



# Dungeons and Dragons meet PowerPoint: an interactive ICT tabletop experience for EFL learners

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## KEY POINTS

**Background:** While wondering and experimenting with different ways to incorporate creative thinking and students' interests into my English as a foreign language (EFL) lessons, I developed a Tabletop role-playing game (TRPG) that uses PowerPoint and *Dungeons and Dragons (D&D)* rules/materials to immerse students in an adventure while at the same time developing their English proficiency and confidence.

**Aim:** To craft a straightforward yet enjoyable TRPG accessible to English learners of all levels, fostering the development of their reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical/creative thinking skills.

**Methods:** My TRPG, hereinafter referred to as EL Adventures, takes the core rules and concepts of *D&D* and simplifies them, allowing teachers (the Dungeon Masters) to primarily focus on their students (the players) actively participating and using English. The PowerPoint presentations not only enhance the comprehensibility and fun factor of the story for students through pictures, animations, sounds, and text but also alleviate the teacher's need to memorize the story text. While dice play a pivotal role in determining certain outcomes, the student's success in the game hinges on direct communication with the teacher, teamwork, and creative problem-solving as they confront challenge after challenge of varying difficulty levels.

**Results:** EL Adventures provided my EFL students with opportunities to practice reading, writing, and speaking English through intricate storylines, character creation, epic battles, and a variety of challenges.

**Conclusion:** Not all lessons can be taught from a textbook; sometimes they are taught on a noble quest in a fantasy world.

## Tweet Synopsis

Tabletop Role Playing Games like *Dungeons and Dragons* are not only for hardcore gamers. They can be played by anyone who has a mind to have fun being creative.

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Who am I?

My name is Ethan Smith, and I am an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Japan. My teaching career can be summarized as a decade dedicated to providing students with a classroom where they can be active learners and have fun. Creative and critical thinking activities have been instrumental in achieving this goal, and I believe they will continue to be the key to sparking students' interest in learning and giving them a new-found interest in learning English.

I currently work as an EFL teacher at an all-boys junior/senior high school in Shizuoka, Japan. Before this role, I taught at several public elementary schools, where I introduced students to basic English through engaging creative thinking activities and fun student-centered English language activities. One example of this is when I asked students to get into groups and create their ideal school lunch. Then, after we learned about the food pyramid, the students judged each group's lunch determining whether they were healthy. Besides my introduction to the lesson (five minutes) and my short explanation of the food pyramid (five minutes), the rest of the 35-minute lesson was done by the students.

Developing EFL activities that encourage students to think critically has always been a significant part of the lesson-planning process. Critical thinking exercises break down the barriers imposed by traditional educational practices, encourage students to think independently, and prepare them for the world beyond school (Fahim & Ghamari, 2011). I have found that my most rewarding experiences as an educator have occurred when I challenge students with motivating, fun, and creatively stimulating activities, encouraging them to think outside the box.

However, in the classes I taught at public schools, my freedom to be highly innovative in lesson planning was limited. While I had the autonomy to create my own activities, I still had to adhere to a fairly strict pre-made curriculum. It wasn't until I started teaching an advanced English class at my current school that I gained complete freedom to design the classes as I saw fit.

## 1.2 Who are the students?

My students are Japanese junior/senior high school boys from an all-boys school with a diverse range of interests. Some are into sports, while others prefer staying at home and playing video games. However, regardless of their differences, they all share a love for fun and silliness, which makes planning activities quite enjoyable.

The first group to start playing EL Adventures was comprised of ten eighth graders who were divided into two teams of five. I took on the role of the dungeon master (DM) for team one, while my colleague, who had experience playing *D&D*, DMed team two.

Note: While other students have played in the past couple of months in different classes, my playtest, evaluation, and next steps will be focused on the above eighth-grade teams.

## 1.3 What is the class?

The class is an advanced English class designed for junior high school students. We typically meet five to six times a week for 45 minutes at a time, with the majority of classes (three to four) dedicated to English grammar, writing, and speaking practice. The other one to two classes are devoted to playing *D&D*.

## 1.4 Why TRPGs?

My students love to play video games, and while TRPGs possess all the fun of a video, they require the players to channel their imagination, creativity, and critical thinking skills far more than any computer processor could. Attaining success and enjoyment in the game requires the students' active participation and communication with each other and the teacher. This ongoing communication enables me to facilitate their English language development throughout the entirety of the game,

ensuring they are not left to fend for themselves. In the realm of games used for educational purposes, teacher involvement is essential for students' improvement (deHaan, 2019).

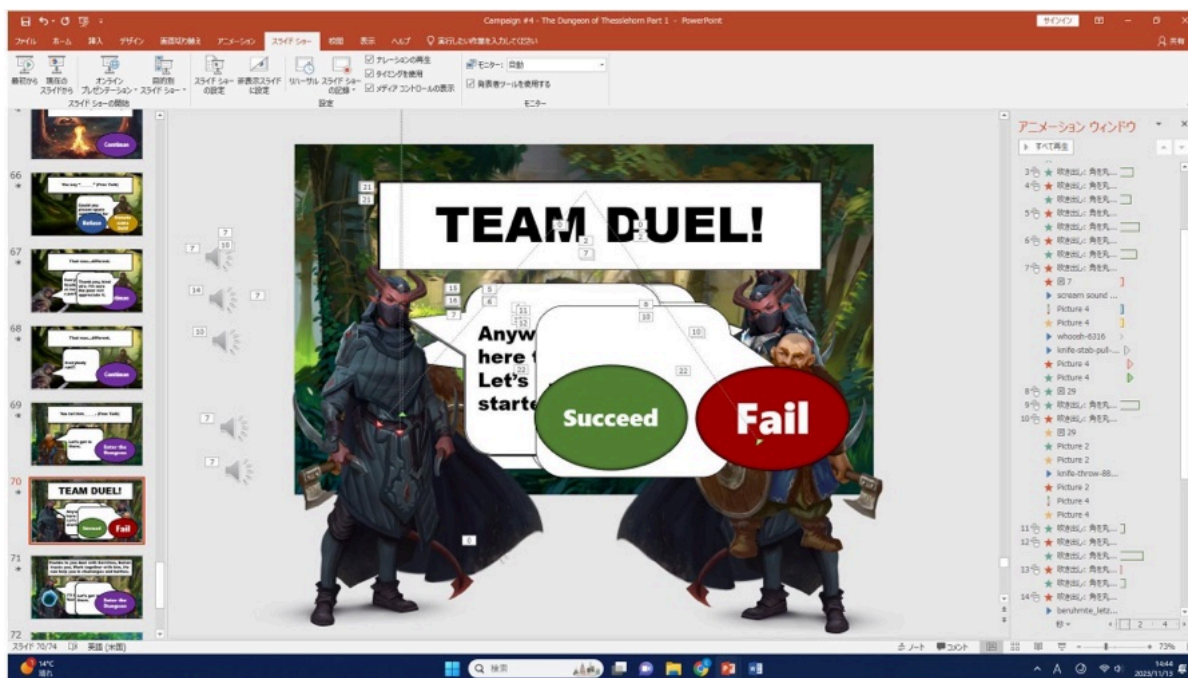
### 1.5 Why PowerPoint?

In my experience, even for native English speakers, following and participating in a TRPG can be challenging. Navigating the storyline, devising solutions to overcome obstacles, and expressing ideas in English can be quite difficult. I knew students would need a type of visual assistance to help them comprehend the story, keep track of the characters they interact with, and fully participate in the journey. With the tools provided by *Microsoft PowerPoint*, I was able to create an animation-filled presentation with narration text for the storyline and challenges, speech bubbles for character interaction, and a wide assortment of hyperlinks that let students make their own decisions and make their way through the story.

Image 1 shows a completed *PowerPoint* slide that incorporates all the features mentioned earlier. On the left side, you can see the slide menu, indicating that we are currently on slide 70. On the far right, there's the animation menu where I arrange each animation, determining its order, timing, and other settings. In the middle is the section visible to students.

Starting from the top, the rectangular text box labeled "TEAM DUEL!" is the narration text, appearing last on the slide with about five other text boxes behind it. Next are the text boxes near the characters, pointing to their mouths – this is the dialogue box where the character's speech appears. Following that are the character images, brought to life with animations, enabling actions like jumping, flipping, falling down, making noise, and more. Finally, in the foreground and always the last to appear on the slide, are two hyperlinks. Clicking on the "fail" hyperlink leads to a game-over slide, while the "succeed" hyperlink leads to the next slide in the story.

Note: Incorporating numerous animations into each slide can make your story more engaging, However, it takes a considerable amount of time.



**Image 1** PowerPoint game slide with pictures, text, audio files for effect, hyperlinks (middle), slide menu (left), and animation window (right)

### 1.6 My first TRPG activity

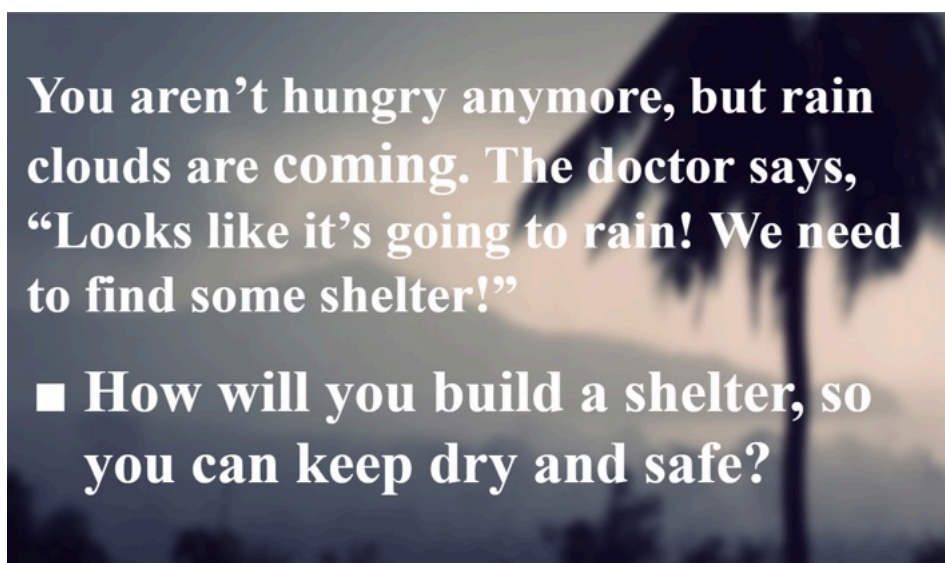
The learning benefits of role-playing games such as knowledge retention, increased motivation and creativity, and a newfound curiosity have been well-documented (Winardy & Septiana, 2023). Also, we cannot overlook how using the personal interests of students can dramatically improve their motivation to learn English and overall proficiency (Franciosi, 2015). Students can experience a

different world while using and practicing a variety of English words and phrases that they may have never used due to their real-world implications (Winardy & Septiana, 2023). After a month or two of research, I began my journey to create a fun, straightforward, and stimulating TRPG English activity for EFL learners. My initial attempt at creating a TRPG activity for my classroom had no direct connection to *D&D*, although it shared some similar attributes.

