Ed Software Evaluation

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Title: Space Science Investigations: Plant Growth

Type of Software: This is a Simulation. NASA created this game so that students could virtually explore the International Space Station. They created it so that you can tap on the different parts of the Space Station and there will be an explanation pop up and tell you what that feature does. You simulate a real life experiment of how to grow plants in space, learning along the way. You get to experience zero gravity as you explore the space station as you would if you were really there.

Version: Version 1.2

Publisher: NASA

Target Audience: 4+

Students 8+ can fully enjoy this app. Reading and problem solving skills are necessary to complete the missions. Smaller children can still explore this app and have lots of fun, though. They will enjoy zooming around in zero gravity and the graphics are really fascinating.

Curriculum/How it might be used in our class: This is an amazing app to use in a science class! Not only does it show a real life simulation of zero gravity space, it lets you explore virtually participate in the experimentation of plant growth in space. Material on the app explains design problems they had with plant growth experimentation and how they overcame it. They describe how plant growth works on earth and in space. This is great for students learning about gravity, plant growth, and design solutions/experiential design.

Possible Environments and Why: Students will each need their own iPad. Once the app is downloaded internet isn't necessary, unless you want to explore the linked websites that NASA has provided to extend learning. The students' progress will be saved when they leave the app, until they come back. I would use this in a Science Class.

Cost: This App is free. No in-app purchases.

Paragraph Describing App: This app virtually transports you into space. You'll find yourself spinning and floating in zero gravity. You must zoom around and complete small missions in order to earn badges. You explore by tapping on different objects in the International Space Station. There will be a screen that comes up on the side that explains the real life purpose of the thing/mechanism that you tapped on. You can even tap on a guitar and it'll tell you that there has been a guitar on the ISS since 2009. There is an underlying theme of this app to educate students about plant growth in space. You can help the onboard scientist grow various kinds of plants and learn how plant growth in space compares to plant growth on Earth. You have a tablet that tells you different missions, shows you what you have in your storage compartment, lets you navigate the map, has settings, and gives links to websites.

Impressions of Software: We love this app. It's free and NASA took great care in making this app educational and fun. We can see it being used to study plant growth or gravity in our classroom. Some students may have problems navigating in zero space. The designers made it as realistic as possible and it's easy to start spinning and not get upright for a minute. Otherwise, the missions are easy and the whole experience teaches you a lot. The sound effects are great, graphics are good for kids, and the touchscreen made this app easy to navigate (if you have issues with the zero gravity you can navigate using the map and you can adjust the gravity in settings). One thing to note is that NASA hasn't updated this app in a year, I don't know if they plan on keeping up with the maintenance.

Does it pass APPS: We think that this app definitely passes. We like that it is a free app that is designed with education as the focus.