An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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Teachers’ Perceptions of Educational Games that Keep Score of Cooperative Performance

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Abstract
The scoring systems used in traditional sports and games are founded on the zero-sum premise that players are on opposite sides and one side can win only if the other side loses. These scoring systems are effective at nurturing a zero-sum mindset and providing data for assessing performance in win-lose relationships. Games that use different scoring systems may facilitate the development of a collaborative mindset that nurtures win-win skills between diverse groups and enables objective self-assessment of performance in non-zero-sum relationships when engaging with those on “other sides.” Although economic game theory has rich reservoirs of research regarding non-zero-sum games, educators do not commonly make use of game-theory concepts in designing educational games in a format that teachers can use to measure the individual performance of a student when learning together with others in a group. This study presents non-zero-sum games and scoring methods that have been used in teachers’ classrooms, and then analyzes teachers’ perceptions of the effects on students’ character and academic performance that teachers attribute to the games. The study uses qualitative research with semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The results show that teachers discern gains in academic achievement and character development when they use games that keep score of cooperative performances in the classroom. Teachers also identified challenges in using these games and recommended improvements. It is hoped that future work on games that quantify collaboration between different sides will reinforce and strengthen productivity and peacemaking in classrooms and in communities.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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