



Game or No Game

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Scenario

Josh has been hired to evaluate an algebra game called *Candy Coat*. He plans to test the game in laboratory and real class settings. He wants to include a classroom where the teacher does not normally use computer games. Therefore, Josh contacts his buddy, Fred, who is the principal of Fairwish Middle School.

Josh came to Fairwish before to evaluate educational software on world history. The teacher and student response in social studies classes had been positive. Fred was not sure if *Candy Coat* could be beneficial to his students but, while driving to work, he had heard on the radio that games can motivate students to learn mathematics and help them overcome math anxiety. Besides, parents keep on saying they want more technology in the classroom.

Consequently, Fred decides to allow Josh to try out *Candy Coat* at Fairwish. The school only has two math teachers. Fred asks both to participate in the *Candy Coat* field test.

Steve is one of the math teachers. He learned about games in education for his master's degree in educational technology. As a teacher, he made a decision not to use computer games in his class. He sometimes uses game elements like team competitions and reward systems to motivate his students. He also uses computer simulations. However, he does not use computer games because he wants to teach his students to be able to study when things seem difficult and no fun.

He believes that he should help them become lifelong learners who persist and persevere.

Regardless, Fred—the principal—wants him to test drive Josh's computer game with his students. How should Steve respond? What would be ethical for Josh and Fred to do in this set of circumstances?

Principle

AECT Code of Professional Ethics Section 3 - Commitment to the Profession

Principle 2

In fulfilling obligations to the profession, the member:

6. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues.

(Apply the principle to the scenario for yourself before going on to read the analysis.)

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Notes

Professional ethics scenarios published in *TechTrends* are fictitious (see *TechTrends*, March–April, 2006, pp. 10-11). There is no intentional resemblance to specific people or particular organizations. The instructional purpose is to raise consciousness about AECT's *Code of Professional Ethics*.

Analysis

All three individuals—Steve, Josh, and Fred—have honest intentions. They each mean well. The situation is interesting because usually people think of this principle as being associated with professionals committing bad deeds or, at least, being excessively selfish. Steve's knowledge and beliefs about games lead him to conclude that he would be less of a teacher if he allows the game to be tested in his classroom. Making this professional decision is his responsibility. Josh wants to see if *Candy Coat* works to help middle schoolers learn algebra. Before *Candy Coat* is empirically validated, Josh simply does not know if it improves learning. Fred chooses to allow the *Candy Coat* trial from past experience with Josh, the radio report, and parents' desires for more technology. This makes sense based on Fred's duty as the Fairwish school principal. However, should Fred impose his vision of the effective use of technology on Steve? Considering that a principal has line authority over a teacher, is asking him to take part in the study something that is coercive?