The first TRPG activity I developed was a desert island survival game for a group of three students from a different class a few years ago in my first advanced English class. The objective of the game is to devise clever ways to overcome five desert island challenges, such as finding food or making a fire, using the tools they had chosen at the beginning of the game until a rescue ship arrives to take them off the island. (See Image 2 for an example challenge.)

They began the game by choosing a role (pilot, doctor, engineer, or rugby player) and selecting five survival items from a provided list (rope, flare gun, first aid kit, etc.). Then, they encountered the island's survival challenges. For each challenge they discussed their plan to pass the challenge with each other, in English, and after they agreed on a plan using the tools at their disposal and the materials on the island, they presented their plan to me in the clearest English they could produce. After playing with the teacher and helping them formulate their ideas in clear and precise English, they would represent their idea to me, and I would decide whether it was a great, good, bad, or horrible idea. They would then have to roll a 20-sided die (the d20). The die worked as a kind of fate determiner, making the final decision whether they passed or failed the challenge. If their survival strategy was clever and well thought out, fate would be on their side, and they would only need to roll a five or higher to pass the challenge. However, if their strategy was too simple (bad) and left room for too many possible repercussions, fate would be cruel and they would have to roll a 15 or higher. If they rolled a high enough number, they would pass the challenge and survive. If they failed to roll a high enough number, they would lose a life point and move closer to dying on the island. Of course, I allowed room for leniency, so if the students failed a roll, I would often grant them another chance and present them with a follow-up challenge they would attempt to overcome.

My students thoroughly enjoyed this game. Even when fate worked against them, and they failed a challenge, the way they lost a life point always elicited smiles and laughter. For instance, in the final challenge of the game, where the goal was to have fun on the island without getting hurt, one group decided to play basketball with a coconut. After listening to their description of the rules and where and what the goal would be, I found their idea creative and reasonably safe. I told them they needed to roll a ten or higher to play without getting hurt. Unfortunately, they rolled a six, and I described the scene to them and said that as they were playing basketball, the coconut hit one of them on the head and then bounced off a tree to hit the others, causing them to lose a life point. Surprisingly, students didn't mind losing that life point; instead, they laughed at the image of their mishap. After witnessing how this game helped students have fun expressing themselves in different ways, I realized I needed to explore more TRPG activities, which eventually led me to *D&D*.



**Image 2** One of the desert island challenges

## 2. D&D Gameplay: the campaign

### 2.1 Playing around with PowerPoint

I created the desert island game using *PowerPoint* and found it to be a most valuable tool for immersing students in a fantasy world. Recognizing its potential, I knew I wanted to continue using it for my upcoming *D&D* game, but I needed to become more proficient in its use. After a couple of months of experimenting with different features and tools, I became quite adept at using the animation features, allowing text to seamlessly flow and complement the story and characters to transcend their two-dimensional forms. Additionally, I became proficient in utilizing hyperlinks - which I explain in more detail later in section 2.3 - to connect different slides and steer the story in various directions based on the decisions made by the students (players).

### 2.2 The story

When I initially embarked on the journey to bring EL Adventures to life, I realized that, regardless of how enjoyable the gameplay may be or how captivating the elements of the presentation software, including visuals and sounds, no one would become truly engaged with the game without a compelling story. Therefore, before I delved into stage-setting, character introductions, or battle preparations, I ensured that there was a captivating story to immerse players in the game's world, a journey that would keep them motivated and challenged, and an ending that would make all their efforts and challenges worthwhile.

While I had a rough draft of a story before creating the presentation, it evolved and improved over the months of work, resulting in a fun story that the students can follow and enjoy. Every day, the characters evolved and gained more depth, the journey's goal became increasingly clear, and the sequence of events flowed smoother and smoother.

I'm not a perfect writer, and even when I play with students, I discover mistakes and aspects of the game I'd like to change. I used to be annoyed by it, but that's the beauty of this game: nothing is set in stone. Stories can be modified, characters can be added, and if someone wants to use my game with their students, they can adapt the story to suit their preferences.

Overall, each story should have a main goal/mission that gives meaning to the enemies and challenges the heroes must overcome. There is also a menacing antagonist/villain that must be defeated. There must also be compelling characters that the heroes meet along the way. Those characters keep the story alive with their personalities and interactions with the heroes. The stories in EL Adventures are full of ups and downs, and while they might not be perfect, they are interesting and funny enough to keep the students wondering what will happen next.

Even the most well-crafted story will fall flat if the DM isn't aware of each step and ready to adjust based on the players' actions and choices. Just as a basketball game cannot function without a skilled referee, a D&D campaign cannot thrive without a competent and knowledgeable DM.

### 2.3 Visual imagery

Visual imagery is a powerful tool in an EFL classroom, especially for teaching language (Kelley, 2006, p. 9). Visual imagery is most effective when it can make abstract language without clear images (e.g., unyielding loyalty), which is not as easily memorized as concrete language (e.g., pink balloon), much simpler to remember (Kelley, 2006, p. 9). For example, I could either give students a word such as 'honor,' explain it to them, and have them memorize the definition, or I can show them a video or image of someone demonstrating honor and let that image serve as a reference point for when the word resurfaces in a book, on a test, or in real life. I would prefer to use visual imagery.

In standard *D&D*, players must rely mostly, if not entirely, on a dungeon master's (DM) verbal language to follow the story and their imagination. I believe this to be much too challenging for younger English learners (ELs). Therefore, my game combines both verbal language and visual language to create a story that is easy to follow and play. This visual imagery is accomplished by the use of PowerPoint

presentations filled with both narration and dialogue text, scenery and character images, and sound effects that bring an additional sense into play.

Note: Most images are used with permission from Dungeons and Dragons, Paizo, and various private artists, while the rest are produced through the use of AI programs such as DeviantArt's *DreamUp*.

## 2.4 Text: the voices of the story

In this game, there are two types of text: narration and dialogue.

The role of narration text is that of a storyteller; it describes the events of the story and immerses the players in the game world. Without the narration, there would be no story and no reason to play the game. The DM should read the narration text with the enthusiasm of a poet and the stoicism of a philosopher.

The role of dialogue text is to engage the players directly with the non-playable characters (NPCs), eliciting spoken and emotional reactions. This is where the DM gets to hone their voice actor skills, be creative, and make the characters come to life. The DM (me) speaks for every character/monster besides the players (Image 3).



Image 3 Narration text and dialogue text

## 2.5 Hyperlinks: giving students some control of their destiny

At the end of every slide, there is a hyperlink that connects that slide with another. There are four types of hyperlinks: purple, blue and yellow, green and red, and gray. These hyperlinks keep the story moving and give the players some control over the story (Images 4-7).

1. First, there are the purple hyperlinks which appear one at a time and merely link the players to the next part of the campaign (the next slide).
2. Second, there are the blue and yellow hyperlinks which present the students with a decision and continue the story based on their choice. For example, will they fight or talk to a character?
3. Third, there are the green and red (succeed and fail) hyperlinks which appear during a challenge or battle. If the students pass a challenge, the DM taps the green hyperlink which will lead to a favorable slide or a slide that will allow them to continue the game. However, if they fail, the DM will tap the red hyperlink, and it could lead to the students being penalized or to the end of the game.
4. Fourth and last, there are the gray hyperlinks which are similar to the blue and yellow hyperlinks, but the decision as to which hyperlink to be chosen relies on the character, interpreted by the DM, that the players are interacting with. Sometimes one link might be more favorable than the other, for example, in a "fight or no fight" situation, if the students have low HP they would want a "no fight" outcome.



Images 4, 5, 6, 7 All four types of hyperlinks

Image 8 illustrates where each hyperlink will direct the students. The only instance where there will be numerous hyperlinks on a single slide is when students are navigating from shop to shop, purchasing items for their journey.



Image 8 Example of where some hyperlinks can lead

### 3. D&D Gameplay: the class

#### 3.1 Classroom organization

The only materials permitted on the table are a pencil, eraser, dice, character figures, and character sheets. I worked at an elementary school for over seven years, and I have witnessed the chaos that ensues when a classroom is not adequately prepared for a planned activity. That is how I knew that before introducing the game to students, I would have to create an organized environment where students would know where to be, how to retrieve their game materials promptly, and where to sit and wait for instructions. See Images 9, 10 and 11 for my classroom layout.

First, I designated the tables by the entrance as the drop-off stations where students drop off unneeded items they bring with them from other classes (e.g., pencil cases, textbooks, tablets, etc.). This helps address the issue of students being overly distracted by their iPads and relieves me of the

burden of having to collect their journals. Second, I placed the *D&D* game materials (figures, profile sheets, dice, etc.) close to the drop-off stations to ensure that students can easily access their materials without having to be told. Lastly, I positioned the team tables in opposite corners. I was worried that the two games happening simultaneously would be a significant issue, but this spatial arrangement helped prevent excessive distraction during the often lively game sessions.

Note: In the early stages of the game, the two teams were set up in different classrooms. However, due to the time it took to prepare the second room for each game, I decided to keep both teams in one room with all the materials.

I worked at an elementary school for over seven years, and I have witnessed the chaos that ensues when a classroom is not adequately prepared for a planned activity.

