The global education sector is going through deep and systemic changes. Tablets and low-cost laptops are becoming ubiquitous, traditional paper-based textbooks are going away, curriculum is becoming unbundled, classrooms are becoming a blend of self-directed and facilitated learning. There is also growing awareness that we are not effectively preparing a large percentage of our youth with the essential skills, literacies, and dispositions necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex, rapidly changing and digitally connected world.

All of these changes are forcing the development of new approaches to curriculum, teaching practices and assessments.

There is no silver bullet for addressing these complex, systemic challenges. However, research points to the promise of inquiry-based learning trajectories using multiple modalities, powered by game-infused methodologies in which players fail safely and use copious data to improve performance. Well-designed games and game-infused experiences offer a delicate balance of challenges and rewards that can drive deep levels of engagement and time-on-task, enabling learners to advance at their own pace, fail in a safe and supportive environment, acquire critical knowledge just-in-time, while iterating performances based on feedback and use this knowledge to develop mastery.

In this presentation, Professor Sasha Barab will first share why games provide such potential as an innovative curriculum. Based on these big ideas, he will share learning impact guides available at the ASU Center for Games and Impact and designed to help players, parents, and teachers unlock the power that exists in commercial and educational games.

Attendees will be encouraged to take an impact guide and play at home, or are invited to create an impact guide for teachers that we could make available to others.

Dr. Barab will also share research related to the effectiveness of games for supporting learning. In particular, he will highlight key lessons learned that would allow teachers to get the most out of leveraging game-based learning in their classrooms. Based on these lessons, he will close with a discussion of his recent work around Thrive. Thrive is an approach to learning that harnesses the power of games, simulations and inquiry-based curriculum to help youth thrive in a complex, rapidly changing, digitally connected world.

Sasha Barab is a Professor in the Teachers College at Arizona State University, where he cofounded and serves as the Executive Director of the Center for Games and Impact. Dr. Barab is an internationally recognized learning scientist who holds the Pinnacle West Chair of Education, and who has researched, designed, and published extensively on the challenges and opportunities of using games for impact.