Games for Good

> "My game builds empathy for homeless people. It brings understanding and help from the community as well as promoting considerate and respectful actions from the community. It also reduces the stigma around homeless people...in turn, they do not feel so invisible and slightly less isolated."
>
> – Student

At Abbotsleigh, an Anglican girls' school on the north shore of Sydney, Year 8 engaged in a twelve week project using advanced gaming software and computer programming language to design a game with a positive social impact. The project launched with an immersion day where we initiated partnerships with industry including female software engineers from KPMG and leading game developer, Wargaming. These partnerships grew and continued throughout the project. This day also saw the girls unlearn what they thought they knew about the gaming industry and the possibilities for employment in this area.

The New Pedagogies for Deep Learning formed the basis of our program design and the way in which we measured student progress. There was an explicit focus on the development of critical thinking skills and the students were required to reflect at regular intervals throughout the project. Student choice was built into this requirement and the girls could elect from a range of multimodal techniques to complete their reflections. Posting occurred every four weeks and after a key skill was taught. For example, a post was completed after exploring Unity software. The learning progression for critical thinking was the driver for such reflections and the girls focused on incorporating the language of the progression to answer:

Where am I on this learning progression?

What made me say that?

What are my next steps?

There was also a strong focus on developing empathy. Using a design thinking approach and the library facilities to explore specific profiles, the girls collaborated and curated game options that met the specific needs of the user groups highlighted in their research. The students created a company with a mission statement and logo and incorporated the target market as well as the social issue the company was addressing.

The task was scaffolded in such a way that the girls' specific skill development in Technological and Applied Studies (TAS) had an equal focus. They learnt the foundational skills of a complex coding language (C#) before creating an early build of their game. We removed the necessity for the girls to build the entire game in C# as our intention was to focus on the global competencies and in particular, critical thinking.

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