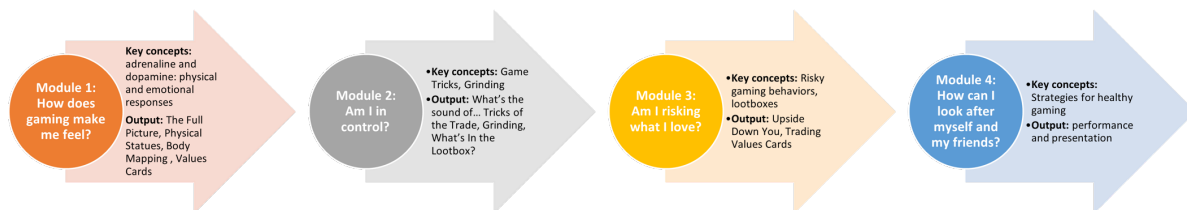# The Bridge

The Bridge is a unique, creative program designed to encourage young people's exploration of both the joys and risks of online gaming. It uses animations, kinaesthetic learning activities and engaging discussions to raise awareness of the addictive nature of gaming and its links to gambling; and supports students to develop self-care strategies to build protection from gaming and future gambling harm.

This online suite of age appropriate and curriculum-aligned resources is designed for use by teachers, parents and community educators with upper primary and early secondary-aged children.

Program Overview

Module 1: How does gaming make me feel?
Key concepts: adrenaline and dopamine: physical and emotional responses
Output: The Full Picture, Physical Statues, Body Mapping, Values Cards

Module 2: Am I in control?
• Key concepts: Game Tricks, Grinding
• Output: What's the sound of... Tricks of the Trade, Grinding, What's In the Lootbox?

Module 3: Am I risking what I love?
• Key concepts: Risky gaming behaviors, lootboxes
• Output: Upside Down You, Trading Values Cards

Module 4: How can I look after myself and my friends?
• Key concepts: Strategies for healthy gaming
• Output: performance and presentation

Program Components

Video	Discussions	Kinaesthetic Learning Activities
3-5 min	15-30 min	30-60 min

The Bridge

(Am I in Control?)

This module explores the elements of computer games that are designed to keep us playing. The young co-designers of The Bridge call these the 'tricks computer games play behind our backs'.

DURATION:

Each lesson is 1.5 - 2 hours long.

Module 2: Learning activities summary

	Lesson 1	**Lesson 2**	**Lesson 3**
Starters	1. **Review of previous themes** 2. **RAN chart** 3. **Key word chart** 4. **Watch video (story summary)**		
Discussion themes	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade (part 1)** *How video game designers keep us hooked through…* - *Bright colours,* - *Bells and Whistles,* - *Chasing the High,* - *Near Misses*	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade (part 2)** *How video game designers keep us hooked through…* - *Grinding,* - *Free to Play – or is it?,* - *Random Rewards,* - *Variable Timing*	**Theme 2.2 Are You In Control of the Game?** **Theme 2.3 Are You In Control of your Emotions?** **Theme 2.4 The Line Starts to Blur** **Theme 2.5 Choice** **Theme 2.6 Conflict**
Essential Kinaesthetic Learning Activities	**Activity 2.2 What's the Sound of…** (drama) *How sound in games can manipulate us*	**Activity 2.3 Grinding** (drama game) *How investing time and money can keep us hooked* **Activity 2.4 What's in the Lootbox?** (art/drama) *Class makes a Lootbox and develops random winning and losing rewards. This activity is returned to in Module 3.*	
Extension Kinaesthetic Learning Activities	**Activity 2.0 20 Up: Celebrating Failures (game)** *Fun warm up game turning losing into a winning moment*		**Activity 2.5 Avatar in Trouble** (art) The physical and emotional effects of risky gaming **Activity 2.6 Game Over** (drama) Negotiating gaming times with adults

Notes:
- Words highlighted in green can be found in glossary.
- Activities highlighted in blue have accompanying visuals that can be used in class for reference.
- Story summary is found in Appendix.

Module 2

Learning intentions

(1) To understand how computer games 'hook us in'

(2) To understand that we do not always have control over the game

(3) To understand how this can affect our lives

Success criteria

- Understood how computer games 'hook us in'

- Understood that we are not always in control over the game

- Understood how not being in control of the game affects our lives

Essential Questions

How do games 'hook us in'?
Do we always have control over the game?
How does gaming affect our lives?

Key Concepts/Themes

Bells and Whistles are bright, flashing visuals, and excitable sounds which the player comes to associate with winning.

Near Miss is when a player almost wins a point but just misses out.

Grinding is a simple, repetitive activity within a game, usually with no relation to the core action. Grinding may be used to increase a player's / avatar's strength or power but is primarily a psychological manipulation to increase and maintain a player's investment in the game.

A **lootbox** is like a lucky dip. It is presented to the player as a reward for an achievement, but the player must generally pay to open the box. It has unknown items inside it, the value of which can vary widely and is unknown to the player before opening the lootbox.

Lesson 1: Tricks of the Trade (Part 1)

Overview

This lesson explores how computer games 'hook us in'.

Learning activities

Starters and Activity Sheets (30 min)	
1	Review past themes and Helmette's journey so far
2	(RAN Chart)
3	Key Word chart (on butcher's paper)
4	Watch video

Discussion Themes (30 min)	
5.a	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade** - Bright colours - Bells and Whistles
5.b	- Chasing the High - Near Misses

Kinaesthetic Learning Activity (30 min +)	
6	**Essential: Activity 2.2 What's the Sound of…** (drama) How sound in games can manipulate us
(7)	**Activity 2.0 20 Up: Celebrating Failures** (game)

Assessment Notes

The following Learning Intentions are tied with the themes / activities, which can be assessed following the suggested Victorian Curriculum domains listed in the Appendix:

Learning Intentions	Themes / Activities	Domains
To understand how computer games 'hook us in' To understand that we do not always have control over the game	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1** Tricks of the Trade	Critical and Creative Thinking Health and Physical Education
	Activity 2.2 What's the Sound of…	English Drama
	Activity 2.0 20 Up: Celebrating Failures	Personal and Social Capability

Lesson 1 Starters (30 min)

Note: The extension activity 20 Up: Celebrating Failure is a great introduction to this lesson. Please refer to Appendix C for details.

1	**Review (10 min)**	Review key themes in previous lesson and Helmette's journey so far.

