



Roll for Learning:

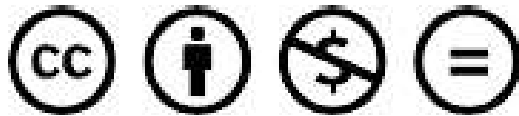
51 Micro Tabletop Role-Playing Games to Use in the Classroom

Edited by: Camilla Zamboni, Matthew Farber, William Merchant

Roll for Learning

51 Micro Tabletop Role-Playing Games to
Use in the Classroom

Camilla Zamboni Matthew Farber
William Merchant




Roll for Learning Copyright © 2024 by Play Story Press is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Copyright © by Play Story Press™ 2024
Pittsburgh, PA
<https://playstorypress.org/>
ISBN: 978-1-300-92250-6 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-300-92249-0 (Digital)

Cover design by John Dessler

TEXT: The text and images of this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NonDerivative 4.0 International License.

IMAGES: All images appearing in this work are property of the respective copyright owners, and are not released into the Creative Commons. The respective owners reserve all rights.

 Created with Vellum

Contents

Introduction	ix
--------------	----

Ages 5 to 11

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

HAPPY LITTLE GIRAFFES Trent Boyd	5
KNOW ME (AND YOU TOO) Joaquin Garcia	15
EPHEMERA: HARBINGERS AND HEROES Rob Monahan	25
DRAGONS & DETENTION David Perlman	37

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

OPERATION BLUE SKY Rina Amaranthine	47
FIXING THE BUCKET Robert Dash	53
FUR AND FITNESS Brendon Trombley	59
FIXIT AZURE AQUA VERSION WeiHsuan Lo, Erin C. Wachter	67
PANGAEA PALS Devan Wardrop-Saxton	75

Humanities

TIME TO GO! Angie Bandhoesingh	87
LEAST TRIVIAL PURSUIT Tyler Crumrine	97
ROCKIN' RAT PIZZA PARTY Jonathon Greenall	105
BIRD DETECTIVES John Mulligan	113

Dragons & Detention

David Perlman

Original or Adapted System: Original system

Brief Description: *Dragons & Detention* is a mash-up of a strategic board game and role-playing game (RPG). Think: chess meets Stratego meets Risk. It is designed to provide younger kids for whom a full-fledged RPG is too complex with enough basics in game mechanics and role-playing prompts to be an interesting game in its own right but also to prepare them for more advanced RPGs when they are more mature.

Main Content Areas: Social Emotional Learning (SEL), especially reinforcement of SEL goals and objectives when the game is used for afterschool programs

Target Audience: Ages 5 and up (although children 3-5 years old might be able to play without role-play prompts if guided by an adult or older child)

Recommended Number of Players: 1 child and 1 older child or parent, preferably with RPG experience

Components Needed To Play: Grid board (preferably with 1" squares), 4 6-sided dice, 12 tokens for minions (6 of one color and 6 of another color), 2 tokens for dragons (1 each to match colors for minions)

Estimated Time To Play: 15-30 minutes

DRAGONS & DETENTION

Presented here is the base version of Dragons & Detention. Additional variants and versions, with increasing complexity and fun additions (including **free** paper standees, a game board, and other base version supplies!), can be found on our website: www.gameonphilly.org/dragons-and-detention

Supplies

- A grid game board with 1” squares (a chess board would suffice; a downloadable version is available from our website to print onto paper. If the latter, clearly mark the first 3 rows of opposite sides of the grid board as the “Spawn Area”).
- Tokens or figurines of opposite colors (black and white; red and black; etc.) to represent the Dragons and minions. Painted mini-figurines or tokens from Dungeons & Dragons or other RPG games (2 large sized dragons of different color and 12 minions (6 of each kind) like goblins, kobolds, or orcs) are ideally suited for this game. But any kind of token (e.g., coins, bottle caps, glass beads, rocks, etc.) will suffice. If using a chess set, pawns can serve as minions and any other piece as the Dragon.
- For downloadable paper standees (which kids can personalize and color!), visit our website.
- 4 6-sided dice (2 for play and 2 to keep track of the Dragon’s hit points). *Optional:* 2 places (e.g., in front of each player) or things (e.g., Tupperware, cups, bowls, etc.) to serve as detention areas (cutting one piece of paper into 2 and labeling each as “Detention” works well).

Goal Of The Game

Reduce the opponent’s dragon health from 6 to zero.

