Adapted Board Games

Description

Most teachers realize that games are motivating and fun for students of any age. They may not understand, however, how much learners can profit from creating their own adapted board games or playing teacher-created or teacher-adapted games. Students will surely be excited to engage in this activity and may even surprise the teacher by using their creations outside of the classroom and extending their learning beyond the confines of a particular unit.

Directions

Decide on the objectives, skills, or knowledge you want to teach or reinforce (e.g., adding fractions, speaking in complete sentences, generating adjectives, learning about famous American women). Then, look in your supplies closet for a game you can adapt for this purpose.

Games can be adapted with sticky notes, permanent makers, extra supplies from other games, new cards, or stickers and pictures. Some of the ways games can be adapted include the following:

• Change the rules: Create a different set of rules for all players or just for some.
• Change the format: Draw the game board on a larger piece of poster board or even on a shower curtain to make it easier to see or use for some.
• Make it more accessible: Instead of using a regular pair of dice, use large fuzzy dice (easier to manipulate for some).
• Make it more appealing: Integrate a student’s favorite things into the game (e.g., use a Mickey Mouse figure instead of a colored marker).

Augmentative communication symbols may be used in the construction of the games (e.g., putting a “start” symbol to indicate where markers should be placed) so that learners who use them can better understand the game, their role, and the expectations or directions.

Materials

• Boards and pieces from popular games
• Poster boards
• Markers
• Sticky notes
• Stickers
• Extra pieces from various games (e.g., dice, markers)
• Communication symbols
Examples

A first-grade teacher created an adapted Candy Land game to help one of her students work on counting, addition, and subtraction. She created new cards with an addition or subtraction problem on each. If the student drew an addition card, he or she had to figure out the answer and then move forward that number of spaces. If the student drew a subtraction card, he or she had to figure out the answer and move back that number of spaces. The treat cards remained and functioned as they would in a typical game of Candy Land. To respond to the needs of different students, the teacher created two sets of cards: a blue pack, which contained easier questions, and a red pack, which contained more challenging questions. This game adaptation allowed Nathan, a student with significant difficulties in math, to play the game, practice facts, and still be successful.

High school teachers running an after-school board game club created adapted questions to a trivia game for Leslie, a student with cognitive disabilities. Leslie's questions were appropriately challenging and often focused on content the teachers knew she was learning in her classes. Students could then play the game without modifying the rules.

Dixon and Addy (2004), suggest making a three-dimensional game of Snakes and Ladders for students who are dyspraxic. They create drinking straw ladders and rolled-clay snakes on their boards and glue string to the various checkerboard lines on the game to make it easier for students to appreciate the distinction between squares.

References/Recommended Reading


Vendors

BoardGameDesign.com
http://www.boardgamedesign.com
This unique company specializes in game manufacturing and will make custom pieces for various games. They also make custom games and stock game supplies and components (e.g., blank game boards, blank game boxes, pawns, spinner arrows).

Enabling Devices
http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/toys_for_disabled_children/adapted-games/hungry-hippo
An adapted Hungry Hippo game
Web Sites

Future Reflections (The National Federation of the Blind Magazine for Parents and Teachers of Blind Children)
http://www.nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr18/fr05sf07.htm
A short newsletter article by Katrilla Martin on adapting games for students who are blind or have low vision

Googol Learning (Math Games to Play at Home)
http://www.googolpower.com/content/articles/math-games-to-play-at-home-adapting-your-favorite-games
A short article by Susan Jarema on creating and adapting card and board games to support math instruction

LoveToKnow Corp. (Board Games for Learning Disabled)
http://boardgames.lovetoknow.com/Board_Games_for_Learning_Disabled
Suggestions for board games for students with learning disabilities
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