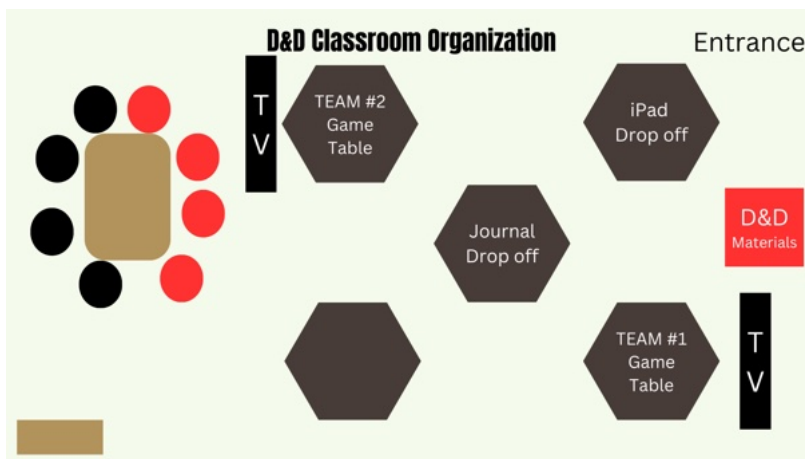


Image 9 Classroom organizational chart



Images 10, 11 Students choosing what items they want to buy from the store & class layout

### 3.2 Timeline/routine

The annual schedule for *D&D* included the following stages: *D&D* introduction and rules, character creation, backstory writing, learning the difficult campaign story vocabulary, playing the game and maintaining a journal, taking four term tests, which featured a *D&D* vocabulary section and a *D&D* writing section, and creating the final personal *D&D* campaign creating the project (Image 12).



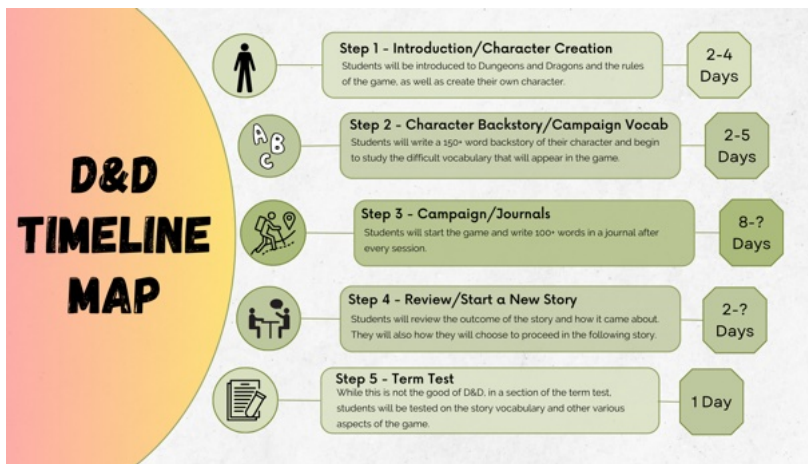


Image 12 D&D timeline map

Each class lasted 45 minutes, which gave us just enough time to complete a few challenges or defeat a monster or two. The daily progress of the story largely depended on how efficiently students gathered their materials, their level of participation and concentration, and dice rolls. Among these, sometimes dice rolls were the biggest waste of time, as battles would sometimes go back and forth with no end.

The daily schedule is straightforward. It involved students entering the classroom, placing their iPads and journals on the designated tables, collecting their *D&D* game materials, taking their seats, and playing the game. From time to time, I would enter the classroom and begin preparing the student's materials before they arrived. This helped speed up the process and allowed a lot more game time.

## 4. Character Sheets: beginning the game

### 4.1 Character Profile Sheet: who is your character?

In *D&D*, character creation is one of the most essential aspects of the game. Players must craft a persona that they'll enjoy embodying throughout the game. *D&D* is, at its core, a role-playing game, which means that players should approach character creation with the understanding that they'll need to fully immerse themselves in their character's role for the whole game. Playing a TRPG is not unlike the work of a stage or film actor; players set aside their personalities and take on the personas of various characters. These characters can either mirror the players' real-life personalities or be opposites. The choice is entirely theirs (Image 13).

| CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER!! |                        |          |  |  |   |  |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------|--|--|---|--|
| CHARACTER SHEET PROCESS |                        |          |  |  |   |  |
|                         |                        | Day      | Goal   | In-Class (Teacher)   | Homework (Student)  | Comments   |
|                         | DND BEYOND             | Day 1    | Research D&D races and class, and decide what you want your character to be                                      | Research together and explain races and classes in detail.                                       | Continue to research.   | Students really enjoy learning about the various races and classes. It a fun day.  |
|                         | PROFILE SHEET          | Days 2-3 | Write down all the information about your character (bio, personality, strengths and weaknesses, etc..)          | Teach students terminology and help without helping too much.                                    | Think about what kind of person you want your character to be.  | Reviewing the terminology can be challenging, and students tend to write very little. Encourage them to write more.                |
|                         | BATTLE SHEET           | Day 4    | Choose your battle role, weapons, and abilities, and fill in your battle stats.                                  | Monitor project risks and take appropriate actions to mitigate them                              | Decide on a special ability for your character.   | This is a simple sheet. Just make sure that students are writing down everything correctly.  |
|                         | CHARACTER BACKSTORY    | Days 5-7 | Create a backstory for you character that helps you understand your character more, so that you can become them. | Give students example backstory and give ideas and make suggestions. Also, correct first drafts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write first draft</li> <li>make corrections</li> <li>Write final backstory on official sheet.</li> </ul> | Students come up with great stories, but they tend not to do the homework, making finishing the stories take longer.               |
|                         | CHARACTER SHEET REVIEW | Day 8    | Review and explain your character with the teacher.  | Double check all sheets for errors.  | NO HOMEWORK   | Make sure you and the students know everything about their character, so they have to reference their paper as little as possible. |

Image 13 Character sheet process

On day one, students research all the different races and classes *D&D* has to offer. For this, I have the students open up the official *D&D* character-building program on *D&Dbeyond.com*. On this website, students can research different character races and classes and start getting an idea of what kind of character they want to be and what role they want to play on their team. As far as race, do they want to be a magically gifted High Elf or a giant ax-wielding Goliath? How about class; do they want to be a barbarian who is blunt and attacks first and asks questions later, or a bard who is a charismatic musician whose main role is to support other players? *D&D Beyond* is the best place for the players to get a feel for who their character will be.

Note: Teachers must not give hints of what characters a student should make. You may only suggest that a balanced team is a strong team.

On the second day of character creation, players should have a solid understanding of the *D&D* races and classes and can start filling out the first character sheet (the profile sheet). The profile sheet consists of several sections:

1. **Basic Info:** in this section, students should provide key details about their character, including their character's level, background (previous occupation), race, alignment (moral perspective, e.g., lawful good), age, height, and weight.
2. **Personality:** here, students detail their character's personality traits (e.g., hardworking, stubborn), ideals (what they stand for), bonds (connections to the world around them), and flaws (traits that can hinder them).
3. **Class and Race Skills:** students should research and document the specific skills associated with their character's class and race and write them down here.
4. **Equipment:** at this stage, students won't have gold or potions, but they should possess tools from their previous profession or background. For example, an ex-thief turned rogue might have a lock-picking kit.

Depending on the students, it takes about 2-3 class periods (45 minutes each) to complete their character sheets. During this process, the students engage with a variety of vocabulary as they fill out their sheets. They learned different ways to express personality characteristics, backgrounds, and elements that motivate a person to live as they live. However, students are not just filling out their sheets randomly. They are practicing critical thinking by connecting various aspects of their character to form a character they can understand and embody. For instance, one student made his character a human archer (ranger) and had to consider what kind of background (job) an archer might have had. He decided on an ex-hunter because that's what made sense to him. Additionally, he had to contemplate the personality traits that he thought he could play and much more. This section is not merely about filling in information; it's about making decisions that create a character with a coherent and interconnected personality that students can understand and embody in a role-playing setting. I demonstrate the importance of creating such a character by having the students play a role for about five minutes and then having them imagine being in that role for the next year. After this playtest they usually laugh and say they understand.

Note: The character sheets used in my class are adapted from a *D&D* character sheet created by Reddit users "*Inuyasharuls*" and "*Axelle123*" to make it easier for individuals with dyslexia to create their own character sheet. Although students do not have dyslexia, the simplified design of these character sheets has proven highly effective in aiding their understanding of the character creation process.

## 4.2 Profile Sheet Part 2: what attributes does your character have?

After recording their character's basic information on the character sheet, players must focus on their character's attributes, which determine their strengths and weaknesses in interacting with the game world. *D&D* features six attributes:

1. **Strength:** this attribute measures a character's raw physical power, affecting actions like lifting and displays of force.
2. **Dexterity:** this attribute reflects a character's agility and skill in acrobatics, stealth, and sleight-of-hand actions.

3. Constitution: This attribute measures a character's resilience to physical or mental harm, determining how much they can endure.
4. Intelligence: This attribute represents a character's knowledge and proficiency with magic.
5. Wisdom: This attribute encompasses practical skills such as intuition and perception. To explain the difference between intelligence and wisdom, think of it as 'book smarts vs. street smarts.'
6. Charisma: This attribute governs a character's interpersonal skills and interactions with others.

In this version of the game, players select two attributes where they excel, two where they are average, and two where they lack proficiency. They mark these choices with H (high), M (medium), or L (low) in the circles at the bottom of each attribute box. Unlike standard *D&D*, these letters guide the DM in determining the success probability of actions involving these attributes when rolling an attribute roll with the d20. For instance, a player with high dexterity attempting a rooftop jump has a better chance of success, requiring a lower roll on the d20. Conversely, low dexterity necessitates a higher roll. Finally, players fill in the attribute box with their attribute modifier, which is +1 for H, +0 for M, and -1 for L. This modifier is added to their rolls when performing specific actions, and it increases as they level up.

### 4.3 Battle Sheet: where do your skills on the battlefield lie?

The second character sheet is the battle sheet. This is the sheet that the players refer to when a battle arises. It tells them everything from their attack/damage bonus, their max health, and how many spaces they can move on a battle map. It usually takes students a day to fill this sheet out.

First, students choose their role in battle, determining whether they will be the tank charging in or take on a support role, providing attack and defense boosts and life-saving HP from the backlines. I have them write this at the top of their sheets to constantly remind them of their team responsibilities.

Next, they fill out battle details and weapon information. Please read Appendix 3 for a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of the battle details.

