Passage #2 – Game-Based Learning

Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

Source Material #1
Game-based Learning Is Merely a Fad
Solomon Robles, Ed.D., Professor of Education at Winborne College
Workplace Training Journal

Electronic learning, or "eLearning," was sold to many CEOs as the wave of the corporate future. There's no need to hire human beings to train staff, managers were told. All the information you require can be accessed online — at a reduced cost for the company, and more flexible scheduling for employees. It sounded too good to be true — and it was. As one writer noted, "most eLearning is nothing more than online lectures or course notes." To teach skills beyond basic facts, the person-to-person method is still more effective than any form of electronic learning.

And yet, along comes the next eLearning fad: "gamification," which means using video games to teach. Video-game-based learning is already widely used in schools, and has spread to corporations as a tool for training workers and motivating customers. This approach is even used in the military. But does it work?

Most research on game-based learning has looked at schools. Results have been inconsistent but not especially encouraging. One 2013 study found that "students who completed the gamified experience got better scores in practical assignments and in overall score, but … performed poorly on written assignments and participated less during class activities." This makes sense: If you're playing video games, you are not developing the so-called "soft skills" —also known as "people skills" – that are necessary for success in any job. In a traditional classroom, on the other hand, students can ask questions and engage with the teacher and with other learners.

In the workplace, game-based learning is yet another wedge driven between younger employees, who might applaud gamification, and older workers, who may now feel obsolete. What's more, the prestigious magazine The Economist points out that "many of the aspects of gamification that do work are merely old ideas in trendy new clothes." For example, the points and other rewards that are selling features of video games are just online versions of sales contests or "employee of the month" perks. Like other trends, game-based learning is likely to fade away as the next new teaching fad appears on the horizon.

Source Material #2
Game-based Learning: An Effective Training Strategy
Janette Morgan, Ph.D., Professor of Business, Saratoga State University
Innovative Trends in the Workplace

Already a multi-billion-dollar business, game-based learning in the corporate world continues to grow at a steady pace, and is here to stay. Executives are smart — they

are not going to waste resources on training methods that don't work. Let's look at some of the advantages of "gamifying" workplace training.

First, many people are "gamers" in their non-work lives, so playing video games is something they are already comfortable with and enjoy. This makes game-based learning in the workplace more attractive and motivating than traditional instruction. And according to the Entertainment Software Association, despite the image of video-game players as teenaged boys, "the average gamer is now 37 years old." Further challenging the stereotype, nearly half of gamers are girls or women. Even 29 percent of those over age 50 are getting into the video-game habit. Teenagers and young men, in fact, make up only 15 percent of the over 190 million video-game users in the United States.

Evidence supporting the effectiveness of game-based learning is starting to emerge. Researchers point out that video games have "compelling storylines, attainable challenges, rewards, recognition and control," all of which stimulate learners. A 2012 report on game-based learning notes that "there is research evidence demonstrating positive impact on higher order skills such as decision making and problem solving." The report adds that using video games can also reduce training time, an advantage for both managers and employees.

Finally, unlike one-time training in a classroom, game-based learning is infinitely repeatable. If employees miss something or need more practice, they can always start the game again, using the feedback provided by the game to gauge their progress. This leads to a sense of accomplishment and creates a supportive learning environment, which is what we all want in an education strategy.

Extended Response Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the two journal articles.
In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.