2	**RAN chart (10 min)**	Students write on their RAN chart (Knowledge I Already Know) based on their knowledge and experience about gaming and what they have learnt from the previous module. **Activity sheet: RAN chart**

3	**Key Word Chart (5 min)**	Once students have finished with their RAN charts, create a Key Word Chart as a class which they will continually add to across the program.

4	**Watch video #2 (5 min)**	(For teachers only: Please refer to Appendix A for the story summary.)
		
		• **Introduce the video:** *In this video we explore the elements of computer games that are designed to keep us playing. The young co-designers of The Bridge call these the 'tricks computer games play behind our backs'.*
		
		• **First take some time to reflect on the storyline in this video:**
		  o *What happens in this story?*
		  o *How has the story changed since the previous video?*
		  o *What is Helmette's journey?*
		  o *What is the avatar, Helmette Head's journey?*
		
		• **Play video #2 from start to finish.** (2 min 53 sec)
		Please note that captions can be turned on or off.
		
		• **Stop at key points to take time and discuss the themes** (see next section).

Lesson 1 Discussion Themes (30 min)

Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade

(How video game designers keep us hooked – part 1)

Aim: Tricks of the Trade asks students to take a deep dive into Video 2 watching closely to identify what tricks the Bridge video game uses to keep Helmette playing.

Duration: 30 mins including in depth discussion

Materials:

Have Video 2 ready to play

Pens and paper

Activity:

- Play Video 2 through again and ask students to write down each time they suspect a trick is being used to keep Helmette playing.

5.a
- You might choose to set this up as a team competition – 'Who can identify the most tricks?'

Activity Discussion:

The Bridge game uses 8 tricks to keep Helmette playing:

> **1 – Bright Colours**

> **2 – Bells and Whistles**

> **3 – Chasing the High**

> **4 – Near Misses**

> 5 – Grinding

> 6 - Free to play – or is it?

> 7 – Random Rewards

> 8 – Variable Timing

In this lesson, we will explore tricks 1 to 4.

Trick 1 of 8: Bright Colours

Video reference: 00.26

The game is very brightly coloured, but each time Helmette Head loses, the game loses colour and Helmette loses gold.

- *Why do most computer games use bright colours?*

Bright colours elicit strong emotions [ref: glossary] Game designers use colours and their corresponding emotions to keep you engaged. Experiencing strong emotions is a key reason many people play computer games. Key emotions you might experience include surprise, fear, joy and anger. These emotions are known to correlate with the colours light blue, dark green, yellow and red, and these colours are used frequently in computer games, as designers work to engage your strong emotions.[1] This feature is used in both video game and poker machine design.

Playing computer games can trigger the release of dopamine, leading to feelings of happiness or wellbeing. There are other ways to boost dopamine naturally:

- Eat healthy foods including cheese, meats, fish, dairy, soy, seeds, nuts, beans, lentils.
- Avoid processed foods, high-fats, sugar, caffeine.
- Get lots of sleep, as this fuels dopamine production.
- Exercise daily.
- Avoid stress and use mindfulness or breathing exercises.

Ask your students to reflect on how this is reflected in the games they play.

Trick 2 of 8: Bells and Whistles

Video reference: 01.38

Helmette Head defeats the dog monster.

- *What changes in the game at this moment?*

   When Helmette Head defeats the dog monster there is not only flashing bright colours, but also happy music plays, cash registers jingle, and gold bars pile up in the corner of the screen. These all trigger the release of dopamine creating the 'feel-good' effect.

- *Why do you think this happens?*

Animations accompanying the opening of lootboxes or 'winning' points during computer games use bright, flashing visuals and excitable sounds which the player comes to associate with winning. This is often referred to as **'all the bells and whistles' [ref: glossary]**.

These bright, flashing images and sounds are designed to stimulate the release of dopamine, making the emotional experience of winning even stronger. This technique is proven to reinforce your desire to keep playing and is used by designers in both the computer game and poker machine industries.

[1]Joosten, Lankveld & Spronck. (2010). Colors and Emotions in Video Games. 11th International Conference on Intelligent Games and Simulation, GAME-ON 2010.

5.b

Trick 3 of 8: Chasing the High

Video reference: 00.13 / 01.23

The monsters start winning.

- *Has the game got harder? Why?*
- *If games get harder as you level up – does this stop you playing?*

Games are designed to get harder as you progress. This is fair enough – and means you increase your skills as you level up. But it also means you have to play harder and longer to get the same amount of wins you were getting in level 1 - with the accompanying adrenaline / dopamine buzz that comes from facing a challenge and winning.

This is one the keys that keeps you playing computer games. Players will keep playing to recapture the great feeling they get when they win or when they 'luck in' to a special lootbox gift - even if this comes less and less frequently. The game will ensure there are always just enough wins to keep you 'chasing the high'.

Ask your students to discuss times when they have experienced this in the games they play.

Trick 4 of 8: Near Misses

Video reference: 00.49

Helmette Head appears to defeat the electric monster but is zapped and killed again.

- *What emotions does Helmette feel when killing…and then being killed by the electric monster?*

  Helmette is elated but then quickly frustrated – but plays on.

- *Does this make Helmette want to stop playing?*

When you almost make a win in a computer game but just miss out – this is called a **Near Miss [ref: glossary]**.

Near misses are widely believed to encourage you to keep playing, even in games of pure chance where the probability of winning never changes.

Despite being frustrating, near-misses make your heart beat faster and 'wake you up', engaging you more deeply in the game. You might also take near misses as an encouraging sign, confirming your strategy and raising your hopes for a win. They might also trigger your 'fear of missing out'. The games themselves are sometimes engineered to generate near misses and provoke these responses.

The brain is wired to respond to almost hitting a target. For some tasks, such as learning to kick a soccer ball into a goal or firing an arrow at a target, near-misses are informative. You're building your skill, and the brain needs to pay attention to near-misses to achieve this.[ii] But Near Misses in computer games can trigger a big urge to continue playing. Research suggests they play a significant role in getting you to commit to the game and contribute to you keeping playing longer than you mean to.[iii]

REFLECTION

- *What emotions do you experience when you think you have won in a game - only to then lose?*
- *Does it make you want to give up? Or keep playing? Why do you think that might be?*

[ii]Strickland. (2009). Slot Machine Near Misses are Perfectly Tuned to Stoke the Addiction. Discover Magazine. https:www.discovermagazine.com/mind/slot-machine-near-misses-are-perfectly-tuned-to-stoke-the-addiction#.Vxou15MrLBI

[iii] Larche, Chanel & Musielak. (2017). The Candy Crush Sweet Tooth: How 'Near-misses' in Candy Crush Increase Frustration, and the Urge to Continue Gameplay. Journal of Gambling Studies. 33.

