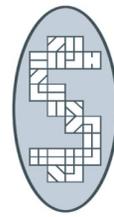


HELPING TEACHERS USE BOARD GAMES

Game publishers offer discounts and donations to cash-strapped schools



STRATEGIC
SPACE

New York, NY -- February 11, 2009 -- The following is excerpted from an article appearing today on the web site and in the newsletter of Games for Educators (<http://www.gamesforeducators.com>):

Why would anyone want to give a teacher a free board game?

by Mark Salzwedel

I have looked through the "wish lists" some schools have posted on the Internet. Some want resources as basic as pens and colored paper. It must seem a pipe dream to expect that the business community would be interested in helping to supply teachers with tools to help them teach.

And after all, a box of pens is a lot less expensive than a board game.

Certain game publishers will subsidize your board game orders. For example, Mayfair Games publishes many great historically themed board games, including *Settlers of Catan*. They currently have a 30% discount for orders by educational institutions. All you have to submit is an order on your school letterhead that includes the school's tax exempt number or certificate. They give you two weeks to pay for the order by credit card or check.

Some publishers, like Z-Man Games (publishers of some great simulation and historical games like *Primal Soup*, *Pandemic*, and *Agricola*) don't have a set discount for teachers, but they are willing to negotiate a discount, if you can prove that you are going to use the games in the classroom and not for personal use. Buying more than one copy of a title or submitting your order on school stationery may put the publisher at ease. In the case of Z-man Games, you can just email your proposed order or talk to Zev Shlasinger at Origins or any other game fair where you see their booth.

Some publishers have specific products geared toward classroom use that are a fairly good value. For example, Hasbro offers a "School Scrabble Kit" for \$49.95 (including shipping and handling) that comes with 6 modified deluxe *Scrabble* games, a *Scrabble* dictionary, and a variety of teaching aids, including a video, handouts, and lesson planning tips.

And a few larger publishers like Rio Grande Games (*Carcassonne*, *Power Grid*, *Zooloretto*, *Puerto Rico*, etc.) and smaller publishers like Strategic Space (*4th Corner*, *Star Hopper*, *Samsara*, etc.) will not only offer a discount to educators, but will occasionally donate games for classroom use.

Especially in this economy, why the heck would any publishers give away free games?

- ▶ **It's great advertising.** Television and newspaper ads are expensive. For the cost of a game and the shipping, you get an authority figure presenting a game and sanctioning its use in yucky school! And then after they play it once or more times in school, it makes its way onto a lot of kids' Christmas wish lists! Multiple sales!
- ▶ **It's an opportunity for cross-marketing.** Most savvy publishers will load their donated games up with information about other games they carry. Even savvier publishers will mention other games of theirs in the rules, so it can't be thrown away. And the savviest publishers will give you one or unlimited coupons toward other games that you can keep for your next order or potentially pass out to students or their parents.
- ▶ **It's a tax write-off.** Depending on accounting practices, publishers only have a limited amount of time to claim depreciation on inventory, so if some games are hanging around in the warehouse too long, they can try to remainder them (sell them at a fraction of their retail price to a clearance house), or donate them to a nonprofit (like your school) for an equal or greater tax benefit.
- ▶ **It's good publicity.** It looks really good to investors, media, potential employees, and a host of others if the publisher is involved in charity work, not matter how small.
- ▶ **It's market research.** Some publishers will send prototypes or even finished games out to teachers so they can get product feedback from a very narrow age group and demographic. All you have to do is tell publishers how their games went over with the kids.

So if you notice a game that would be great support for a curriculum unit coming up, plan ahead and contact the publisher. Even if they don't have a donation policy in place, it's possible they'll work with you if you tell them your budget and how you want to use the game. You might be able to work out a swap: Offer your lesson plan to the publisher for use on their web site to reach out to other teachers.

Mark Salzwedel is the president of Strategic Space, Inc. (<http://strategic-space.com>) and an avid gamer who can often be seen spouting off about game design theory on <http://www.boardgamegeek.com>. The wonderful games of Mayfair Games are listed at their web site: <http://www.mayfairgames.com/>. Z-Man Games has a web site (<http://www.zmangames.com/>), and you can email the owner at zman@zmangames.com with your proposals. Rio Grande Games (<http://www.riograndegames.com>) asks you to email your proposals to Riogames@aol.com. Strategic Space (<http://strategic-space.com>) asks you to email your proposals to info@strategic-space.com.