Lastly, magic users select two types of magic and their respective level-one abilities, while non-magic users devise an original melee or ranged attack. Students find creating their special abilities particularly enjoyable. I guide them with one question: "Do you want your special ability to assist your teammates, attack an enemy, or defend against an attack?" I then provide the rest of the class time to think of ability and work with me to write it down, or if class time is running short, assign it as homework and assist them in adding it to their battle sheet during the next session. Image 15 shows examples of special abilities.

After completing the profile sheet and the battle sheet, the next step is for them to delve into the origin of their character by crafting a backstory. Following this, they will start the game, step into the roles of the characters they have created, and embark on an epic journey.

**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

LEVEL & CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_ BACKGROUND: \_\_\_\_\_ PLAYER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CHARACTER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ RACE: \_\_\_\_\_ ALIGNMENT: \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ HEIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_ WEIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_

STRENGTH: \_\_\_\_\_

DEXTERITY: \_\_\_\_\_

CONSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

INTELLIGENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

WISDOM: \_\_\_\_\_

CHARISMA: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONALITY TRAITS

IDEALS

BONDS

FLAWS

CHARACTER APPEARANCE

TOOLS, GOLD, POTIONS, ETC.

CLASS & RACE SKILLS

**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

C. Noah

LEVEL & CLASS: 1st Level Wizard

BACKGROUND: Sage

PLAYER NAME: C. Noah

CHARACTER NAME: C. Noah

RACE: Elf

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good

OTHER: Mage

AGE: 18

HEIGHT: 5'10"

WEIGHT: 120 lbs

STRENGTH: +1

DEXTERITY: +1

CONSTITUTION: -1

INTELLIGENCE: +2

WISDOM: +1

CHARISMA: +2

LAST BOND

PERSONALITY TRAITS

CHARITY

IDEALS

Bonds: I'd die for my army

WORDS

Woe is to run fast if he is not close to an instant flame

FLAWS

CHARACTER APPEARANCE

TOOLS, GOLD, POTIONS, ETC.

CLASS & RACE SKILLS

DETECT MAGIC ANTCY (BLUE)

BREATH WEAPON (lightning)

DAMAGE RESISTANCE (blindsight)

Images 14, 15, Profile sheets

**D&D**

CHARACTER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

DEFENSE: \_\_\_\_\_ DAMAGE REDUCTION: \_\_\_\_\_

MELEE ATTACK: \_\_\_\_\_ BONUS DAMAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

RANGED ATTACK: \_\_\_\_\_ ACCURATE DISTANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

MAGIC ATTACK: \_\_\_\_\_ BONUS DAMAGE: \_\_\_\_\_ ACCURATE DISTANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

SPEED: \_\_\_\_\_ Max Health: \_\_\_\_\_ INITIATIVE: \_\_\_\_\_

ABILITIES (SPECIAL ATTACKS & MAGIC)

WEAPONS & ARMOR

**D&D**

C. Noah

Role: Support (Buffer)

DEFENSE: 0 DAMAGE REDUCTION: 0

MELEE ATTACK: -1 BONUS DAMAGE: -1

RANGED ATTACK: 0 BONUS DAMAGE: +2 ACCURATE DISTANCE: 2

MAGIC ATTACK: +3 BONUS DAMAGE: +1 ACCURATE DISTANCE: 1

SPEED: 3 Max Health: 45 INITIATIVE: 10

ABILITIES (SPECIAL ATTACKS & MAGIC)

• Baphetic Summoning - Blue DG

• Breath Weapon (optional)  $\frac{1}{2}$

• Potent Note w/  $\frac{1}{2}$

• Prismatic Wisp x2

• Metamorph - +10% and 10% for 300%

• Puppet (The Patriot) w/  $\frac{1}{2}$

• Patient (The Patriot) w/  $\frac{1}{2}$

• Blue = can have 10%  $\frac{1}{2}$

WEAPONS & ARMOR

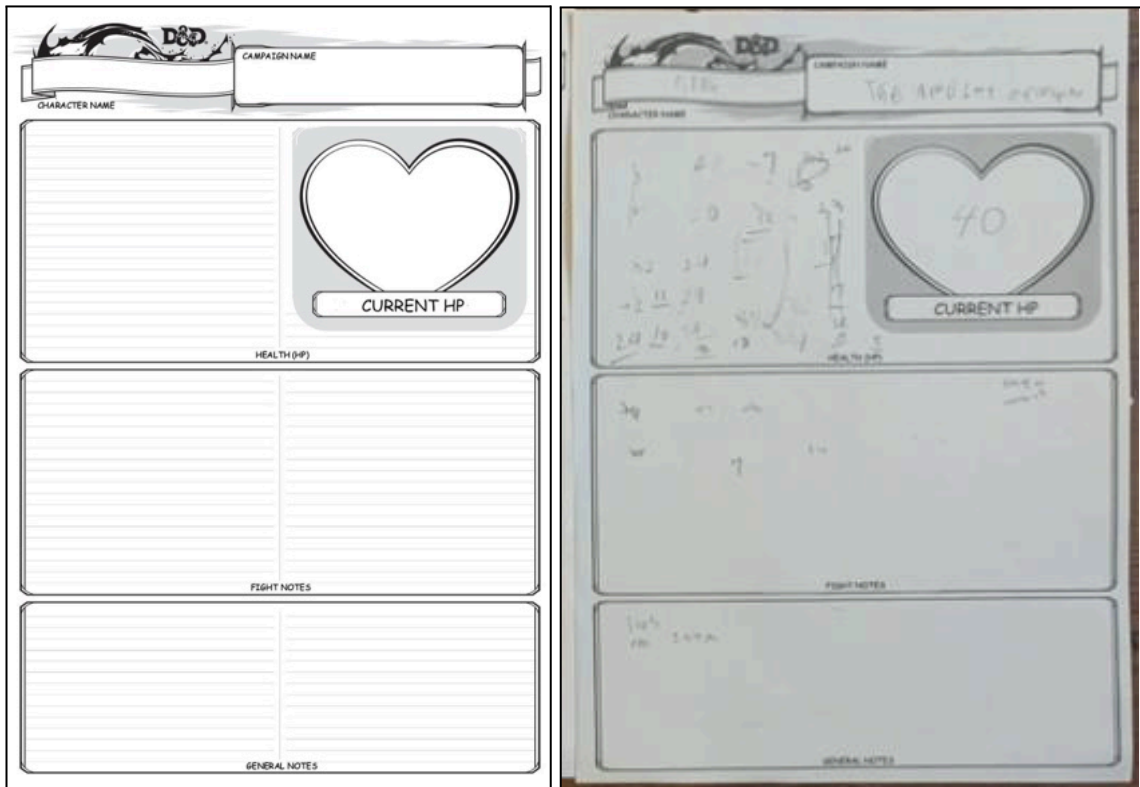
• Combat Note (w/ 10% bow)

• Fight to the Death - Patient Note

• Ring of Resonance - resonant support

• Longshot Arrow

Images 16, 17 Battle sheets



Images 18, 19 Campaign Sheets

#### 4.4 Campaign Sheet: where you take notes

The final character sheet isn't a character sheet per se; it's more of a note sheet. The students receive a new campaign sheet at the start of each new campaign and use it to jot down the damage they've taken in battles and challenges, record the people they've met, and document the situations they've encountered. I always allocate time during the game for players to take notes if they choose to do so. These notes are for the students' benefit, and therefore, they may write them in any way they find suitable.

During the initial campaign and even recently, I noticed that the students were having a hard time remembering some of the details of their quest. It became apparent that the students were forgetting to take notes." This becomes a problem when characters in the game inquire about the names of other characters in the story or the names of different locations because students often struggle to recall the details. Note-taking is crucial, as remembering the different events and characters they encountered can prove essential to anything from gaining a character's trust to making a life-and-death decision.

### 5. D&D Gameplay: the adventure

#### 5.1 Prompts: action must be taken

During different parts of the game, the players will be required to perform specific tasks, such as interacting with a character or overcoming an obstacle or challenge. Prompts appear in parentheses in the narration text of the *PowerPoint* presentation. There are four different prompts:

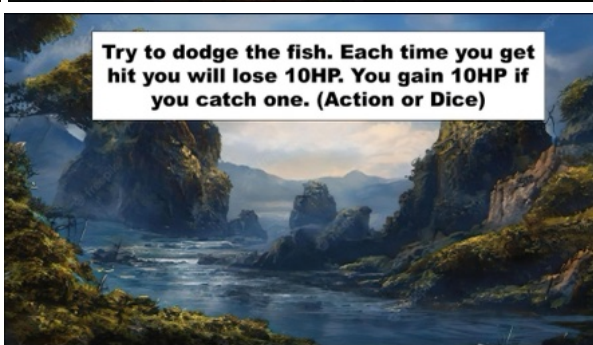
First, there is the "free talk" prompt, which appears when the students must communicate directly to a character (the DM) without the aid of speech bubbles. The purpose of this action is to learn information about the story or the character and/or sway that character to do something. Students must channel their character's personality strengths and consider the DM character's weaknesses to succeed. After the free talk has concluded, the DM will decide whether the students have failed or succeeded in their task by deciding what number the students most roll on the d20.

Second, there is the “roll the dice, if you must” prompt, which appears when the students are faced with a task and can not decide who will face it. The students each roll their d20, and whoever rolls the lowest number must volunteer.

Third, there is the “Attribute Rolls” prompt, which appears when the students come across an obstacle or challenge that requires them to utilize their character’s attributes/skills (i.e., strength, dexterity, etc.). To overcome these challenges, students must each play a specific role in accomplishing a task, then roll a number determined by the DM with the d20 to see if their chosen actions succeed or fail, (this prompt is not so different from the desert island TRPG). One example of an attribute challenge is where the students must work together to save a cat from a burning house. Here is the type of dialogue that would lead to a positive outcome for the students. The following dialogue is an adaptation of a dialogue between students and me. There is me, the teacher (the DM) and three players who each possess a different skill set (attributes); player one (P1) has high strength and constitution, player two (P2) has high wisdom, and player three (P3) has high dexterity.