Lesson 1 Essential Kinaesthetic Learning Activity:
Activity 2.2 What's the Sound Of… Create Your Own Soundscape

Aim: What's The Sound Of.. is a fun, hands on experience to explore how sound can be used to manipulate an audience. By exploring and understanding how sound is used, students become aware of its effects in video games, which can remove some of its power.

Duration: 20 mins +

Materials: Have Video 2 ready to play without sound

6	**Activity Instructions:**
	
	1. **Watch Video 2 with the sound turned off.**
	
	2. **Ask students:** *In the video where do you think sound may be used to invoke a response in the viewer?* Make a list of student responses on the board.
	
	3. **Ask students to re-create these sounds.**
	
	4. **Write the following 6 scene headings on the board:**
	
	    Scene 1. (0-35 seconds)
	    Helmette is trying to destroy the monsters.
	
	    Scene 2. (35 secs to 57 seconds)
	    Helmette must pay to keep playing.
	
	    Scene 3. (57 secs – 1.21)
	    Helmette puts in more money and starts Grinding.
	
	    Scene 4. (1.21 – 1.50)
	    Helmette wins a Hockey stick from Lootbox.
	
	    Scene 5. (1.50-2.20)
	    Helmette reaches the River of Forgetting.
	
	    Scene 6 (2.20-2.35 end)
	    Helmette runs at the Bridge with the hockey stick ready to strike.
	
	5. **Play Video without sound again, pausing at each scene.**
	
	6. **Split class into 6 groups. Assign each group to a scene.**
	Each group practices making sounds to go with their scene. Ask students to create sounds that will match the action and sounds that will contradict it e.g. Helmette Head runs from a monster – students could create fast sounds or music to match the action; or they create a lullaby to contradict the action.
	
	7. **Play video again with sound off. Each group performs their sound scape scene. Watch audience responses to sounds that match the scenes and sounds that contradict it.**

Activity Discussion:

- *What sounds kept you engaged and why?*

- *What sounds broke the moment or made you laugh? Why?*

Sound is a powerful element that can be used to manipulate an audience. These are part of the 'bells and whistles' used in online games and gambling as a 'hook' to keep you playing.

Lesson 2: Tricks of the Trade (Part 2)

Overview

This lesson explores how computer games 'hook us in'.

Learning activities

Starters and Activity Sheets (30 min)
1 Review past themes and Helmette's journey so far
2 (RAN Chart)
3 Key Word chart (on butcher's paper)
4 Watch video

Discussion Themes (30 min)	
5	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade** - Grinding - Free to Play - or is it? - Random Rewards - Variable Timing

Kinaesthetic Learning Activity (30 min +)

6 **Essential: Activity 2.3**

Grinding (drama game)

How investing time and money can keep us hooked

7 **Essential: Activity 2.4**

What's in the Lootbox? (art/drama)

Class makes a Lootbox and develops random winning and losing rewards. This activity is returned to in Module 3

Assessment Notes

The following Learning Intentions are tied with the themes / activities, which can be assessed following the suggested Victorian Curriculum domains listed in the Appendix:

Learning Intentions	Themes / Activities	Domains
To understand how computer games 'hook us in'	**Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1** Tricks of the Trade	Critical and Creative Thinking
To understand that we do not always have control over the game	**Activity 2.3** Grinding	Drama English Personal and Social Capability
	Activity 2.4 What's in the Lootbox?	English Drama Visual Arts

Lesson 2 Starters (30 min)

1	**Review (10 min)**	Review key themes in previous lesson and review Helmette's journey so far.

2	**RAN chart (10 min)**	Students write on their RAN chart (Knowledge I Already Know) based on their knowledge and experience about gaming and what they have learned from the previous module. **Activity sheet: RAN chart**

3	**Key Word Chart (5 min)**	Once students have finished with their RAN charts, create a Key Word Chart as a class which they will continually add to across the program.

4	**Watch video #2 (5 min)**	(For teachers only: Please refer to Appendix A for the story summary.) • **Introduce the video:** *In this video we explore the elements of computer games that are designed to keep us playing. The young co-designers of The Bridge call these the 'tricks computer games play behind our backs'.* • **Play video #2 from start to finish.** (2 min 53 sec) Please note that captions can be turned on or off. • **Stop at key points to take time and discuss the themes** (see next section).

Lesson 2 Discussion Themes (30 min)

Theme 2.1 / Activity 2.1 Tricks of the Trade

(How video game designers keep us hooked – part 2)

Aim: Tricks of the Trade asks students to take a deep dive into Video 2 watching closely to identify what tricks the Bridge video game uses to keep Helmette playing.

Duration: 30 mins including in depth discussion

Materials:

Have Video 2 ready to play

Pens and paper

Activity:

- Play Video 2 through again and ask students to write down each time they suspect a trick is being used to keep Helmette playing.

- You might choose to set this up as a team competition – 'Who can identify the most tricks?'

Activity Discussion:

The Bridge game uses 8 tricks to keep Helmette playing:

> 1 – Bright Colours
>
> 2 – Bells and Whistles
>
> 3 – Chasing the High
>
> 4 – Near Misses
>
> **5 – Grinding**
>
> **6 - Free to play – or is it?**
>
> **7 – Random Rewards**
>
> **8 – Variable Timing**

In this lesson, we will explore tricks 5 to 8.

5

Trick 5 of 8: Grinding

Video reference: 00.29 / 00.39 / 00.54

The game stops and signs appear: "Plant 100 trees or buy 10 gold bars. Pat 500 dogs or pay 50 gold bars. Plant 1000 daisies or buy 100 gold bars."

- *When the game pauses and the signs appear - is this the end of the game?*

  Helmette Head appears to be dead, and all the gold has disappeared.

  In order to continue playing Helmette has a choice – to do a repetitive activity (eg. planting trees) OR buy more gold bars to move forward.

  Helmette chooses to pour coins from their piggy bank into the computer to keep playing rather than waste time doing a meaningless task.

  When Helmette runs out of money they have no choice but to 'plant daisies' to continue playing.

- *How long do you think it will take Helmette to plant 1000 daisies?*

- *Why do we see Samak the fish swimming around the bowl when Helmette is planting daisies?*

  Helmette is in a kind of fishbowl - going round in repetitive circles achieving nothing.

Grinding [ref: glossary] is a simple, repetitive activity within a game, which usually bears no relation to the core action. Grinding may be used to increase a player's / avatar's strength or power, but is primarily a psychological manipulation to increase and maintain your investment in the game.

