



## Exergaming: The Gamification of Physical Education

Technology works as an educational tool for many reasons, but one of the major ones is that it is engaging. Rather than traditional, one-dimensional lessons, different tech tools allow students to connect with content in new ways that are effective, memorable, and fun. For example, the gamification of education—that is, using digital games as learning tools—has been a trend on the rise for some time now. **A new, similar phase has been emerging recently with the onslaught of Pokémon GO and similar apps: exergaming, or gamercizing, could just be the gamification of physical education. Here's what you need to know.**

### Pokémon GO's Popularity—and Why That's a Good Thing

Pokémon GO, a competitive, free, downloadable app that encourages participants to travel to different locations and find various Pokémon characters—was launched in early July. Since that time, it has exploded in popularity. With an estimated [7.5 million downloads in the US alone, the creators are netting \\$1.6 million in daily revenue](#) from iOS users (not counting Android).

It's the app hit of the summer, and people of all ages are busy catching creatures across the country. While some see this as simply more screen time for students during the summer months, others tout the following physical and social benefits of this type of exergaming:

**Movement is required.**

In order for users to track and collect Pokémon, they have to move—and physically move, because in this GPS-based program, driving doesn't count. Traveling substantial distances by foot allows users to hatch Pokémon quicker, thereby getting ahead in the game. Even [EducationWorld reports that sometimes wearables](#) like Fitbits aren't enough encouragement to get kids moving in summer, but exergaming tools like Pokémon GO seem to be working.

### Going outside is required.

The app encourages users to walk outside to find characters, meaning they're outdoors instead of playing stationary videogames inside the home. (While [there have been reported instances of users injuring themselves while playing the game](#) by walking into trees, etc., those cases are few.)

### It's easy to play with friends.

Many users get together in groups to track Pokémon, encouraging positive, active social interaction that can be especially welcomed when school is not in session.

### It encourages educational exploration.

Pokestops—the places users go to find Pokémon—[are based on an older game that chose locations based on their architectural or artistic value](#).

### Not the First, Not the Last

Pokémon GO wasn't the first exergaming tool embraced by the digital generation, and it won't be the last. Take, for example, games like Dance, Dance, Revolution—the popular dancing game released in 2007 that got people moving. Since then, there have been other movement-based systems such as the Nintendo Wii and the Xbox Kinect. Today, there are a [plethora of exergaming choices besides Pokémon GO](#) that only require smartphones, including [JumpJump Froggy](#) for young children to [The Walk](#), a zombie-esque game for older students.

### What's Next?

While we don't expect Pokémon GO or other exergaming tools to replace physical education during the school year, it is another example for educators to witness the power of digital tools and how well they engage (and excite) the student populous. Encouraging exergaming during the summer months or during other breaks from the school year can help children stay active, get outside, and socialize with their peers in a healthy way.