# What Teachers Could Learn from Video Games

Consider this controversial quote by MIT professor Seymore Papert, *"Game designers have a lot better take on the nature of learning than instructional designers."*

Video games are part of the daily lives of most of our students. Contrary to what some educators contend, video games are not the enemy of teaching and learning.  In fact, there is much we can learn from those who design video games.  Dr. James Paul Gee, author of <u>What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy</u>, offers 7 principles of video game design that can help teachers create meaningful, engaging, and memorable learning experiences for students.

**Co-design**
Good learning requires that learners feel like active agents not just passive recipients.

**Customize**
Different styles of learning work better for different people.  People cannot be agents of their own learning if they cannot make decisions about how their learning will work.  At the same time, they should be able (and encouraged) to try new styles.

**Pleasantly Frustrating**
Learning works best when new challenges are pleasantly frustrating in the sense of being felt to be at the outer edge of, but within, their "regime of competence."  That is, these challenges feel hard but doable.  Furthermore, learners feel – and get evidence – that their effort is paying off in the sense that they can see, even when they fail, how and if they are making progress.

**Information "On Demand" and "Just in Time"**
Human beings are quite poor at using verbal information (words) when given lots of it out of context and before they see how it applies in actual situations.  They use verbal information best when it is given "just in time" (when they can put it to use) and "on demand" (when they feel they need it).

**Skills as Strategies**
There is a paradox involving skills:  people don't like practicing skills out of context over and over again, since they find such skill practice meaningless, but, without lots of skill practice, they cannot really get any good at what they are trying to learn.  People learn and practice skills best when they see a set of related skills as a strategy to accomplish goals they want to accomplish.

**System Thinking**
People learn skills, strategies, and ideas best when they see how they fit into an overall larger system to which they give meaning. In fact, any experience is enhanced when we understand how it fits into a larger meaningful whole.

**Meaning as Action Image**
Humans do not usually think through general definitions.  Rather, they think through experiences they have had and imaginative reconstructions of experiences.  You don't think and reason about weddings on the basis of generalities, but in terms of the weddings you have been to and heard about and imaginative reconstructions of them.  It is your experience the gives the word "wedding" meaning.