Game designers insert grinding activities into games for two reasons:

1. To make money from you.
2. To foster your 'commitment' to the game.

The more time and/or money someone commits to a game the less likely they are to stop playing. Grinding can include spending a lot of time doing repetitive activities or waiting while the game pauses for a fixed period or watching ads – but it will often take longer and longer to get back into the game. Designers know that as you get more 'hooked' into the game you will be more likely to pay than wait. Even watching ads earns money for the game developer.

Ask your students to discuss examples of grinding they know from games they play.

Lesson 2 Essential Kinaesthetic Learning Activity
Activity 2.3 Grinding

Aim: In Video 2, Helmette is forced to plant daisies before moving to the next level – this kind of activity in video games is called 'grinding'.

This activity is a way to **explore choices students may make**. It can be both fun and useful and can be used in many other capacities in the classroom. It's particularly interesting because there is no right answer. Students love justifying their choices, making for great conversation. Sometimes other students change their stance after hearing another student justify their choice.

The interesting outcome is that although students may have a choice with each question – they are mostly predicated on undertaking activities in order to play a video game. So, is this really a choice?

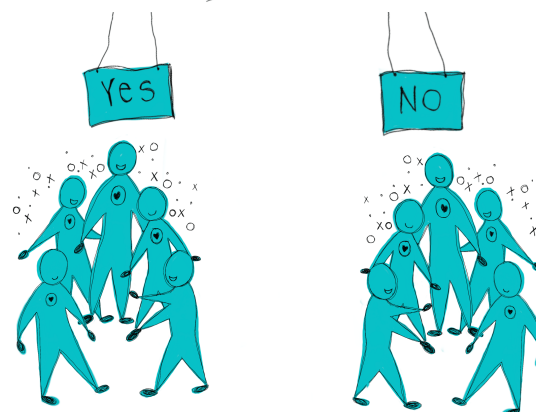**Duration:** 10 + minutes, can be periodic to suit class.

Materials: no materials needed

6	**Game Rules:** • All students stand in the middle of the room. • **Designate one side of the room as YES and the opposite side of the room as NO.** • As a question is announced, students move to the side that represents their opinion, either YES or NO. • At times ask students to justify their answer. • There is no right or wrong answer. **Play YES/NO activity.**

SECTION 1

Things students would do to get somewhere/something they want (eg in an online game they might choose to plant potatoes to go up a level)

Teacher reads out questions:

Questions:

● *Are you <u>happy</u> to do a really boring chore for half an hour if you get to play a game after that? YES or NO*
● *Do you <u>love</u> practicing something over and over? (Like a Musical instrument, sport, dance, a song) YES or NO*
● *In online life, do you <u>love</u> practicing something over and over? YES or NO*
● *If you've spent a lot of time practising something – onground or online – would you find it hard to give it up and never do it again? YES or NO*

SECTION 2

In many games you may have to grind to build up gold or points.

Questions:

● *Do you like cleaning the house? YES or NO*

● *Would you spend 2 hours cleaning the house in exchange for money? YES or NO*

● *Would you spend 3 hours cleaning the house in exchange for spending time with your friends? YES or NO*

● *Would you spend 4 hours cleaning the house in exchange for playing your favourite video game? YES or NO*

SECTION 3

Some games use advertisements between levels to make you wait before going to the next step or level (They are 'grinding you' – making you invest your time, so you will be less likely to stop playing the game)

Questions:

● *Do you get frustrated when you have to watch advertisements to keep playing your game? YES or NO*

● *Do you take a short break when there's an ad between levels? YES or NO*

SECTION 4

Boring things that take a long time vs undesirable things that are quick to get to the next game/level (eg. Helmette has to plant daisies or pay 50c to keep playing the game – and eventually runs out of money)
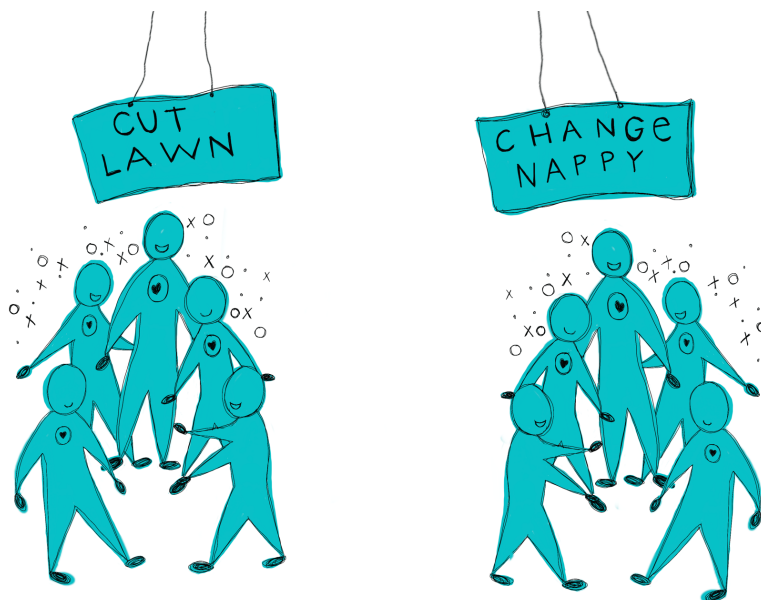
Questions:

- *Would you rather take an hour to cut a lawn with scissors (point to left side of room) or change a baby's really disgusting nappy (point to right side of room) to play a game tonight?*

- *Would you prefer to get really wet and muddy taking a short cut home from school to play a game (point right) or walk the looooong way home and stay dry (point left)?*

- *Would you choose to do 20 pushups (point right) or pay $20 (point left) to be able to play games right now?*

- *Would you rather receive one new video game right now (point right), or wait and get a whole pile of presents and video games for your next birthday (point left)?*

Activity Discussion:

- *What does it mean to have choices?*

- *Did the whole class agree at any time?*

- *How do people feel about trading lots of time and a boring chore for something they want?*

- *In games, do you ever feel that you make a choice you don't really want to? Do you know why you feel this way?*

- *What does grinding mean in a game? Why do games have grinding?*

- *If all the choices you made were in order to play video games – was this really a choice? Or were you being manipulated?*

Trick 6 of 8: Free to Play – or is it?

Video reference: 00.33 / 00.39 / 00.54

Helmette empties money into the computer rather than plant trees. Helmette pays money rather than patting dogs. Helmette runs out of money and plants daisies instead.