- *DM (Textbox): “On your way back to your hideout, you come across a house on fire. While you stare in horror, a strange man grasps P1 by the sleeve of your coat and beseeches you to save his poor cat from the flames engulfing his beloved home. How will you save the cat?”*
- *P1: “I will bash down the door and use my shield to block the flames from hurting my teammates.”*
- *DM: You have high strength and constitution so busting down the door should be easy. To bust down the door you must throw a strength roll of 4 or higher.”*
- *P1: \*Rolls a ten\**
- *DM: “Excellent! You rush in and break down the door! Next, to protect your friends from the wild flames, you have to throw a constitution roll of 7 or higher.*
- *P1: \*Rolls a 15\**
- *DM: Great! Your shield holds strong and can protect your friends from getting burned.*
- *P2: While P1 is blocking the flames, I will run into the house and find the cat.*
- *DM: Good idea. You have high wisdom, but the flames are growing stronger, and the smoke is beginning to affect your eyesight. You have to throw a wisdom roll of 12 or higher.*
- *P2: \*Rolls a 19\**
- *DM: Good job! You jump in behind P1 and spot the cat on top of the staircase. What will you do now?*
- *P3: I will jump off P1’s shoulders, grab the cat, and jump back down.*
- *DM: That’s a little risky. While it is true you have high dexterity, you will have to throw a dexterity roll 10 or higher to jump high enough to grab the cat.*
- *P3: \*rolls a 14\**
- *DM: Excellent! You jump up to the top of the stairs and grab the cat. Oh no! The flames are growing stronger and the stairs collapse! What are you going to do?*
- *P3: I’m going to jump down.*
- *DM: That’s dangerous. You have to throw a dexterity roll of 13 or higher.*
- *P3: \*throws a 6\**
- *DM: Oh no! As you jump off the top of the stairs, the flames rise up and burn your leg. You won’t make it.*
- *P1: I’ll catch him!*
- *DM: How heroic! You have to throw a strength roll of 11 or higher to catch him and the cat.*
- *P1: \*rolls a 16\**

- *DM: Well done! P3 falls into your arms with the cat. You all exit the house as it collapses behind you. You successfully saved the cat!*
- *P1, P2, and P3: HURRAY!!*
- *DM: The cat is saved, but P3 has lost ten HP due to his leg getting burnt and it might affect you for the next couple of challenges.*



Images 19, 20, 21, 22 Examples of free talk, roll the dice, if you must, attribute rolls, and action prompts

## 5.2 Duels: on guard!

Duels in the game are straightforward, turn-based battles between a player and a DM-controlled enemy using a d20 To determine the order of attacks, both the player and the DM roll a d8, with the higher roll deciding who goes first. Once decided, the duel begins. The attacker begins by describing their attack and then rolls the dice. The defender, in turn, describes how they will block the attack and roll the dice. If the attacker rolls higher than the defender, the attack will be successful, but if the defender rolls higher than the attacker, the attack will be averted. If there is a tie, the attacker always wins. Note: depending on the player's creativity in describing their attack or defense, the DM may grant bonus roll points to the player or take some away from the NPC.



Images 23, 24 Duel screen and figure placement

### 5.3 Battles: fight as a team!

Whether facing a massive tree monster or battling a horde of ghoulish goblins, students enjoy using their creativity to work as a team and defeat their enemies. Battles are a fundamental aspect of *Dungeons and Dragons* and can be quite challenging for the DM to handle. However, in my version, the rules make battles smoother and easier to manage.

In each battle, the first step is placing the figures on a 9x12 gridded battle map that I made with online map-making software<sup>1</sup> (Images 27-30). The players, as the heroes, and the DM, controlling the monsters, position their figures within three spaces from the back of their respective sides of the battle map. After all figures are on the map, the DM and the students roll a d20 to determine who takes the first move (known as the initiative roll). If the student rolls a higher number than the DM, the student moves first, and vice versa (player 1 - DM - player 2 - DM - player 3 - DM, and so on). Once the figures are on the battle map and turns are established, the battle begins.

Dice play an integral role on the battlefield, with the d20 by far being the most important. The d20 determines both the strength of the attacker and the defender. For example, the players encounter a ferocious man-eating bear blocking their path, and they decide to attack it. During the battle, one of them decides to perform a melee attack on the bear and rolls a 15 on the d20. The DM, who is the bear, rolls the d20 and gets a 12. With an attack roll of 15 and a defense roll of 12, the attack is successful, resulting in the bear taking some damage. Certainly, these are simplified explanations, and several other factors come into play.

Please read Appendix 1 for more details on all extra battle rules and details.

During the battle, I encourage, and want, the students to speak up and assist their teammates when it's not their turn.

**Table 1** *Example activity language*

| Activity                            | Language  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Attribute rolls, duels, and battles | Action description language: "I am going to attack him with my sword." "I am going to block his attack with my shield."   |
| Free talk (enemies)                 | Persuasive language: "If you don't leave us alone, I will turn you into a mouse."   |
| Free talk (friends)                 | Informative language: "We have been ordered by the king to go to Ethnorica to help the elves."  |
| Free talk (shopkeepers)             | Complimentary language: "Your hair is lovely, and I love your shop. You must have the best shop in the world." Pleading language: "Could you please give us a discount? We need items!" |

<sup>1</sup> [www.inkarnate.com](http://www.inkarnate.com)





Images 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 battle setup with figures, a dire bear's battle stats, and four battle map examples

#### 5.4 Items: you have the power!

Items play a significant role in the game and serve as the primary rewards for players' success in challenges and battles. Items include a variety of weaponry (e.g., swords, bows and arrows, axes, knives, etc.), armor (e.g., cuirasses, shields, helmets, etc.), and magical items (e.g., staves, jewelry, various garments, etc.) These items not only provide various attribute and battle stat bonuses such as d20 modifiers to their attack and defense but also bestow upon the player a unique special ability (Image 31).

Unique abilities add an extra layer to a battle, requiring students to articulate a more complex English sentence to activate the ability. I liken it to using magic words that unlock the item's power. For instance, simply saying, "I am going to use my ability" won't suffice. Instead, a player needs to state the ability's name and describe the effect it will have on the battle, such as, "I am going to use my Cosmic Slam ability and hit the three monsters around me, causing 10 damage to each of them." While this can be challenging for some students, and I might need to guide them through the English, the added difficulty is always justified by the extra effort. See Appendix 2 for more details on the different items and their usage.

Items are acquired through one of two methods: being purchased at an item shop or after defeating an enemy or successfully passing a challenge. In the shop, all item prices are set at ten gold pieces, but players have the option to negotiate and lower prices through positive interactions with the shopkeeper. There are various strategies to secure lower prices, but I particularly emphasize two approaches: compliments and sharing information about their journey. For instance, in one campaign, if the students reveal that they are on a mission from the king, the shopkeeper responds with enthusiasm and offers them a half-price discount on all items. (This is where taking notes becomes valuable.)














|   |   |  |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|
|  <p><b>Sword of King Frankfort (d12+4hp)</b><br/> <b>HP Theft:</b> Steals HP from an enemy on every successful attack -d4. (Must be wielded by those with a just heart.)</p>                                     |  <p><b>Sword of Life Stealing (d12+4hp)</b><br/> <b>HP Theft:</b> Steals HP from an enemy on every successful attack -d4. (Must be wielded by those who are evil at heart.)</p>                                  |  <p><b>Shield of Reflection</b><br/> +1 Defense<br/> -1 magic/ranged distance<br/> <b>Reflection:</b> Reflects all missed attacks, causing d4 damage. (automatic)</p>             |  <p><b>Cuirass of Invincibility</b><br/> +1 Defense +1 Wisdom Roll<br/> <b>Invincibility:</b> Throw an intelligence roll of 11 or higher to turn invisible, gaining +6 attack for one round. (2 battle charges)</p> |  <p><b>Quiver of Elemental Chaos</b><br/> <b>Magic Arrows:</b> Shoot a magic arrow. Roll the d6 before attacking to determine the magic. 1= normal, 2=wind, 3=ice, 4=potion, 5=lightning, 6=fire. (2 battle charges)</p> |  <p><b>Relentless Stinger (d4xd4)</b><br/> +1 Melee Attack<br/> <b>Momentum:</b> When you kill an enemy using this weapon, the next target you hit takes an extra 10 damage from the attack.</p> |
|  <p><b>Thwack! Staff (d12+2)</b><br/> +1 Melee Attack<br/> <b>Thwack!</b> Knock out an enemy for 1 turn. (2 battle charges) (DM determined strength roll) (unblockable)</p>                                      |  <p><b>Cosmos Ring</b><br/> +1 Wisdom Roll<br/> <b>Cosmos Damage:</b> +8 damage on the first successful attack of a battle.</p>  |  <p><b>Blessed Crossbow (d10+4)</b><br/> <b>Dark Enemy Bonus:</b> Does plus d4+2 damage to dark creatures.</p>  |  <p><b>Silver Hammer of Whispers (d12)</b><br/> <b>Silent Hit:</b> Hitting enemies makes no sound.</p>   |  <p><b>Blossoming Arrow</b><br/> <b>Poison:</b> Successful hits with this arrow cause a bonus d4+2 damage for three turns.</p>   |  <p><b>Lionguard Chain</b><br/> +2 Defense -1 Damage Taken<br/> +1 Constitution Roll<br/> <b>Charisma Boost:</b> Gain a charisma boost when speaking with humans.</p>                            |
|  <p><b>Boots of Levitation</b><br/> +2 Dexterity Roll<br/> <b>Levitation:</b> Throw a dexterity roll of 11 or higher to levitate off the ground for one turn, avoiding all melee attacks. (2 battle charges)</p> |  <p><b>Ring of Change</b><br/> +1 Wisdom Roll<br/> <b>Change:</b> Throw a DM-determined wisdom roll to transform into any monster that you desire. The transformation lasts for d4 rounds. (1 battle charge)</p> |  <p><b>Helm of the Justicars</b><br/> +1 Defense, +1 Melee Attack<br/> <b>Fighter Spirit:</b> Summon your fighter spirit and attack two times in one turn. (2 battle charges)</p> |  <p><b>Helm of Teleportation</b><br/> +1 Defense, -1 ranged attack<br/> <b>Teleportation:</b> Teleport anywhere on the battle board. (2 battle charges)</p>  |  <p><b>Bracers of Reflection</b><br/> +1 Defense<br/> <b>Ranged Reflection:</b> Reflects missed ranged/magic attacks back at the enemy causing DM-determined damage. (automatic)</p>                                     |  <p><b>Gloves of Healing</b><br/> +1 Intelligence Roll<br/> +1 Magic Attack<br/> -1 Magic Distance<br/> <b>Advanced Healing:</b> Levels up your healing magic one level.</p>                     |
|  <p><b>Dead Ringer Mask</b><br/> <b>Dead Ringer:</b> Allows you to copy a special attack from anyone. (2 battle charges)</p>   |  <p><b>Wyrmhide Bow (d12)</b><br/> <b>Simplicity:</b> Anyone can use this bow.</p>   |  <p><b>Ring of Burden</b><br/> Strips the wearer of all attribute bonuses and minuses their defense by one.</p>   |  <p><b>Amulet of Redoo</b><br/> +2 Defense<br/> <b>Rewind:</b> Allows the wearer to rewind time and restart a turn. (anytime ability) (2 battle charges)</p>   |  <p><b>Ring of Switcheroo</b><br/> +1 Intelligence Roll<br/> <b>Switch:</b> During a battle, you can switch places with anyone. (anytime ability) (2 battle charges)</p>   |  <p><b>Emberheart War Hammer (d12+4)</b><br/> +1 Melee Attack<br/> <b>Gold Lust:</b> Hits d4-1 gold pieces out of every target on successful attacks.</p>  |