Initial Game Setup

1. Place the game board on a tabletop between 2 players. Give each player 2 6-sided dice.

2. Ask each player to give their Dragon a fun and descriptive name and descriptions of their minions (e.g., “little dragons” like kobolds, goblins, orcs, humans, etc.).
3. The first 3 rows of the grid on each player’s side is the “spawn” area, from which all tokens will move.
4. Players may set up their tokens as they please on the first 3 rows of their spawn area. Most players will choose to set up their pieces with the Dragon (which has 6 health) surrounded by its weaker minions (who have 1 health and can only take 1 successful hit) in order to provide the most protection for the Dragon, but that’s only 1 strategy.
5. Each player should put 1 6-sided die to the number “6” or 6 pips to indicate their Dragon is at full strength. This die will be used throughout play to keep track of the health of the Dragon. The other die will be used for attacking and defending.

Game Play

Players take turns completing actions back and forth until one player reaches the victory conditions of eliminating the opponent’s dragon.

Initiation of Play

Each player rolls a d6, and the highest number goes first. Re-roll all ties.

Player Actions

On each player’s turn, they first select a character (dragon or minion) on their team that is available (i.e., not in Detention). They then can take up to 2 actions on that turn: (1) a move action and (2) an attack action. These actions can be taken in any order. At any time, they can choose not to do one or both of these actions.

Move Action: On their turn, the player can move up to 2 spaces. Players can only move orthogonally (either right or left or up and down, relative to their spawn area) on the game board. Players cannot move diagonally unless attacking.

Attack Action: If a player starts or ends their turn with a character (dragon or minion) in a space adjacent to any opponent’s character (dragon or minion), they can take an attack action against that character. In order to attack, they roll a d6 against that character. The targeted character’s

player then rolls a d6 to defend. If the attack roll is higher than the defense roll, the attack is successful and deals 1 point of damage to that character. Since in the base version of the game, minions only have 1 hit point, if they are defeated by an attack, they must be moved to Detention, where they remain until the end of the game unless a Jailbreak occurs. If the defense roll is equal to or higher than the attack roll, the opponent's character successfully defends, and no damage is taken. Note: If multiple minions attack the Dragon, the Dragon defends against each attack separately.

Dragon Attack: Due to its larger size and health, the Dragon may choose to attack twice during an Attack action. This attack may be against 1 or 2 opponents that are adjacent to the Dragon.

Jailbreak: As in chess, when a minion can maneuver to the last row of an opponent's spawn area, they may free one of their minions from Detention. This may be done only once for each minion in the game, including any minions previously freed from Detention. Dragons may not initiate a Jailbreak.

End of Game

The game ends when one player's Dragon, which can take 6 points of damage, is reduced to 0. Players should use the d6 to display their Dragon's current health, including when it reaches 1 hit point. The player with the remaining Dragon is declared the winner of the game.

BEST PRACTICES FOR RUNNING THE GAME

Below are some best practices for integrating role-playing elements into the game:

- Open-ended questions bolster imagination (e.g., “What does your dragon do when attacking?” whether it be claws, bite, or breath weapon).
- For younger kids or those with neurodevelopmental issues (decreased cognitive processing speed or executive functioning delays), forced choices might be a good option to help them describe the action (e.g, “Does your minion use a sword or their claws to attack?”).
- Model and encourage use of silly, funny, or otherwise different voices for dragons and minions to enhance the role playing experience.

In addition, based on our playtests, here is a strategy for playing with younger players. Younger kids tended to move one minion at a time down to attack the opponent's minions or dragons, which resulted in less exciting gameplay due to minion attrition. The adult or older child should encourage the following strategy or tactics to such kids before play begins: Move more than one minion into attack position at a time as in chess.

TIPS FOR RUNNING THE GAME

For players aged 5 and up, the older adult playing can pause the action during attacks and defenses and prompt the child to describe the specifics of the action. Use of imagination here can help prepare younger kids for more advanced RPGs. Ask the child to describe the scene in detail. What weapon is the minion using? What defense is the minion or dragon using? What taunts do they use? (To help the child, describe the emerging action to them as “a movie in their head.” The attack comes first; then we pause the “movie” to allow the child to describe the attack; then we press “play” to see how the attack is resolved (by rolling a d6); the adult then describes in detail the resolution (e.g., a hit, a block, the reaction, etc.); then we press “pause” again, and the opponent rolls a d6 to defend, and that scene is described.

