

DGBS Policy on Toys, Games and Resources

The DGBS philosophy is aimed at promoting the healthiest social, emotional and intellectual development, in accord with a mindset and culture conducive to living in harmony with each other and the natural world. The values our games and resources aim to promote are creativity, cooperation, empathy, resilience, self-sufficiency, critical thinking and a deep connection with the natural world.

We hesitate to use the term “resources” as it reflects the Western view of all of existence as being dead stuff that humans are free to use, exploit, kill and manipulate for whatever reasons they choose. For example, referring to forests as resources implies they exist for human use – not for their own existence. This is the same thinking that enables us to build zoos.

DGBS School Resources

The Land

- 10 hectares of school site, with stream, trees, birdlife and countless plants and animals

Hand tools

- gardening tools (shovels, spades, etc.)
- chisels, knives, etc.

Other practical/artistic equipment

- sewing, knitting, felting
- pottery from available clay
- natural paints
- paint brushes

Books

- fiction reflecting healthy values
- history, social science
- academic skills
- outdoor skills

Musical Instruments

- non-electrical
- Guitar, ukelele, recorder, African drum, etc.

Cooking

- camp stove, camp fire, kitchen & basic supplies
- healthy food ingredients

Games

- with few material requirements
- or with materials easily fashioned from nature
- adjusting rules to suit those playing
- that promote healthier social interactions and mindset
- Some acceptable common games: Scrabble, UNO (see below)
- Students may suggest other games and explore their viability

Deep Thinking on Games and Resources

Since we generally take for granted the games, toys and resources around us – primarily because no one ever voices concern over them – then we will take time here to expand on the dangers inherent in these items.

First, we must think beyond the fact that when we were young we may have played certain games or with certain toys and enjoyed them. Each is a product of corporations, who spend millions of dollars on child psychologists researching how to get children addicted to their products. They also spend hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising, which is used to convince the public that the games have educational value. But the games were never created for educational value – they were created for profit, and we must never forget that. Yet the fact that we grew up with them and have been so thoroughly saturated in advertising since we were born, makes it harder to question.

Even before corporations existed, board games were created by the ruling class and elite to reinforce the society's hierarchical social structure and military culture. The oldest known board game, from ancient China, was a war game. Chess, 1500 years old, is a war game. Many of the most popular recent board games are war games (such as 'Risk'). Many games, especially video games, are promoted by the military and often created by the military.

This shouldn't surprise us. Everything created by a culture is a *cultural artifact*. Every cultural artifact reflects the values and mindset of the culture, as well as reinforcing those values and mindset. Every game, toy and school resource reflects the values of this culture and reinforces them. This is the same culture that is destroying all life on the planet – another important fact to keep in mind. When we play these games, we must adapt our minds to the rules of the game – the rules created by a corporation – and to the way of thinking necessary to win in the game – a way of thinking created by a corporation. We allow ourselves to have our minds re-shaped by an institution predicated on the destruction of the Earth in pursuit of profit. Any store-bought game, computer, or typical school resource mediates how we see the world – and that is why we must be extremely mindful about what we expose our children to. Nothing is value-neutral.

The games and resources we're sold are forms of social engineering. The population is not allowed to think freely, to think creatively, to think critically or to live with a deep connection to the Earth. They must be trained, and board games, other store-bought games, toys and many school resources are all used to manipulate our minds as we grow up – just as TV, movies and the internet (another invention of the military) are also used to control the population.

Let's also not forget that none of these games or school resources existed before a hundred years ago – yet for the previous two million years humans still learned all they needed to know, they developed their social, emotional, and intellectual capabilities – and they still played many, many games. Arguably humans were also far more creative before all these products were created.

In essence, the ultimate purpose for games and toys is to form a certain worldview and generate profit, not to entertain. The ultimate aim is dumbed-down, obedient slaves. Entertainment is just the bait. Education is the sales pitch.

The Dangers of Most Games, Toys and School Resources:

Undermines Intelligence and Creativity

Games and toys mediate how we interact and view the world. In order to use a toy or game, we must adopt the thinking necessary to play – and in this way our thinking is molded and manipulated.

The mere presence of store-bought games and toys means that we will pay less attention to the world around us. When we want to “have fun” we will more and more turn to these games, rather than invent our own games, or play games that enable more creativity. Instead of inventing our own games, instead of exploring the world around us, and instead of allowing our creativity and imagination to flourish, our minds become funnelled into these narrow, consumerist channels whose ultimate purpose is to dumb us down.