Image 31 One of five item sheets

The number and type of items a player can carry are primarily at the discretion of the DM. However, there are some restrictions, such as a player not being able to wear two helmets simultaneously or a smaller character being unable to carry a massive war hammer, where it's obvious the character will be unable to carry it. In some cases where players insist on carrying an excessive number of items, the DM may choose to adjust their stats accordingly by taking away some of their bonuses. It's also important to note that younger players can become overwhelmed by managing too many items, so there should be a limit imposed on them.

## 5.5 Potions: "We're almost dead. Drink up!"

Potions are consumable items that provide immediate assistance to players in various ways. Most potions are employed during battles, while health potions can be used both before and after a battle. Players can obtain potions by purchasing them at a potion shop or as rewards after battles or challenges. However, drinking a potion during a battle does not require the use of a turn and can be used at the player's discretion (Images 32, 33).

| Potion List   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
|  | Blue Potion<br>+2 Dice Roll  | 2  |
|  | Health Potion<br>+10 HP  | 2  |
|  | Mega Health Potion<br>+50 HP   | 5  |
|  | Revive Potion<br>Revive an ally  | 5  |
|  | Cosmos Potion<br>+10 Damage  | 2  |
|  | Stono Potion<br>+7 Defense & +3 attack for d4 turns (one speed)  | 4  |
|  | Battle charge Potion<br>+1 battle charge recharge  | 4  |
|  | Mystery Potion (d6)<br>1= poison potion<br>2= blue potion<br>3= health potion<br>4= cosmos potion<br>5= revive potion<br>6= mega health potion | 3  |
|  | Rage Potion<br>x2 everything for one turn.   | 6  |
|  | Rare Carrot<br>Restores half of all heroes' full HP  | 10 |

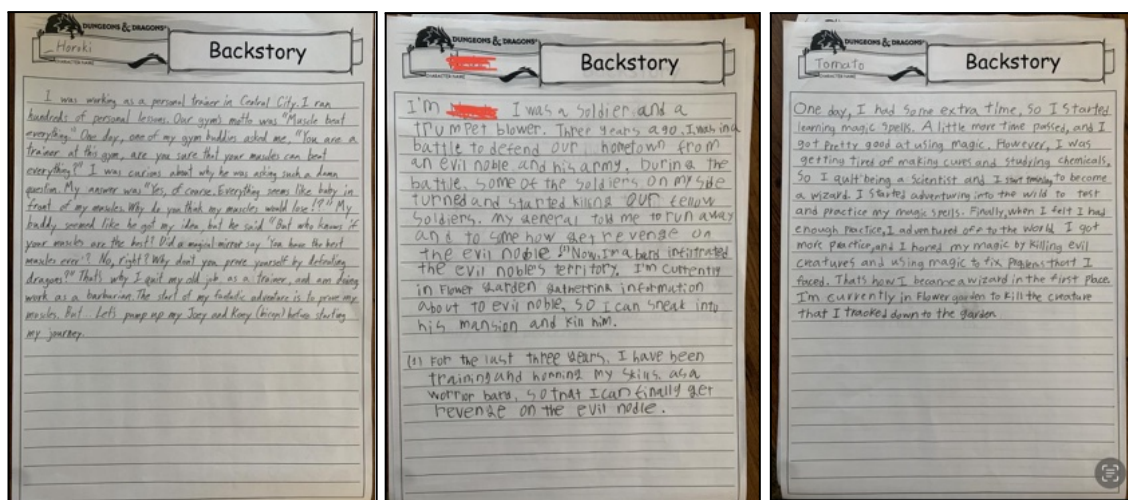
Images 32, and 33 different types of potions

## 6. Lesson Plans: work outside of the fantasy world

### 6.1 Backstory essay

The first homework assignment for students involved writing an essay about their character's background. They were tasked with delving into their character's origins, detailing where they came from and the specific circumstances that have led them to the point in their character's story where they started the first campaign.

For this assignment, I initiated the process by providing the students with an example essay that I've composed. Together, we engage in a brainstorming session to explore the potential backstories for their characters, and why they find themselves in the first scene of the first campaign story. Following the brainstorming phase, the students draft a preliminary version of their essay. Once they've completed the rough draft, I review it, providing feedback and guidance. Finally, they write their final essays with this feedback and guidance in mind and turn it in for a pass or fail grade. Students have complete freedom to be as creative as they want and craft a backstory that is suspenseful, dark, or comedic. They can create a narrative that contributes to the shaping of their character and helps explain why their character is who they are (Images 34-36).



Images 34, 35, 36 Example character backstories

### 6.2 Vocabulary Practice

Before commencing a new campaign, I create a vocabulary sheet containing the most challenging and significant words that will appear in the campaign. The day before the new campaign begins, we dedicate an entire class (45 minutes) to reviewing these words and delving into their meanings and usage. I make an effort to refrain from directly providing the Japanese equivalent of these words. Instead, I offer examples and guide the students to discern the meaning through contextual understanding. About half the words on each of the vocabulary lists will appear on their semester term tests as spelling, definition, and fill-in-the-blank questions (Images 38-39).



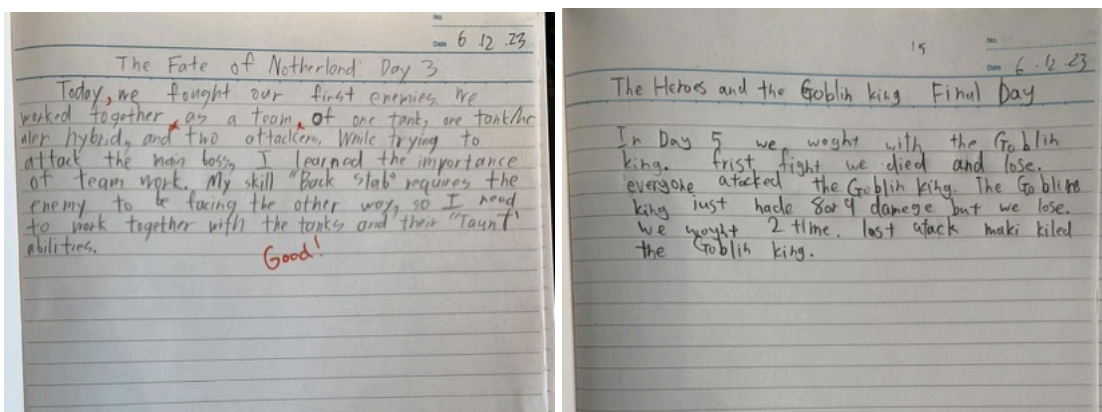
Images 37, 38, 39 Vocabulary lists from three different campaigns

### 6.3 Journals

After each game session, the students have a task to write a brief journal reflecting on the events that transpired during the session (Images 40, 41). In their journals, they can detail what and who they encountered, elaborate on the choices they made, discuss the outcomes and repercussions of those choices, or provide an account of the events that unfolded during any battles. This practice of writing journals serves multiple purposes: it aids in story comprehension, keeps the students engaged, even during extended breaks from playing, and provides a valuable opportunity for them to hone their writing skills.

As part of the process, I review their writings and provide feedback. Notably, these journals are not assigned traditional grades but are assessed on a pass/fail basis for each entry. If a student completes and submits the journal on time, they receive a pass; otherwise, they receive a fail. At the end of the semester, I tally the passes and fails to determine their grade. For instance, if a student submits eight out of ten journals on time, they would receive an eighty percent grade. This approach allows students to focus on their reflection rather than being overly concerned and bogged down by making sure that the grammar is perfect. However, a journal with excessive spelling and grammar errors, incoherent content, or an insufficient word count is considered incomplete and would not be considered a pass.

This practice of writing journals serves multiple purposes: it aids in story comprehension, keeps the students engaged, even during extended breaks from playing, and provides a valuable opportunity for them to hone their writing skills.



Images 40, 41 Example journals

## 6.4 Students make their own campaign

During the last semester, the students form groups of 3-4 and begin to craft their own *D&D* campaigns using *Keynote*. I provide them with the necessary resources, including a premade PowerPoint campaign file filled with narration and speech text boxes, various types of hyperlinks, and prompt and battle slides. Students then personalize that file, filling in their unique story with vibrant characters, challenging foes, and mind-bending puzzles and challenges.

As the end of the school year approaches, we allocate time to play the campaign that the students have crafted. During this period, the students take on the role of Dungeon Master (DM) for their game, while the rest of the students and I engage as players. The students are responsible for reading all text and participating in free talks. I actively encourage them to incorporate different voices and to have fun with the experience.

After their campaign, I assess and grade them based on various criteria, including the flow of their campaign, the thoroughness of their prepared text, their proficiency in DMing action prompts (attribute rolls) and battles, their English proficiency, and their ability to manage and enhance the fun for the players.

Note: I expect that students will primarily work on their campaign presentations outside the classroom. Nevertheless, I dedicate approximately one class per week to monitor their progress and provide assistance with any challenges they encounter.