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

To make the setting more realistic and school-like, feel free to use this sample narrative as an opening to your play:

Many years ago, a clutch of dragon siblings attended Hero Middle School, and while on the playground one day, they devised a game called Super Attack Tag. The game started out as just tag on the playground but then evolved to include handmade weapons of all kinds. Soon they were playing it all across the school and with all the other students. The teachers, however, were unimpressed. Whenever they would catch a student playing the game, it resulted in a one-way trip to detention. Now, years later, as teachers, who are helping to teach the new crop of students at Hero Middle School, the dragon siblings have renewed the game. But they didn't want to be left out! So, they started to hold weekly Super Attack Tag games, pitting their classrooms against each other. Any player that gets tagged, or loses all their health, is put into "detention." The last teacher standing is the winning class and holds bragging rights until the next week's game.

POTENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Playing any game with rules, and especially with role-playing prompts, can enhance or reinforce SEL. Our game is likely best used to reinforce specific classroom social and emotional learning objectives or as adjuncts to such objectives during dismissal or as components of afterschool programs. Since the game has elements of role-playing basics with fantastic beasts, school clubs that use RPGs or have science fiction and fantasy components might find the game helpful to reinforce SEL classroom objectives or the development of particular SEL skills. In our playtest in such clubs, we arranged tournaments with players, with the champion winning a small prize for triumphing against other players.

While the game itself might not be a primary driver of SEL development due to its nature, the game does involve a number of activities that have SEL correlates and thus can help reinforce the development of those particular skills - namely:

- Dice rolling: Arithmetic skills (counting, comparison of different

values, and determination of which values are higher, equal to, or lower than others) (McConkey & McEvoy, 1986)

- Turn-taking: Patience and emotional regulation (Dell'Angela, 2020)
- Naming one's dragon: Creativity and imagination (Karwowski & Soszynski, 2008; Umarova, 2023)
- Describing one's minions: Creativity and imagination (Karwowski & Soszynski, 2008; Umarova, 2023)
- Strategic thinking: Executive skills in planning, execution, and anticipating opponents' moves (Cullinan & Genova, 2023)
- Role-Playing Prompts: Creativity and imagination (Karwowski & Soszynski, 2008; Umarova, 2023)

RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cullinan, M., & Genova, J. (2023). Gaming the systems: A component analysis framework for the classroom use of RPGs. *International Journal of Role-Playing*, (13), 7-17. <https://doi.org/10.33063/ijrp.vi13.305>

Dell'Angela, L., Zaharia, A., Lobel, A., Vico Begara, O., Sander, D., & Samson, A. C. (2020). Board games on emotional competencies for school-age children. *Games for Health*, 9(3), 187-196. <https://doi.org/10.1089/g4h.2019.0050>

Karwowski, M., & Soszynski, M. (2008). How to develop creative imagination? Assumptions, aims, and effectiveness of Role Play Training in Creativity (RPTC). *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 3(2), 163-171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2008.07.001>

McConkey, R. and McEvoy, J. (1986), Games for learning to count. *British Journal of Special Education*, 13: 59-62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.1986.tb00655.x>

Umarova, M. I. qizi. (2023). Psychological and pedagogical characteristics of children's physical and mental development in ruled games. *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*, 2(3), 295-297. Retrieved from <http://erus.uz/index.php/er/article/view/2352>

John Mulligan

he/him

john@exeunt.press

John Mulligan is an independent tabletop game designer and owner of Exeunt Press. His published games blend the storytelling of roleplaying games (TTRPGs) with the mechanisms of board games, including the ENNIE-nominated Exclusion Zone Botanist. He writes at Skeleton Code Machine, a weekly publication that explores tabletop game mechanisms.

Anthony Ortega

he/him

ortega.a0@gmail.com

Anthony Ortega is an educator, project manager, artist, and game designer. He works for Harrisburg University of Science & Technology, teaching in the Interactive Media and Game Design undergraduate programs while also managing student designers and developers for real world client work. In his spare time, he is a freelance illustrator and game designer, as well as being a full time husband and father.

David Perlman

he/him/his

dperlman002@gmail.com

David Perlman is a seasoned scholar and educator with dual backgrounds in health psychology (MS, 2022, University of the Sciences) and medical ethics (PhD, 2000, University of Tennessee). David's goal is to combine these dual academic backgrounds and his passion for role-playing games into opportunities to use RPGs therapeutically in a number of different capacities, but especially for those not traditionally served by such therapeutic services. He has been an RPG professional Game Master since 2019 and a player since his early adolescence. In addition to a number of scholarly and academic pursuits and positions, David runs a non-profit organization, GameOn! (www.gameonphilly.org), whose purpose is to bring the joy and pro-social benefits of RPGs to kids and adults in the Philadelphia area, especially those who identify as or are neurodiverse.