

FIGURE 8.7:
**INCREASING THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF
ACADEMIC GAMES**

- ◆ List the skills and concepts targeted in a certain game; then, ask students to explain how they applied or extended those skills as they played that game.
- ◆ Ask students to describe what they are doing as they play a game so you access students' perceptions, academic vocabulary, and problem-solving strategies. Most children have a lot to say when asked about their game-playing process.
- ◆ Invite students to analyze and alter one rule or aspect of the game that might effectively increase the challenge level and make it even more engaging to play. Have them experiment with that change and report their results.
- ◆ Incorporate authentic writing tasks. When students create an original game that teaches or applies targeted skills and concepts, have them write directions so others can play the game independently.
- ◆ Ask students to teach a digital game to their family, a peer, or another adult at school. This invitation provides an effective opportunity for children to guide adults and peers into their digital world. Ask these students to present a brief oral or written report of their experience.
- ◆ Challenge students to determine ways they can connect the ideas and skills they develop from games to other learning opportunities, such as with books, discussions, or personal interests. As one example, students might generalize that they need to continue trying when learning something new as one skill builds to a higher level.
- ◆ Post a short list of approved websites that are sources of games with academic connections. In pairs or as individuals, students explore one or more of the sites to assess its engagement potential and educational value. Students write recommendations to peers based on their assessment. When possible, they post their reviews on the game website.
- ◆ Invite students to propose additional online sites they discover that offer appropriate games with skill applications. To nominate a site, a student writes a proposal explaining the academic value of the site and includes reasons why classmates will benefit from the site. A class committee and the teacher review all proposals and research a site before it is added to the recommended list.
- ◆ Deconstruct what it is about a game that entices students to practice and apply particular skills or ideas. Use gained insights to provide learning opportunities with value-added potential for your content.