- *Why does Helmette choose to pay money instead of planting trees or patting dogs?*
- *Why does it get more expensive each time Helmette Head dies?*

Many online games are <u>free to play</u> - meaning the game itself does not have to be purchased; or once purchased you can play without any further financial commitment. However, this does not mean you will not spend money. The more 'hooked' into a game you are, the more likely you are to pay money to level up, to purchase skins, or to avoid waiting to play.

As players become more 'committed' they are often prepared to ==PAY to play [ref: glossary]==, spending more and more money to get back into a game as quickly as possible - choosing to 'buy the gold bars' rather than waste time on a senseless grinding activity.

These transactions are often not expensive and are called <u>microtransactions</u>. However even tiny amounts of money from each player can add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars or more for game companies, depending on the popularity of a game.

There are two ways a player can spend money in digital games.

- They can use their own money to purchase virtual currency to use within the game.
- They can spend directly – purchasing access to the game or to higher levels of game play with their own money. In some games players can purchase virtual items with their own money from an in-game 'marketplace' where they can then trade items with other players for cash. This is known as Skin Trading.

REFLECTION

- *Have you ever spent your own money (or someone else's) inside a game?*
- *How did it feel? Why?*

Trick 7 of 8: Random Rewards

Video reference: 01.34

A lootbox randomly appears. Helmette Head pulls out a hockey stick.

- *What do you think Helmette was hoping to pull out of the lootbox?*

- *Do you think a hockey stick would be a GREAT reward?*

Random Rewards in computer games can refer to a number of experiences:

- the random cycle of wins– which are sometimes based on skill, but often happen at random intervals.
- the unknown rewards that appear when you win or defeat an enemy.
- the 'lucky dip' rewards you purchase in loot boxes. Sometimes players will receive virtual items 'worth' almost nothing, sometimes players might win virtual items 'worth' hundreds or even thousands of dollars – the price other players will pay to purchase this virtual item online.

It is important to note that game rewards remain virtual and are never actually 'owned'. They are in fact only pieces of code. But not knowing when the reward will happen, or what the reward will be adds to the anticipation, building your engagement. Random Rewards are an incentive for you to keep playing because the surprise reward stimulates your dopamine, so you will keep playing in the hope of restimulating these good feelings.

REFLECTION

- *Ask your students about their experiences with random rewards in games.*

- *What might be a great reward in the games you play?*

- *Do you like the surprise element in lootboxes and similar rewards in games? How does it make you feel?*

- *How do you think random rewards might help to keep you playing?*

**Lesson 2 Essential Kinaesthetic Learning Activity:
Activity 2.4 What's in the Lootbox? (art/drama)**

Aim: To understand the risks of Loot Boxes and their similarity to gambling. To reflect on what you could lose.

Together students will create a class Loot Box and play a game called **What's in the Loot Box**.

This game asks students to quickly and unconsciously name things they would consider great prizes. This is then flipped to naming things that would be unwanted. As the game progresses the risks of winning unwanted prizes becomes more apparent.

Duration:

Art Activity: 45 mins

Drama Game Activity: 15 mins +

7	**Art Activity** **Materials:** Cardboard box Decorative materials such as coloured paper, paint etc. **Activity instructions:** 1. The Loot Box needs to be large enough for students to reach in and pull out value cards and pieces of paper. 2. Starting with a cardboard box base. 3. Ask students to brainstorm a 'look' for their class Loot Box. 4. Create a lid that opens and closes or a slit or hole that students can reach into. 5. Discuss with students how they would like to decorate the Loot Box. It can be painted, add text, add coloured paper, get as creative as you like. 6. Get decorating!

Drama Game

Materials:

Class Lootbox

Pens and one A4 sheet of paper

Activity instructions:

1. **Students stand in a circle.**

2. **Place the lootbox in the middle of the circle.**

3. **Ask students to one by one step into the middle of the circle, put their hand into the lootbox.**

4. **Student pretends to pull out an imagined fantastic prize and announce it to the group.** These prizes could be objects, or game related, or school-related.

   For example – 'I won a new bike!' Or 'I won a new skin for my avatar!' or 'I won no homework for a week!' **Other students cheer.**

   (Examples of **winning prizes:** Free time/no

   homework/Extra-long lunch time/etc.)

5. **Then ask students to one by one step into the middle of the circle, put their hand into the lootbox and pretend to pull out a horrible prize they'd really hate to get, and announce it to the group.** These prizes could be objects, or game related, or school-related.

   For example – 'I won a week-old sausage roll!' or 'I won a cardboard sword!' or 'I won picking up rubbish in the playground for a week!'

   Other students boo.

   (Examples of **losing prizes**: Lunchtime Detention/Lots of homework/no talking in class/etc.)

7
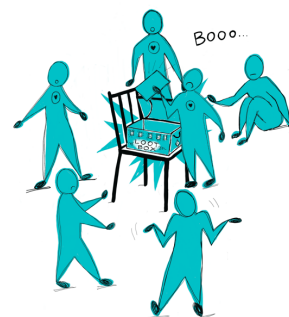
6. **Ask students to return to their tables and cut or tear their A4 pieces of paper in half. They then write down one winning prize on one piece of paper, and one losing prize on the other piece of paper.**

7. **Students then fold their pieces of paper and put them in the class Lootbox.**

Trick 8 of 8: Variable Timing

- *Does Helmette win every time a monster comes near?*

  No. Sometimes they win a lot, and other times not at all. This doesn't seem to be related to Helmette's playing skills.

When you start playing a new game the 'wins' come frequently and regularly. As you 'level up' the time between wins becomes longer and more irregular. This irregularity keeps you glued to the game – because you don't know what or when you will win.

Both Random Rewards and **Variable Timing[ref: glossary]** build your desire to continue an activity like playing computer games. This was 'discovered' by a scientist called B.F. Skinner - who is the grandfather of modern psychology. He did experiments where rats were placed in a box and given food when they pressed the correct lever. Skinner found that if the food rewards came <u>every</u> time the rat pressed the correct lever, the rat would lose interest. But if the food rewards came **randomly** (the rats got food but NOT EVERY TIME it pressed the lever) and at **variable intervals** (the rats couldn't predict when the rewards would come) the rats were more likely to keep pressing the lever to get the reward no matter how long it took.

Poker machines also use random rewards and variable timing and are very successful at keeping people playing – often well beyond what may be good for them.

REFLECTION

- *When you play a game do you win every time?*

- *If you won every time would the game be more interesting or less?*

- *How do you think this would affect how much you play?*

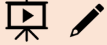- *Discuss your experiences with variable timing in games.*

Lesson 3: Are you in Control of the Game?