## 6.5 Grading

I assessed the students based on three criteria: game participation, homework completion, and term test performance. For active participation in the game, they received a perfect score of 100 percent. If they had completed all of their homework (journals), they also earned a full score of 100 percent. However, when it comes to the term test, I had to be a bit more stringent and deduct points for incorrect answers and poor writing.

I maintained weekly records, and after calculating all the grades, I combined them with their scores from other English lessons and submitted the overall grades at the end of each term. At my school (Shizuoka Seiko Academy), students had two-semester grades: their overall semester grade and their term test grade. After calculating both, they were entered into the system separately.

In terms of game participation, all students received 100 percent. They consistently engaged in each session, demonstrating skills in both their free talk and battle language articulation. While I lacked specific scores for numerical comparisons, I gauged growth by the reduction in the number of times I corrected their language, and most students exhibited substantial progress in this regard.

Unfortunately, concerning the journals, a number of students were falling behind. They consistently forgot to write and submit their entries, leading to a decline in their overall grades. While I was unsure if my decision was correct, the situation became so dire that I temporarily suspended journal entries. Recently, I reinstated this practice as I deemed it too crucial to neglect.

Lastly, the evidence of their vocabulary practice and essay-writing skills was reflected in their term test grades. While their performance had generally been satisfactory, it was evident that they dedicated minimal time to studying vocabulary. Perhaps spending some class time to review the vocabulary might be necessary.

## 7. Playtest

### 7.1 The Campaigns 1: Speaking

With the students having completed their character sheets, they were ready to embark on the first campaign, titled "The Heroes and the Goblin King."

The students demonstrated an excellent overall understanding of the text and storyline. They engaged well with the story, expressing appropriate emotions such as laughter, excitement, surprise, anger, and sadness at various moments. At the end of the story, they correctly answered most of the review questions I had prepared. However, a challenge arose in one of the role-playing aspects of the game - Free Talk. When a character asked them a question or they had to speak to a character about a particular issue, they had a rough time. Most students fell silent, while a few attempted to mutter something, often in incomplete sentences. But with their silence came penalties, so they quickly learned to say something, even in simple English.

Needless to say, before embarking on this game, the students had never experienced the need to speak to a castle guard in a need to persuade him to spare an innocent dwarf or negotiate with a potion salesman for the best price on a health potion. Engaging in such conversations was entirely new to them, and they required considerable assistance.

Throughout the initial campaign, I often found myself guiding the students on what to say and correcting their English in real time during free talks. The students mirrored my language each time, and, for the most part, learned from their mistakes. The interactions lacked originality for the most part. However, with the commencement of the second campaign, "The Fate of Notherland," a noticeable transformation occurred in the students. While their English still required correction, they became more confident and participative in free talks. An interaction at a potion shop shifted from a simple, "Oh, please make it more cheaper," to a more engaging, "I like your beard. It is beautiful. We don't have many gold. Can you make cheaper?" While the latter quote is still not perfect, the improvement persisted throughout subsequent campaigns, evolving into more intricate dialogues and actions. For instance, in the third campaign, "The Amulet of Destiny," a student, in character, threatened a shopkeeper with a sword, saying, "Give us the potions for free or I'll kill you!" The other students, also in character, intervened to de-escalate the situation, saying "Please ignore him! He's crazy!" While I do not endorse violence, the students' use of English in this unexpected scenario showcased their progress. Ultimately, the king arrived, arrested the character, and took him to the dungeon.

It's encouraging to witness the students' growth and increasing independence in both their decision-making during the campaigns and their use of English. As they continue to gain confidence and proficiency, it will be interesting to see the creative and engaging elements they introduce in the upcoming campaigns. Hopefully, no more shopkeepers get threatened.

## 7.2 The Campaigns 2: Expressing action

The next crucial aspect of the game involves students explaining how they plan to overcome specific obstacles on their path to accomplishing their main mission.

Just like the Free Talk section, students faced difficulties in expressing their thoughts in English and lacked the foresight to see the potential consequences of their actions. For instance, in the first challenge of the game, where the students needed to rescue a cat from a burning building, a student with incredible strength suggested - and I am paraphrasing - that he would ram through the wall of the house and continue running until he found the cat. Such an approach could not only bring the entire structure down but also pose a danger to the cat if someone behaves recklessly.

To address the English problem, I implemented a rule for students: when expressing their actions, they must use the phrase, "I am going to\_\_\_." For example, "I am going to cut down the tree with my ax." Providing this phrase to students and consistently practicing it made it increasingly easier for them to convey their ideas. Additionally, to tackle the issue of generating ideas, I started allocating time at the beginning of each challenge for students to brainstorm and share their ideas with their teammates. This extra time allowed the students to take a deep breath and ponder the pros and cons of certain decisions together.

In the beginning, helping the students required some micromanagement. However, by the end of the first campaign, they had developed a strong understanding of what it takes to overcome obstacles. As they complete each campaign and time goes on, their performance continues to improve.

### 7.3 The Campaigns 3: Expressing attacks and defenses

The last section that demands participation from the students is the battles. To be successful and keep the game moving, they need to be familiar with their characters' abilities, adept at referencing their battle sheet, and knowledgeable about which dice to use.

In the initial battles, I found myself frequently switching roles between DM and English teacher. The students sometimes got lost in their battle sheets, on the battle maps, and would mistakenly grab the wrong dice, such as the d12 instead of the d20 and I would have to help them. Furthermore, they struggled to work as a team and nearly met their match against some of the weakest monsters that D&D has to offer. As the DM, I took it easy on them during the first campaign, providing hints and guidance along the whole way until they defeated the goblin king and continued to the next campaign.

Even after three campaigns, the students continue to find battles the most challenging, but they are improving in their ability to express their actions, attacks, and defenses. Any warrior who joins the students' teams would indeed be fortunate.

### 7.4 The homework

This is the area where students face significant challenges. Most students consistently forget to complete their homework. Their only task is to write a 100-word journal summarizing the events that took place during a D&D session, but they frequently fail to do so or conveniently "forget" to bring their homework to class. Unfortunately, I have become used to it, and only become surprised when a student walks in and puts their journal down on the journal drop-off table.

I have discussed this issue with other teachers, and it appears that it's not unique to my class; it's a challenge in other classes as well. Additionally, I've recently discovered that our school does not mandate homework assignments for teachers, and as a consequence, students have become accustomed to having no homework. However, the journals are essential for reflection and writing practice, and there's no excuse for not completing them. I will continue to enforce them and give grades accordingly.

## 8. Evaluation

### 8.1 The good/epic

The students thoroughly enjoyed my roleplaying game. They entered the classroom each day eagerly asking if they were going to play it. Over the course of the game, they have transformed from quiet, uncertain characters into confident warriors who conquer formidable foes and overcome perilous challenges. On the negative side, their mouths have loosened to some degree which leads them into some dicey situations. For instance, one student decided to threaten a shopkeeper to give them a better deal on some potions. The guards were called and some of the party's gold was taken.

Their English language skills have also shown improvement. I find myself needing to correct grammar mistakes less and less with each passing day, and even the quieter students are gradually becoming more vocal and participative.

One of the reasons I believe my game is a success is the valuable advice and feedback I receive from students. Whether trying out a new challenge or redesigning character profiles, I always ask for students' thoughts. At the end of every new activity, I ask them questions such as, "What can I change?" or "How can I make this better?" Sometimes, I may think a game or activity is great, but the true test lies in the perspective of those who play it. It is essential for teachers not to be afraid of criticism and to make time for valuable student/player feedback.

Playing standard D&D with this group of students, I believe only a few would have truly enjoyed it, but the rest would have been left feeling lost. Creating the campaigns on PowerPoint is a time-consuming process, taking over 100 hours for each campaign to be fully completed. However, the thought of the fun students will have with the challenges and battles, and the joy they'll experience when laughing at

funny events in the story or engaging in a lengthy dialogue with interesting characters is what keeps me motivated and excited to continue.

## 8.2 The bad/ugly

The first challenge in my *D&D* lessons was the substantial amount of time it took me to refine my game, leading to students having to adapt to numerous changes and modifications along the way.

- Firstly, there were three iterations of the character sheets. With each revision, the students had to rewrite their stats and reacquaint themselves with the rules. Although I did feel a bit guilty each time I put them through this, I was confident that the updates to the character sheets would ultimately prove worthwhile - and indeed, they did.
- Secondly, my hyperlinks didn't always work. While the majority of the over one hundred hyperlinks correctly linked to the intended slides, there would consistently be one or two in each presentation that I noticed while playing with students, disrupting the positive momentum of the game. Hyperlinks are an amazing tool in PowerPoint, but when you have over one hundred slides, they become a bit daunting.
- Lastly, as I played the game with the students, I kept discovering grammatical or spelling errors in the text, necessitating constant corrections after class. Since I write over ten thousand words per campaign, and correcting the text requires moving the textboxes one at a time, and then placing them back in the correct order, I find errors to be quite frustrating. I understand that errors are inevitable, but I need to work harder to make sure that they go the way of the dodo.

The second debacle was my handling of the organization of records and homework.

- Firstly, I did not handle the journal homework very well. Writing their journals after each *D&D* session was and still is an important exercise. However, as students continued to forget to write them, I became upset to the point of just stopping it altogether. Looking back, I should not have stopped it and simply continued to give fails to the students who kept neglecting to write their journals and praised those who wrote them.
- Secondly, I should have kept daily records of the students' progress throughout the campaigns. It would have helped me fill in the gaps in their language acquisition development.
- Lastly, I should have occasionally slowed down the campaign, allowing the students more time to process the story and the challenges. As a DM, I tend to like to keep things moving, but as a teacher, I need to ensure that students are getting the most out of every opportunity to use and practice their English.

## 8.2 The practical implications

As difficult as playing this game is for the students, it is much more challenging/tiring for the teacher. Checking journals and guiding the students through the character sheet process is not so bad, but cultivating the students' English as a teacher, while simultaneously controlling the game as the DM is daunting. To make things easier, I like to think of myself becoming a teacher to help the students as a role. No matter what you choose to do, you have to remember that the students' English proficiency development comes above everything else.

My one requirement for teachers who wish to use this game in their class is to always encourage students to think critically and creatively, and to allow them to be crazy from time to time. Students need to have fun and experiment with English that they normally wouldn't use in the real world.

