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Teaching Kids About Media and Digital Literacy

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For the past few months, I have been researching, learning, and teaching others about digital media and literacy. But, before I was able to teach others, I needed to learn it myself. The sole purpose of this thesis project is to interactively engage middle school students in an activity that would teach them three different media message purposes: entertain, persuade, and inform. I had to research what digital media and literacy was and the sole item that helped me learn was a book called *Everyday Media Literacy* by Sue Ellen Christian, who is also my thesis mentor. Luckily, I took her class a few years ago when she was about to release her first release of the book. I was able to read her book in 2019 before it came out in 2020. I already had a basic idea of the topic and terms that were being used within this thesis, but there was much more that I needed to learn.

Creating a card game was the sole purpose for this thesis and I had to start from scratch. No idea of how the game will be played or what to focus on so kids can learn while playing. I think that the most difficult part of the starting process was figuring out how the game should be played. I knew that I wanted a fast-paced game because it keeps the players attention and raises heart beats from the excitement. I thought of my favorite card games that I play with my friends and instantly the game Speed popped up. I love the game speed because it's fast-paced and always keeps me on the edge of my seat when playing. Once I figured out a basic level of game configuration then it was time to get down to the details and what the cards will look like. The number of times that every single card design or layout was changed was immaculate. It took a lot of time to get the perfect cards ready for the game and it was the help that I seeked from others that helped bring it together. When I look back to the original game that was roughly designed to the final product, it does not even look remotely the same. But, that is what was fun

during this project because everything kept evolving and every time I learned something new it was my intention to put it into the game.

My focus groups were the biggest help when creating this game. I first sent out a survey type packet to a group of students in middle and high school. I placed four pictures on each page out of 60 pictures and asked them whether the picture correlated as inform, persuade, entertain or none at all. I even had a section at the end where they can suggest other ideas for the pictures on the cards. Once I received the surveys back, I made an organized chart on which images had the most wrong answers. I needed to narrow down my card images anyways, so the cards with the most wrong answers were taken out of the game because they clearly did not make sense to others. This was a first great step to starting out the game and finding the correct images to be placed on the cards. The next focus group was another major help because they critiqued the actual game itself by playing it. I had the cards printed out on cardstock to have the kids play with the mock card deck. They gave suggestions on how to make it more fun and exciting and said what confused them. I took this all into perspective and recreated the card game from their feedback. The craziest part was that these kids found loopholes and brought my attention to them when I did not even realize what they were doing was possible. It's always good to have another set of eyes look over projects that you created but having four of them actually playing a brand-new game shows you things that I couldn't see myself.

Overall, this project took up a lot more time than I was expecting. I did not think that creating a card game would take just as long as doing five classes worth of homework, at least that's what it felt like. But luckily it was a fun process and kept me engaged the whole time. I loved being able to create something from scratch and being able to call the product mine. I created the whole concept of the game, the card designs, the images that are on the cards and the

overall play of the game. Seeing the kids smile and laugh while playing the game I created felt so rewarding because I brought that joy into their lives. I do hope that teachers get ahold of this game and keep it in the classroom for years to come for their students to play.