - Playable with different timeframes and student skill levels
- **Cooperative-constructive vs. Competitive-destructive**
 - Cooperative-constructive game to foster an environment of students supporting and teaching each other--less rushed, less likely to create fairness issues, more reflection
- **Recommended read - *Making deep games: Designing games with meaning and purpose*, by D.C. Rusch**

Creating a Boardgame (the short version)

- **The path is littered with broken prototypes and fizzled ideas**
 - **We explored (and rejected):**
 - UFO-shooter style Flash game quizzes
 - defeating the “dragons” of research
 - creating our own (Game of)LIFE-style research journey
 - Professor Godzilla, Toppler of Weak Arguments
- **Takeaways from our process**
 - Keep notes on all your ideas, good and bad - even the bad ones have good parts!
 - Keep your goals in mind - does your game meet them?
 - Pre-test with colleagues, student workers, or partner faculty

Argument Architect

- **Students construct an argument through the metaphor of building a skyscraper**
 - Shared topic is the foundation
 - Source blocks provide credible and non-traditional sources for a variety of arguments
 - Thesis blocks cap the structure and can be customized
- **Followed by essential discussion**
 - **Students are asked:**
 - if they noticed sources or thesis options that seemed problematic
 - what they learned from starting with either sources or thesis options
 - how this relates to their prior experiences researching and writing papers



Construction sounds = more fun

Our first class' game!

One newly constructed argument, awaiting judgment

A classroom scene where students are seated at tables, working on projects. They are surrounded by blue folders and red-bordered cards. An instructor in a light blue shirt is visible on the left. The room has computer monitors on desks in the background.

**A visit from an
argument inspector**

**Brett offering some
helpful advice**

**Healthy debate over
what sources to choose**

Our (Mixed, but Fun) Results

- **At Penn State Berks**

- Approximately 25-person classes, excellent collaboration with instructor
- Students grasped the idea and expressed the logic of starting from sources, learning about a topic, and developing a thesis, and searching for more sources from there.
- **Student comments:**
 - “Find a claim that fits the evidence well, don't just look for any evidence to fit your claim”
 - “Start with your sources, not your thesis statement.”

- **At Penn State Abington**

- Very small class, unfortunate timing
- Students were more inclined to start with thesis statements, but did acknowledge that they'd have to do more research to find the best sources that way.

What's Next?

- **Penn State Lehigh Valley**

- New environment, similar population to Abington but different structure
- Working on introduction to first-year English, Communication, and/or general classes

- **Penn State Berks**

- Same faculty member has requested new sessions of Argument Architect for this coming fall for introductory English classes, with additional companion sessions

- **Companion game coming soon: Evidence Excavator?**

- Future offering for courses interested in Argument Architect
- Additional session focusing on “mining” for good sources, evaluating their characteristics, and determining how they could be best used (from anecdotal discussion to proof of a fact)

A photograph of a classroom table. On the table, there are several red cards with text, a yellow envelope, and a white card with a diagram. A large white box with a black border is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Enough Talking - Let's Build Some Arguments!". The background shows a blue and green mat on the table and a brown carpeted floor.

**Enough Talking -
Let's Build Some
Arguments!**

You're the Architects!

- **Start** with your topic block as your foundation.
- **Look through your source blocks.** What ideas or arguments do you see?
- **Choose 3-4 source blocks** that seem to be discussing different areas of the same idea.
- **Choose a thesis statement** that those sources would support. Can't find one that fits? Write your own!
- **Explain your design** to the building inspectors and make changes as needed.

Your Suggestions, Criticisms, and Thoughts

- Continue to encourage group participation
- archivists/special collections collaborations - working with primary sources
- Write your own thesis follow-up
- Hide the thesis statements for the 1st round?
- Collect sources for specific audiences

Thank you for attending!

Working on your own gamification plans?

Looking for colleagues to bounce ideas off of?

Have more comments or questions?

**Please contact us -
we'd love to work with you!**

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