While my game, including the gameplay and the story, is largely intuitive, any teachers interested in using this game in their classroom would need to read through this walkthrough and carefully review each slide of the campaign on *PowerPoint* or *Keynote*. The only somewhat difficult part is the printing and preparing of resources like battle maps and character figures. This process is quite time-consuming, especially in the case of the creation of figures, as they require a considerable



amount of time to prepare. The simple solution is to prepare a simple 9x12 gridded paper and some game pieces from another game (chess, checkers, etc.) to use during battles.

While I created this game, I drew a lot (if not most) of my inspiration from real *D&D*, and therefore, it is not, in any way, mine. I would advise other teachers to make it their own; feel free to modify the gameplay, the story, the animations, or the text as you see fit. I hope that you and your students make this game your own, enjoy the experience, and grow together.

## 9. Next Steps

### 9.1 New approaches

Now that the gameplay is nearly perfected, and I have four campaigns ready for students to enjoy, I'd like to shift my focus towards developing various forms of homework and assignments for them. I'm convinced that with more structured coursework with writing assignments, vocabulary quizzes, and presentations, students who engage with this game can make even greater strides in their language development. Please see Table 2 for examples. As Al-Khanfar (2023) stated in her LLP walkthrough about using the video game *Zelda* to teach Spanish, "The key element to making a gaming unit conducive to learning is having a curriculum" (p. 53).

**Table 2** *New Course Work Ideas*

| Assignment                  | Summary  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Character Stories           | Writing stories about their character's past escapades would help the students practice longer forms of writing, unlike the journals, and allow them to think creatively. The students would then read each other's stories, ensuring that they were not just writing for a grade; they were also writing for their friends. |
| Vocabulary Quizzes          | These quizzes would help strengthen the students' knowledge of the vocabulary, better preparing them for the term test, which carries a greater weight in grading.   |
| Pair Dialogue Presentations | Having two students speak together, as their characters, in front of everyone with a practiced dialogue, would assist the presenters in developing their characters, while also helping other students better understand the presenters' characters.   |

For the past two years, I've invested a lot of time and heart into this game. I understand that it's not perfect, and there's always room for improvement, but I plan to continue using this game in my English classroom for a long time. I hope that other teachers who share a love for TRPGs and *D&D* will utilize it and refine any aspects that may require improvement. Who knows, perhaps in ten years, it will be enjoyed by teachers and students from all over the world.

Now that I have four completed campaigns, I'm going to focus on organizing all my materials, making it easy for anyone to pick up and play my game. I currently have files on my computer and USB drive, but they're not exactly "in order." I'll be creating a Google Drive file, providing all presentation (campaign) files and documents. Please see Appendix 4. Also, later down the road, I would like to release a *YouTube* video to explain everything.

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My school, Shizuoka Seiko Academy, who have supported all of my ideas with full trust and enthusiasm. I know that if I were working for another school, my game would have been shut down to devote more class time to preparing for English proficiency exams.

My colleague and friend at Seiko, Naif Yussof, who generously shared his extensive knowledge of *D&D* with me, contributing to the enhancement of my game. I'm also thankful for his collaboration as a DM, as I couldn't have managed to DM for ten students alone. He truly made a significant difference in the class.

My wife, Akane, who puts up with me constantly nagging her about the different campaigns and their challenges. She always listens with enough enthusiasm that I never feel bad.

My student, Noah, whose excitement upon hearing that we might play *D&D* encouraged me to proceed with the plan. His enthusiasm played a crucial role in making it happen. He is also highly knowledgeable about *D&D* and provided invaluable assistance with various aspects of the game. It is also fun to watch him go crazy sometimes.

My colleague, Jonathan deHaan, who is constantly finding ways to support me. He is the one who introduced me to *Ludic Language Pedagogy (LLP)* and encouraged me to write this walkthrough.

All students, who have suffered through the constant updates to the game and never complained once. They were with me in the beginning and stayed with me to see and experience the game as it has now become. However, I know some of them have used some of the chaos to become a little overpowered.

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## Appendix 1: Extensive battle details and rules

In a battle, a player might have a melee attack bonus of +1 and a unique sword that adds 1 point to their melee attack. In this case, to overcome the bear's defense roll of 12, the player would only need to roll an 11 or higher to hit the bear, as 11 plus 2 equals 13 ( $11 + 2 = 13$ ). After every successful attack, the extent of the damage dealt is determined by rolling other dice. Note: In the event of a tie roll, both the attacker and defender lose five HP.

The next set of dice that come into play during a battle includes the d12, d8, d6 and d4, which determine the damage dealt by a successful attack. Both players and monsters have a limited amount of HP, and when they sustain a certain level of damage, reaching zero HP, death is the result. For example, if the students are fighting an ogre with 5 HP remaining of its 45 max health, and one of the students lands a successful attack and rolls a 6 on the d12, the ogre's HP will drop below zero, causing it to cease to exist.

The primary dice used for damage is the d12, typically designated for single attacks with main weapons like swords, bows, war hammers, and battle axes. The d6 and d8, on the other hand, are used for smaller weapons like knives, crossbows, and hatchets, they also determine the damage dealt by multiple attacks against one or multiple opponents, such as a triple-hit combo sword attack or multiple arrows shot from a bow. The choice of dice used for players or the DM depends entirely on the strength of the weapon and the type of strike used against the opponent.

Depending on the creativity and cleverness of an attack, among other factors, the DM has the discretion to award a player with an attack bonus (+1, +2, etc.) and/or a damage bonus (+5, x1.5, x2, etc.). For example, if a student chooses to attack a tree monster with a fireball, a tactically sound move due to the tree's vulnerability to fire, the DM might grant an attack bonus of +3 and, if successful, a damage bonus of x3. Subsequently, after a successful d20 attack roll and a d12 damage roll of 8, the tree would lose 24 HP.

Lastly, actions taken out of turn to assist a fellow hero are encouraged. While they cannot directly attack an opponent causing damage, they can engage in tactics that distract or hinder their adversary, providing their comrade with an attack or defensive advantage. For instance, a player, a wizard, is preparing to cast a fireball at an orc, but before doing so, another player, a barbarian, decides to leap in and grapple the orc from behind. This strategic move leverages the barbarian's strength, but it carries a risk. The barbarian must succeed in a strength roll, and the DM decides that he needs a result of nine or higher to effectively restrain the orc. Failing to roll high enough would allow the orc to break free and harm the barbarian, resulting in the loss of health. However, if the barbarian rolls successfully, he will maintain his hold on the orc, and his friend, the wizard, will gain an attack bonus.

Enemy battle stats are displayed on the PowerPoint slides and include all stats, their specials, and their weaknesses.

While the above explanation of how battles unfold may appear complex, consider them as more guidelines than rigid rules. Dungeon Masters (DMs) hold the ultimate authority and discretion. They can choose to be lenient or embody the essence of true chaotic evil.

## Appendix 2: More details on items

The first and most beloved category is weapons, providing bonus melee attacks, bonus damage, and a special ability. The second category consists of armor, which grants bonus defense, incoming damage reduction, attribute bonuses, and a special ability. The final category is magical items, offering bonus magical abilities, attribute bonuses, and special abilities (for more details, please refer to the images below).

Below each ability (in parenthesis) different words specify different aspects of the abilities.

- battle charge: All item abilities have a certain number of battle charges, which is how many times a player is allowed to use said ability in a battle. Battle charges are expended both on successful and

failed attempts of an ability. Abilities with no battle charges can be used an unlimited number of times."

- unblockable: these abilities are unblockable, and as such, bypass the need for an attack versus defense d20 roll and guarantee an attack on an enemy.
- automatic: these abilities are activated 'automatically' after an action by the player or enemy and sometimes have an unlimited amount of battle charges.

### Appendix 3: The battle sheet explained

On the battle sheet, there is the main battle stats section. The base stats vary for each class but can be modified with different items and as players level up. Students start by filling in their defense, melee attack, ranged attack, and magic attack modifiers. If a student has a +1 melee attack modifier, when they roll a 13 to attack an enemy, it becomes a 14. The same applies to defense, ranged, and magic. Next, they fill out the damage reduction for defense and the bonus damage for melee, ranged, and magic. Depending on whether the player is being attacked or attacking, these sections determine whether the amount of damage taken or dealt is reduced or increased. Lastly, provide the accurate distance sections for ranged and magic. These sections indicate the maximum distance (in spaces) a player can be from an enemy to successfully hit the target.

Third, there is the speed, max health, and initiative section. Speed indicates how many spaces a player can move per turn, max health indicates the highest HP a student can reach, and initiative indicates a student's eagerness to make the first move in battle.

Fourth, there is the weapons and armor section. Depending on the player's class, they can select from a variety of weapons and armor. For instance, a ranger can use a bow, while a barbarian cannot. Also, only a bard can carry a musical instrument. The types of weapons are quite vast, making this section very enjoyable for the students.

Finally, there is the abilities section. This is where magic users write down their magic abilities, and non-magic users record their unique special abilities. Magic abilities depend on the type and level of magic the user chooses to wield. For example, if a player has level one fire magic, they possess only the ability to throw a fireball that deals d12 damage. However, when a player levels up their fire magic to level two, they will keep the fireball ability and gain the ability to create a firewall that grants them +5 defense.

Regarding special abilities for non-magic users, players get to decide what those abilities are. For example, if a barbarian wants the ability to swing his weapon around in a circle and hit everyone within a one-space radius of where he is standing, dealing d12+1 damage, they can make that their special ability. This ability can also be leveled up as the player progresses, to deal more damage, become unblockable, or cover more space on the battle map. Students enjoy coming up with different special abilities for their characters.

### Appendix 4: Google Drive folder

The amount of files is too great to put on this paper. Please refer to this Google Drive folder to find all the campaign *PowerPoint* presentations and all the necessary *Word* documents. I will update the folder as I create more campaigns.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LL4jxVF8fUAtrnUwRMz0j6MbX0GGCPLrFNQiT-t9PjBq8RjNjxuMDkmB0qzTNeOAFVLLbqG\\_W?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LL4jxVF8fUAtrnUwRMz0j6MbX0GGCPLrFNQiT-t9PjBq8RjNjxuMDkmB0qzTNeOAFVLLbqG_W?usp=drive_link)