Overview

This lesson explores how we do not always have control over the game and how this can affect our lives.

Learning activities

Starters and Activity Sheets (30 min)

1. Review past lesson themes and Helmette's journey so far.
2. (RAN Chart)
3. Add to Key Word Chart (on butcher's paper)
4. Watch video again

Discussion Theme (30 min)

5	**Theme 2.2 Are You In Control of the Game?**
6	**Theme 2.3 Are You In Control of your Emotions?**
7	**Theme 2.4 The Line Starts to Blur**
8	**Theme 2.5 Choice**
9	**Theme 2.6 Conflict**

Kinaesthetic Learning Activity (30-60 min)

| (10) | **Extension: Activity 2.5 Avatar in Trouble** (art)

 How losing impacts us physically |
| (11) | **Extension: Activity 2.6 Game Over** (drama)

 Negotiating gaming times with adults |

Assessment Notes

The following Learning Intentions are tied with the themes / activities, which can be assessed following the suggested Victorian Curriculum domains listed in the Appendix:

Learning Intentions	Themes / Activities	Domains
To understand that we do not always have control over the game	**Theme 2.2** Are You in Control of the Game? **Theme 2.3** Are You In Control of your Emotions?	Critical and Creative Thinking English Personal and Social Capability Health and Physical Education
To understand how not being in control of the game can affect our lives	**Theme 2.4** The Line Starts to Blur **Theme 2.5** Choice **Theme 2.6** Conflict	English Personal and Social Capability Health and Physical Education
	Activity 2.5 Avatar in Trouble	Visual Arts Personal and Social Capability
	Activity 2.6 Game Over	Critical and Creative Thinking Drama English Ethical Capability Health and Physical Education

Lesson 3 Starters

1	**Review (10 min)**	Review key themes in previous lesson and review Helmette's journey so far.
2	**RAN Chart (10 min)**	Add any notes in the RAN chart. **Activity sheet: RAN chart**
3	**Key Word Chart (5 min)**	Once students have finished with their RAN charts, add to the Key Word Chart as a class which they will continually add to across the program.
4	**Watch video #2 (5 min)**	• Play video #2 from start to finish. (2 min 53 sec) Please note that captions can be turned on or off. • Stop at key points to take time and discuss the themes (see next section).

Lesson 3 Discussion Themes:

5

Theme 2.2 Are You In Control of the Game?

Video Reference: 01:15

Kids and Astro run past the window

- *Why do we see the kids and Astro running in the park?*

  They are having fun outside.

- *Do you think they are having more or less fun than Helmette at this moment?*

Video Reference: 01:20

Helmette throws the keyboard on the desk

- *Why does Helmette throw the keyboard on the desk? What is Helmette feeling?*

  Helmette is feeling frustrated and angry because they are constantly losing and can't move ahead in the game.

- *Do you think Helmette was going to stop playing the game because of these feelings?*

- *What happens to prevent Helmette from stopping?*

  Helmette wants to stop playing, but the moment they give up, the game turns back on, with more flashing lights, the sounds of winning, and a cache of gold bars. Helmette is hooked back into the game.

Many **video games can learn player behaviour[ref: glossary]** and exploit this to keep you playing, using techniques like:

- Tracking your play to adjust the level of difficulty depending on your skill or success rate
- Varying the level of difficulty based on your engagement with the game
- Matching you with others online who are stronger or weaker players than you
- Introducing random surprises, such as new maps or game modes

These all serve to keep you engaged, ensuring you play more often and for longer periods of time. The more rounds you play the more likely you are to spend money on in-game purchases, leading to higher revenue for the game company; the more ads you see, the higher click through numbers and higher revenue for the game company; and when you are really involved in a game you are more likely to upgrade to premium or next version of a game, leading to higher revenue again.[iv]

So, when you believe you are in control of the game – you might like to reflect on this.

[iv] Institute for Operations Research and the Management Services. "New research analyses video game player engagement: Gaming companies can drive up to 8% increase in game-play and correlates to revenue boost." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/09/190925133637.htm (accessed January 20, 2021).

Theme 2.3 Are You In Control of your Emotions?

Video reference: 01.42

Helmette dances around the bedroom, lights glowing around their head.

- *How is Helmette feeling?*

  Helmette just defeated the dog monster and is feeling excited and happy.

- *Why does Helmette's brain glow?*

  Helmette is experiencing a wash of dopamine, the 'feel good' effect, as the result of the big win and the flashing lights and colours and music. At this moment Helmette has experienced a series of wins in quick succession - the lootbox is a win! Defeating the monster is a win! The gold bars piling back up are a win! The bells and whistles and flashing lights reinforce the feeling of a really big win!

- *Only a moment ago Helmette was frustrated and angry - what do you think caused such a quick shift in emotions?*

- *Will this feeling last? Or be impacted by the very next thing that happens in the game?*

  Helmette's emotions are now being controlled by the game and the experiences Helmette is having as the player.

6

Note: Extension Activity 2.5 – Avatar in Trouble (art) is a great activity after this discussion. Please refer to Appendix C for details.

Reflection:

- *Have you ever felt your emotions changing when you're playing a game? Happy and excited at one moment, and soon after feeling frustrated or angry?*

- *What did you do about it?*

This is an opportunity to discuss ways to manage uncomfortable emotions such as frustration or anger. Ask your students to share any strategies they use – these may include deep breathing, simple mindfulness activities, taking a break from the game, going for a walk or a run, throwing a ball against a wall, having a glass of water, talking with a friend or family member. It is always most powerful when students can learn from each other's experiences or develop strategies themselves.

Theme 2.4 The Line Starts to Blur

Video reference: 01.46

Inside the bedroom Helmette is happy and dancing. Outside the window two friends look at Astro who is lying on the ground next to a broken hockey stick.

- *What do we see out the window while Helmette is happy and dancing inside?*

- *Why isn't Helmette looking after Astro?*

- *How has Helmette changed since the beginning of the story?*

- *Are you seeing any overlaps between what is happening in the game and what is happening in Helmette's real life?*

The line between Helmette and Helmette Head and between real life and the game is becoming less clear.

We have seen the hockey stick in Helmette's bedroom. It is one of Helmette's treasures.

The hockey stick has now become a weapon, and Astro has been hurt.

Helmette is no longer interested in anything but the game, and is forgetting the things they treasure.. friends.. pets.. music.. books.. family.

REFLECTION

- Have you ever forgotten yourself like Helmette has? Been so involved in something… or wanted something so badly you behaved in ways you might not usually?

- What was happening at the time? How did this feel?

