Design an Escape Room

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The education system has traditionally adopted a teacher-centered approach to learning. Unfortunately, this way of teaching students in the classroom does not reach all of the different learners and their learning styles. Students are often not engaged, distracted, or uninterested in what they are being taught in this kind of environment (Mara, 2017). When students are reading, they are only activating a small portion of their brain to process written language. On the contrary, games have the opposite effect and they can engage a full range of the senses (Johnson, 2006), similar to the environment of the gaming world.

Although the concept of escape rooms aligns well with the gaming world, they did not emerge from one single influence. They are a result of merging various types of entertainment (Nicholson, 2016). The first escape room originated in Japan in 2007 and have been becoming increasingly popular over the years (McConnon, 2018). Their popularity corresponds with the growth of social media and nerd culture (Mallenbaum, 2018). People are drawn towards social play. They enjoy seeing what they can do and doing things together (McConnon, 2018). Some escape rooms can be very difficult and their complexity has been evolving very quickly (Clare, 2017).

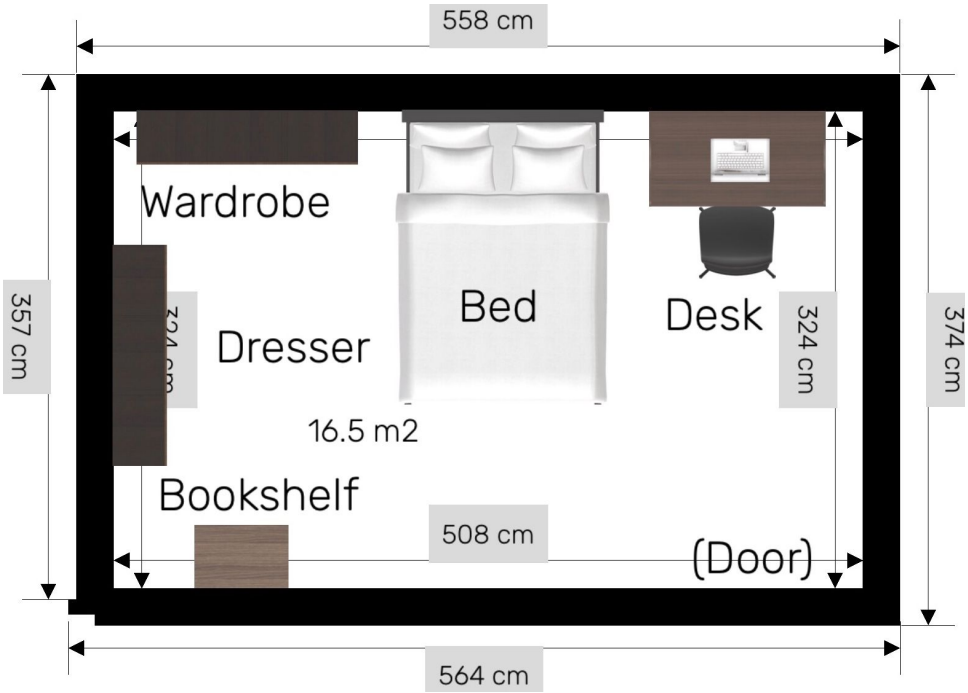
Adults enjoy escape rooms because they can be challenging, engaging, and a nice break from solitary screen-based worlds that many people spend their days in (McConnon, 2018). Students enjoy them for similar reasons. In addition to challenging and engaging students, they become curious, critical thinkers. It becomes an authentic experience and deepens their learning (Randles, 2017). Students enjoy it more than the mundane tasks that they are used to experiencing in their classrooms' daily routines. In one study, the evidence showed that through

the active learning that took place, students had more success at retaining the various information that they learned in the escape room and struggling students were able to perform better on tests pertaining to the same information (Vörös and Sárközi, 2017).

The theme of this escape is room is a bedroom setting (see Figure 1). You, the player is a teenager. You were sent to your room because your mother logged into your school's learner management system and saw some bad grades. Since she is upset, she also told you that you are no longer allowed to go to the school dance tonight. You are distraught because you were really looking forward to going to this dance. You told your mother that there must be some kind of mistake because you have all passing grades. Your mom did not believe you. She said that you are going to have to prove it so she locked the door to your room. She said that if you can figure out how to escape, this will prove that you are a smart cookie and deserve to go to the dance.

Figure 1.

A visual representation of what the escape room will look like.



As the participants walk into the room, they will see a bed, dresser, bookshelf, desk, ceiling fan, laptop computer, and a few other odds and ends placed around the room. One of the first things players may notice is the piggy bank that is on the dresser. Upon further investigation, they will discover seventy-five cents of loose change inside. This will be helpful later. Players will also notice the bookshelf in the room. All of the books are permanently fastened to the bookshelf except for one. This book has a lock on it. Pulling out all of the dresser drawers and looking under them will reveal a laminated piece of paper taped under one of the drawers. The paper has a riddle that says, I am a three digit number. The second digit is four times as big as the third digit, while the first digit is three less than the second digit. What is my number? The answer is one hundred forty-one. Players will use this is the code to open the lock that is on the book. Opening the book will reveal a cutout hole and the player will find eighty-five cents of loose change.

The dresser is missing one handle. There is a loose screw along the floorboard that can be used to easily open the drawer. Inside the drawer is a blacklight. Turning off the light in the room reveals a key that was camouflaged in the wallpaper on the wall. The blacklight also reveals that certain letters (g, r, a, c, and i) stand out on a poster that is on the wall. The last thing that users will notice is that something is written on the ceiling fan. Turning the fan on reveals a four-digit code. The four digit code opens the lock on the desk drawer. Inside the desk drawer is another seventy-five cents in loose change.

The clock on the wall is not moving. It is stuck at 12:11. This is the password to get into the diary that can found under the mattress. Once the player gets into the diary, they will see a QR code. Scanning the QR code reveals a virtual diary. The player reads an excerpt about some

cute boy named Craig. It says that in two years, he will be twice as old as five years ago. How old is he now? The answer to this riddle is twelve. This helps users open the lock that is on the wardrobe closet door. When the player opens the wardrobe closet door, they will discover ninety cents in loose change.

Players should figure out that the name Craig is significant because it was in the diary and was also the letters that were revealed with the blacklight on the poster. If players add all of the loose change together, they will get three hundred twenty-five. There is a laptop computer on the desk, entering the password Craig325 will cause the escape door to pop open. Once this happens, the player is free to go to the dance.

Most elements of this design are extremely feasible. The most costly aspect of this escape room would be the laptop and escape door. The majority of the things involved were simple locks and loose change.

There were several types of math and critical thinking elements involved to get out of the room. Escape rooms such as this one create an immersive and engaging environment that is exciting for students. Being able to submerge the player right into the game is a benefit of using an escape room rather than just a game. It also eliminates obstacles for the experience and makes learning more effective (Stone, 2016). By learning material this way, students are more likely to absorb the information and be able to apply it more effectively in different situations (Mara, 2017). Creating an escape room takes time and creativity, but they can embrace any area of the curriculum and can be tailored for any age group. The effort is well worth it.

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