

### Research on animated characters and motivation

- Research conducted by Ricci et al.(1996) proposed that instruction that included game-like features enhanced student motivation, which led to greater attention to training content and greater retention. Furthermore, Druckman (1995) added that games seem to be effective in enhancing motivation and increasing student interest in subject matter.
- Due to the visual striking structure, animated information, and tailoring of information (depending on the student's needs), CAI has been supported by the literature as an efficient and effective learning environment that motivates students (Kinzie, 1990; Padma & Ross, 1987; Traynor, 2003).
- Each character in TeachTown was carefully designed with a rich personality, including strengths and weaknesses, with the purpose of creating a believable world where students can form emotional bonds with the characters. These bonds are more likely to result in better skill acquisition, generalization, attention to task, and fewer behavioral issues due to enhanced motivation (Koegel, Tran, Mossman, & Koegel, 2006).
- Animated cartoons are popular with children and have been shown to have pro-social benefits (Mares & Woodard, 2001).
- To make animated shows as powerful and effective as possible, Fisch (2005) recommends the following: 1) Engage children using humor, mysteries, games, and other motivating components; 2) Choose age-appropriate topics that are inherently interesting and relevant to children's lives; 3) Present content using age-appropriate language with varying levels of difficulty; 4) Present educational material in a clear, direct, and explicit manner; 5) Keep the educational content "on the plotline" (i.e. making it central to the narrative story); 6) Focus on a small number of teaching points; 7) Reinforce educational concepts by repeating them throughout the episode or across multiple episodes; 8) Draw connections among conceptually related segments to help children see how skills can be applied in different situations; 9) Use engaging visuals rather than just "talking heads" - include characters with whom children can identify; 10) Encourage viewer participation - have children actively engage in each episode's educational content; and 11) Provide extension activities to help children carry their learning into real world activities.

### References

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