7

Theme 2.5 Choice

Video reference: 02.02

The monster says: Do you dare cross the River of Forgetting? You might lose all you treasure! You have a choice…

- *What treasure is the monster referring to?*

The monster is referring to Helmette's personal treasures – pets, music, books, hockey, family, and friends.

REFLECTION

This is an opportunity to open a discussion about choice – and how the choices we make can impact us and those around us.

8

- *Helmette has a choice – do I go back now and not lose anything else? Or do I cross the bridge and RISK losing all I treasure?*

- *What choices could Helmette make at this point?*

- *Go deeper into the game (to cross the bridge) and risk losing more than just their piggy bank money, or…?*

- *Might things get worse for Helmette? If so, how?*

Theme 2.7 Conflict

Video reference: 02.15 – 02.30

Helmette Head grabs the hockey stick and runs at the bridge.. a voice calls out for Helmette to stop playing.. a hand pulls the plug from the wall and the game goes black.

- *Why doesn't Helmette do as their parent asks?*

- *Why does Helmette scream when the screen goes black?*

Helmette is no longer winning. The game has become a struggle, but Helmette is hooked.

Helmette's parent wants them to stop playing but Helmette is too deep in the game.

Computer game mechanics (tricks) can make it very hard to stop playing. This can result in fights with your adults, or getting in trouble for ignoring your other responsibilities, and not doing as asked – turn off the game and come to dinner; turn off the game and go to bed; turn off the game and do your homework.

REFLECTION

- *Do you think it was fair when Helmette's parent pulled the plug on the computer?*

- *How might Helmette and their parent have done this differently?*

- *How would you rewrite the end of this video so there was no conflict between Helmette and their parent?*

Note: Extension Activity 2.6 – Game Over (drama) is a great activity after this discussion. Please refer to Appendix C for details.

This is a chance to start students thinking about strategies for achieving different and better outcomes with family and friends when gaming:

- setting time limits and sticking to them
- discussing and agreeing with the other person about how long to play – and doing as agreed
- how to negotiate with the other person if you're in the middle of a game, and stopping will have consequences
- how to bring the other person into your game world so they understand what you are doing and why

9

Summary Discussion Questions

Ask your students to precis what has happened in this video:

- *What journey has Helmette taken?*

- *What has changed?*

- *Where did Helmette begin, and where is Helmette by the end?*

- *How would you describe the emotional journey Helmette has taken?*

- *What emotions has Helmette felt through this part of the story?*

- *What has prompted these emotions?*

Appendix A: Story Summary

The Bridge (video 2)

The story takes a turn in this video.

Helmette Head is finding it harder to destroy the monsters.

The gold bars are disappearing.

The bright colours on the screen start to fade.

Helmette must pay to keep playing or spend time doing useless tasks (grinding).

Helmette is getting frustrated and angry with the game, lashing out by throwing down the keyboard - about to give up and stop playing. But at that moment the game flashes back on with bright colours, music and the offer of free gold bars.

Helmette is winning again!

Helmette Head is being chased by a dog monster but wins a hockey stick in another lootbox and destroys the monster.

Helmette is elated – and doesn't notice that outside the window their friends are gathered around Astro the dog who is lying hurt on the ground next to Helmette's broken hockey stick.

Back in the game Helmette Head reaches the River of Forgetting with the Mountain of Gold on the other side.

Helmette's parent asks for the computer to be turned off, but Helmette can't stop now - The Bridge and its guardian Monster have appeared!

The monster challenges Helmette Head to cross the bridge even though it could mean losing 'everything you treasure'. After a moment's hesitation, Helmette chooses to continue playing. Helmette Head runs at the bridge with the hockey stick ready to strike but cannot get up the steps.

Helmette's parent gets more insistent about turning off the computer, but Helmette again ignores them. Helmette Head is finally knocked off the Bridge, just as Helmette's parent pulls the plug on the computer turning everything black. Both Helmette and Helmette Head scream with frustration.

Appendix B: RAN sheet

Activity sheet: RAN chart

Name: _____

KIDS THRIVE – THE BRIDGE

Term 1 – 2021

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
What I already know...

NEW KNOWLEDGE
What I have learnt...

WONDERINGS
My thoughts/wonderings from our lessons

Appendix C: Extension Activity 2.0
20 Up: Celebrating Failure (game)

Introduction:

In video 2 Helmette spends a lot of time losing. As a result, they lose all their money and are forced into Grinding. All of this starts to emotionally affect Helmette in negative ways.

Often in our society, losing or failing is accompanied by shame and anxiety. However, failure can be positive and propel us to try more, try harder, or commit more strongly to something. Alternatively, losing can be a 'bridge' to unhealthy responses to failure.

Aim:

This activity explores celebrating failure. By celebrating failure as a team, we remove some of the power failure can hold over us, and the power others have to use it against us. This module prompts the students to be aware of their own responses to losing or failure which can lead to self-reflection and self-led positive change. This activity also gives students tools to reflect on their behaviour and emotions while playing video.

Duration: 10 min +

Materials Preparation:

This activity is best done outside or in a school hall where there are no obstacles. You will need a small ball of loosely scrunched up paper, to about the size of an orange. Put some tape around it to stop it coming apart.

Choosing a cheer to celebrate failure:

Before starting the game students choose a random word to 'celebrate' failure.

Students choose a word they wouldn't normally use.

> Teacher: "Tell me objects you find in the bathroom."
>
> Students: "Toothbrush, shower, towels, toilet brush, bathtub..."
>
> Teacher: "When the ball hits the ground, everybody calls out together; Ahhhh toilet brush!!
> Teacher: "Let's have a practice….Ahhhhh toilet brush!!"
>
> Students (loudly): "Ahhhhh toilet brush!!!!"

The Game:

Split the class into 2 groups (or more). Give each group a 'ball'.

The task: Students began to tap the ball, keeping it up in the air. Every time the group 'fails' (dropping the 'ball') the whole group uses their cheer to 'celebrate' the failure.

Eg; the ball hits the ground: Whole group cheers Ahhhh toilet brush! And then starts again at a count of 1. Aim to get to 20 taps in a row.

The Rules:

All students count the taps out loud, they are aiming for 20.

Students must tap the ball, not catch and throw the ball.

Students must keep the ball in the air-it must not touch the ground.

Students cannot tap the ball twice in a row.

Everyone in the group must tap the ball at least once before you reach a count of 20.

If any of these rules are broken, you must start again at a count of 1.

Class Discussion:

What happened when you were asked to celebrate the failure?

