More Than a Scavenger Hunt: Using Escape Room Game Design for Library Orientation

Objectives: To increase the comfort level of first year pharmacy students in a team-based learning (TBL) program with library resources and services during orientation through a game-based scenario.

Methods: First year pharmacy students were oriented to library resources using a game-based learning approach. After being given a 30 minute PowerPoint introduction, 15 teams consisting of 5-6 students were given 1.5 hrs to complete 10 missions. The game was designed around nine study rooms, two quiet study carrel rooms and a flex space. Each room or station had its own purpose and was run by a Student Ambassador, known as the Room Master. Successful completion of a mission entailed solving a problem regarding library resources, allowing the team to “escape” the room or space and move on to the next mission. After each activity, successful teams were awarded a sticker on their game map to acknowledge their completion. To analyze the success of this activity, pre- and post- surveys were implemented at the beginning and end of the library orientation using a Likert scale. An incentive for being the winning team was ice cream. Feedback from the 2021 Day 2 Survey was shared with the library at the end of orientation week.

Results: There were 87 pre-surveys handed out and returned. While only 78 of the 87 Post-surveys were collected, several students had left the classroom once the group turned in their completed map. Data gathered from the pre- and post- survey showed a positive increase in the level of comfort with talking to the librarian, navigating the library’s website, and in knowing what types of resources and services the library offers. Comments and data from the 2021 Day 2 Survey provided constructive feedback on the duration of the games, length of overall orientation, and content learned.

Conclusion: The use of Escape Room game design for library orientation was well received by our first year pharmacy students. Participants were engaged and the level of comfort with library resources increased. The competitive nature of the game coupled with time restrictions and an ending prize, shows a promising future in enhancing students’ experiences with library resources and services. This type of event can be scaled and recreated with consideration to the size of the space utilized, the number of participants and facilitators, and the time allotted to the library for orientation.

Keywords: Gamification, student engagement, assessment, orientation