We have seen at the DGBS how having fewer store-bought games has encouraged creativity:

- finding fun uses for anything
- making music
- building huts
- using naturally-occurring clay to create
- inventing their own games
- spending time outdoors
- being imaginative with their friends

Corporate-created games and resources alter our brain development into behaviours and ways of thinking that would never naturally develop – and never naturally developed for two million years. Again, store-bought items are forms of social engineering to purposely dumb us down to make us easier to control.

Interference with healthy socialisation

- Students are less likely to freely talk with each other if surrounded by too many distractions and games which mediate how they think and interact
- At the DGBS, our students often sit and talk with each other, unmediated by consumerist items

Encourages Staying Indoors

- The more you fill up rooms with toys, games and “resources” the more children will choose to stay inside
- Our curriculum is predicated on a deep connection with the natural world, so any time students are playing store-bought games is time not spent in free play in nature – it's reinforcing an acceptance of an artificial and synthetic world

Development of Consumers

- Having and using store-bought items reinforces the idea that you have to buy things to be happy, “normal” or “smart”
- Our approach is to minimise store-bought items to what will help us create a healthy *culture of sustainability*

Promotes the false concept of “resources” as necessary for learning

- toys and resources didn't exist before 100 years ago
 - everyone for the past two million years still developed their social,

- emotional, academic, intellectual capabilities
- ignores that corporations create all these resources for profit above all else
 - schools are vehicles for corporations to sell their wares
 - (the same way the Food Pyramid was created to sell grains by the big food producers in the US, contradicting actual health needs)

Reinforcement of unhealthy values

- Competition
- Greed (ex: Monopoly and other similar games)
- Militarism & Jingoism (Examples: Stratego, Battleship, Risk, etc.)
- Consumerism & materialism (Lego, Barbie, etc.) and the belief that you'll never be happy unless you purchase things

Reinforcement of a Western Way of Thinking

- Linear thinking
- Cartesian mindset
- suppression of intuition
- patriarchy
- humanism – that humans are superior to all other life
- Obedience to authority/rules
- Raises mathematics as high status knowledge
- Ignores/devalues other ways of knowing (i.e., indigenous, traditional)

Deconstructing Some Common Games and Toys

Lego

- artificial and synthetic toys encourage artificial and synthetic living and thinking
- restrict creativity to how the pieces connect
- further restrict creativity to the specific sets, and following the instructions
- reinforce mentality of construction (with “bricks”) and development of synthetic environments
- For example: in a recent school Lego competition, students built a haunted house, a parade of models and a busy street

Chess

- A game which originates from the ruling class - teaches hierarchy of life – kings and queens above everyone else
- it is a game of war
- chess games take a long time – and the players stare at the chess board the whole time, allowing the checkerboard to be imprinted in their mind – life is reduced to the duality of black and white, good vs evil, a two-dimensional grid which has no resemblance to anything in the natural world
- all those hours spent staring at a chess board are not spent connecting with other people or learning from the richness and complexities of the natural world

Playing Cards

- teaches hierarchy of life – kings and queens above everyone else
- life is not equal – some people (and things) are worth more than others
- obedience to authority

Checkers

- polarises world into black and white
- is a game of war
- leads us to think in Cartesian terms of good and evil, us against them – competition
- reduces our concepts of the world to a two-dimensional mathematical grid – inhibits intuition and development of other senses

Trivial Pursuit (or similar)

- places importance on meaningless information
- equates intelligence with knowing meaningless info such as celebrities and TV shows
- equates intelligence with high-status knowledge, downplaying other ways of knowing (indigenous ways of knowing) which are more reflective of sustainable and healthy ways of living

Monopoly

- reinforces competition and greed – the keys to the capitalist economic system
- life is made of winners and losers

Some Acceptable Common Games

Keep in mind that all store-bought games reinforce the values of the dominant culture. But this is not a black-and-white issue, so we approach it as a matter of degree. Some games are not as socially or emotionally damaging as others.

Scrabble – has among the least negative influences in comparison with other games

- useful for developing literacy

UNO – useful for developing numeracy

- does not carry the hierarchical baggage of the usual deck of cards

Other games – students may suggest other games for discussion

- an excellent alternative for many games is for students *to make* the game they want from natural materials
- for example: Connect Four can easily be made from natural materials, or simply played with pen and paper

We still aim for an educational environment that promotes creativity and connecting with nature – which is one in which students make their own games, toys, etc. rather than being surrounded by store-bought items.