How did you feel when you got close to 20, and then didn't?

How did you feel about not making it to 20?

Appendix C: Extension Activity 2.5

Avatar in Trouble (art)

Aim: This activity allows you explore what you and your Avatar may look like when you are having trouble or are in a challenging situation, and how your own body looks when you are having trouble, feeling frustrated and not having fun anymore.

Teacher Preparation:

As students will be photographed for this activity, have a camera/phone and printer ready. A laminator will give the optimal desired effect but not essential.

Duration: 30 minutes +

Materials:

Camera	Laminator	Coloured paper	Blutack
Printer	Scissors	Textas	Sticky tape

Activity Instructions:

1. **Ask students to strike a pose of their avatar when they are having troubles:** when they are losing, when things are not going their way.
2. **Photograph each student in their chosen avatar pose.**
3. **Create the avatar template by printing out each photograph of the student.**
4. **Students carefully cut around the printed body pose.** (Laminate if you can, to make it sturdy).
5. **Students create avatar skins by using either coloured paper or white paper and textures.** Are these skins damaged in any way?
6. **Attach avatar skins to the template by using either sticky tape or blue tack.**
7. Optional: string up avatars next to original Avatars to notice the differences in body language.

Activity Discussion:

- *How does your avatar look when they are having trouble?*
- *Are their skins damaged?*
- *Does this look like you when you are feeling troubled or frustrated?*

Appendix C: Extension Activity 2.6 Game Over (drama)

Click here to view illustrated exemplar to project in the classroom.

Aim: *Game Over* improvisation offers students an opportunity to explore conversations between children and adults as they do happen, and as they could happen. The key to improvisation is listening to what the other person says, and *how* they say it, and responding to that. There is no right or wrong way to respond, and some will make more sense than others. This will be in direct response to listening.

Duration: 15 mins

Materials and preparation:
Print scripts for persons A & B to hold as they speak OR
Write or project the scripts on the board so persons A & B can see.

Video:

At the end of video 2, Helmette's parent suddenly *pulls the plug* on their game, causing Helmette distress. Children and adults often express frustration with each other over moments such as this, which can cause conflict and alienation. This can further impact a child's ability to ask for help should unhealthy behaviours develop, and to talk to their adult about any concerns they may have about gaming in the future.

Preparation:

Project the **Extension Activity 2.6 Student Version** on your board, or write the prompts as they appear in each Round below so all can see. This will scaffold the improvisers.

Talk through the Rules of Improvisation with students.

Rules of Improvisation:

When each person speaks or does something it is called an 'offer'. This is because the scene hasn't been made up previously, so each new thing is 'offering' a part of the story for their scene partner to respond to. This keeps the story moving.
The key to improvisation is *listening* to what the other person says and *how* they say it. These are offers being made for you to respond to. And that's what you do – *respond* to what has been offered. There is no right or wrong way to respond, and some will make more sense than others. This will be due to the listening.
It is important to offer something new - and not repeat an offer that's already been given.

The Improvs:

Person A plays the adult, Person B plays the gamer. The dots in the speech bubbles require students to make an offer.

Do a couple of rounds of this with different students in each role. Some will be funny, some serious, and students may run out of ideas, which is a great time to go another few rounds as they will then move beyond the obvious with deeper responses.

ROUND 1

Person A is the adult, Person B is the gamer.

Person A: The Adult

Person B: The Game Player

It's time to finish playing your game.

No I ....

No you ......
(respond to what was said)

No.

ROUND 2

Person A is the adult, person B is the gamer.

Person A: The Adult   **Person B: The Game Player**

It's time to finish playing your game.

Yes but ....

Yes but …........
(respond to what was said)

Yes but …......
(respond to what was said)

ROUND 3

Person A is the adult, person B is the gamer.

Person A: The Adult

Person B: The Game Player

> *It's time to finish playing your game.*

> *Can we do a deal? Like....*

> *Yes and ....*
> *(respond to what was said)*

> *Yes and ......*
> *(respond to what was said)*

Reflection:

- *How did it feel to be person A and/or B?*

- *Can you think of other ways they could have responded?*

- *What differences did the class notice between saying No.. Yes, but.. or Yes and..??*

- *What were the most believable scenarios?*

- *Can they think of other times when any of these conversations have taken place?*

- *What scenario would either of the 3 rounds be appropriate for?*

Students can write down ideas they have for discussing positive ways with their adults on how to end playing a game.

- *What strategies can you think of for achieving better outcomes with family and friends when gaming, eg:*
  - setting time limits and sticking to them
  - discussing and agreeing with the other person about how long to play – and doing as agreed
  - how to negotiate with the other person if you're in the middle of a game, and stopping will have consequences
  - how to bring the other person into your game world so they understand what you are doing and why

Appendix D: Curriculum Links

Victorian Curriculum Connections (Levels 5 and 6)

Critical and Creative Thinking Curriculum

Code	Strand	Content description
VCCCTQ022	Questions and Possibilities	Experiment with alternative ideas and actions by setting preconceptions to one side

Drama Curriculum

Code	Strand	Content description
VCADRD030	Drama Practices	Develop skills and techniques of voice and movement to create character, mood and atmosphere and focus dramatic action.

English Curriculum

Code	Mode	Content description
VCELT314	Reading and Viewing	**Year 5** Responding to literature: Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features on particular audiences.
VCELY337	Speaking and Listening	Interacting with others: Clarify understanding of content as it unfolds in formal and informal situations, connecting ideas to students' own experience, and present and justify a point of view or recount an experience using interaction skills.
VCELA339	Reading and Viewing	**Year 6** Text structure and organisation: Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects
VCELY366	Speaking and Listening	Interacting with others: Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions, and use interaction skills, varying conventions of spoken interactions according to group size, formality of interaction and needs and expertise of the audience

Ethical Capability Curriculum

Code	Strand	Content description
VCECU009	Understanding Concepts	Examine the contested meaning of concepts including truth and happiness and the extent to which these concepts are and should be valued

Personal and Social Capability Curriculum

Code	Strand	Content description
VCPSCSE025	Self Awareness and Management	Explore the links between their emotions and their behaviour

Visual Arts Curriculum

Code	Strand	Content description
VCAVAV030	Visual Arts Practices	Select and apply visual conventions, materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to different art forms when making artworks

Health and Physical Education

Code	Strand	Content description
VCHPEP108	Personal, Social and Community Health	Plan and practise strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing.
VCHPEP109		Practise skills to establish and manage relationships
VCHPEP110		Examine the influence of emotional responses on behaviour, relationships and health and wellbeing