



Leadership Esports Resource Guide

Version 1.0

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Building Community Awareness and Support

The school community includes a variety of stakeholders, ranging from district to building leadership, education and support staff, parents, business people, university staff, and esports organizations. Students, of course, are at the center of these groups. The approach to each stakeholder group is critical to the long-term success of any esports program. Education, opportunities, and concerns are all important factors for what the community needs to know and understand so as to be on the same page and support the programs.

Educate Leadership and Staff

For any program to get started, the administrators, teachers, and education staff need to know about esports, its impact for students, value to the school system, and how it supports their primary work—the education of students. While many of these individuals will not play an active role of building and maintaining an esports program, they are the foundation for whether or not implementation succeeds.

Education on Esports

Knowing what is esports and what it is about are important. While some people will have knowledge of aspects of esports, it is important to establish common understanding of core elements. Esports represents a variety of computer or digital games that people compete in to win tournaments, prize money, league championships, and brand identity. Esports represents team and individual sports. Players are paid a salary to compete. Coaches, trainers, nutritionists, marketers, content developers, reporters, and business people are hired to provide the wraparound support so that esports leagues and tournaments are high quality events that rival their counterparts in the traditional sporting world.

Share examples of esports competitions, of which they might have heard about. Some options at this time includes:

- [League of Legends](#)
- [Rocket League](#)
- [Overwatch](#)
- [Smite](#)
- Super Smash Brothers (and other fighting games)
- [NBA 2K League](#)
- [Fifa Eworld Cup](#)

There are other popular esports such as [CS:GO](#), [Fortnite](#), and [Apex](#). These are known as FPS or First Person Shooters. Because of the style of play, realistic combat with guns, most schools and communities choose not to offer them. Sometimes Overwatch, an FPS, is seen by some as in the same category. FPS is an example of why games need to be studied and understood so as to ease concerns that may arise by being informed.



As of the start of 2020, the esports industry exceeds 1.2 billion dollars and has global hype and viewership across the world. During the League of Legends World Championships in 2019 between G2 a European team and Fun Plus Phoenix from China, viewership was higher than the Superbowl in the same year and more than triple that of the NBA basketball championship series. As businesses and traditional sports teams, like the NBA Golden State Warriors, take notice, they are investing into esports. The infusion of money has led to job growth in this industry.

Colleges and universities are building programs and are actively recruiting high school players for their teams. In 2019, 15 million dollars in scholarships were offered. Career and degree tracks are being developed and offered to college students interested in working in this emerging and expanding field.

The growth of esports has led to impacts on K-12 districts and schools that should not be ignored.

Impact for Students

The most immediate impact on students is having an opportunity to participate in something they love AND represent their school. While there are existing student-athletes who also play these games, there is also a large number of students who do not play on traditional sports teams or are not interested. Yet, esports like League of Legends and Overwatch, gives them a way to be more deeply part of the school community. There is real potential for students who feel marginalized as outsiders find themselves feeling accepted as a part of the school culture. Perception can be the reality they live inside.

Another strength is building a broader community. Unlike many traditional sporting events, esports brings together students from different schools, building comradery. It is not uncommon for students from one team to root for another during competition. The players know each other or have heard about other players virtually. Meeting in-between games has led to building new friendships and networks among the students. As more students become active in the school community for positive experiences and achievements, their families can also be brought in to feel welcomed.

Supports the Education of Students

Similar to traditional sports athletes, esports participants tend to their course grades more so as to remain academically eligible to play. Sports can provide structures and supports that these students can access for their growth. The skills of managing classes, digital citizenship, global professional skills like collaboration and critical thinking, self-organize, self-discipline, collaboration, professional behavior, and esports practices are opportunities to grow so as to prepare students for post-high school graduation for any college or career choices they make.

Value to the school system



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All that has been said so far are critical to what leadership and staff need to know and understand. The value for students while in school and the career opportunities are tremendous. Esports provides students with greater access to opportunities post-secondary that are important to offer. The prestige for school systems who can share how their students who graduate their program well prepared to enter colleges and job opportunities in esports is no small thing.

However, a district or building needs more than an ideal or promise to justify the energy, time, funding, and resources that must be committed to make an esports program a successful reality. They need to be able to explain how esports aligns with their core ideas: mission, vision, values, and goals. In the course of educating about esports as already described, also present a concise and well-reasoned explanation of how esports aligns to the district and/or school's reason for existing.

Esports Alignment to District/School Purpose

	District/School Language	Esports Alignment for Learners
Mission		
Vision		
Values		
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		
Goal 4		

Form a committee to complete a table like the one above that shows the alignment. Leave no blank spaces. Show alignment to each item that the district or school has. Be specific with concrete examples that will resonate with the decision makers and community influencers who you must persuade and garner their support.

Building Awareness with Students

The students can be your greatest asset for building an esports program. They can be the most convincing to family and community and can help determine the needs for a team, club, and/or courses. To get the broadest reach, including diversity of genders and ethnicity, take the time to carefully plan the meetings. Include specific steps that will be taken to best ensure that a representative of your school and community shows up to the awareness sessions. Consider taking the following steps:

Step 1: Recruit students and staff to form an esports committee.

Use this committee to plan the information meetings. It is valuable to have mostly students, a diverse representation, and a balance of genders. Use them as a focus group for understanding the interests and concerns that students may have about participating in an esports program. They would also provide perspective and support for the parent meetings.



Step 2: Create a needs assessment

Use the committee and their feedback to create a needs assessment survey. Send out the survey to students as a means to get their perspective about esports and gaming. They can rate the games being explored for interests and identify formats to use such as tournaments and leagues, teams and/or clubs. Also, learn from them what makes for a safe and encouraging gaming culture. The survey will notify students that something with esports is coming. Consider using Google Forms, Survey Monkey, or another tool.

Step 3: Promote and hold several informational sessions

The needs assessment should give you a sense of how many attendees you may have to the informational sessions. Based on interviews with sponsors from around the United States, student attendance can go into the hundreds. When sending out the dates and times, have students rsvp for dates so as to get some sense of numbers. Leave room for walk-ins. Charge your committee to advertise and recruit students to attend. Execute a plan for recruiting a diverse population to attend by the adults and students on the committee. Share at a staff meeting and post in classrooms to maximize awareness of the information sessions.

At the sessions, share with students the plan for starting teams, a club, and/or course. Share as many details as possible about:

- Games being considered, the selection process for the games, ie. the rationale.
- The culture of professionalism and positive social behavior
- The signup process for teams and clubs
- The requirements for trying out and participation
 - This would include academic expectations, digital citizenship such as their digital footprint (have they demonstrated toxicity in their social media), time commitment.
- The date when the application process will open (ie. Google forms)
- Collect their feedback about the games and processes being put in place.
 - Equipment needs for games under consideration (tournament base requirements).
 - Official rulings for competitive play according to each league.
 - Provisions for students without personal equipment.

Step 4: Student leadership recruitment and advisory

The committee can be this body, however more candidates may be found after the informational sessions. Use this advisory board to ensure that students have an active voice in the development and growth of the esports program. They become the eyes and ears for receiving information from the student body about any desires or needs that would improve the esports program and equitable opportunities for everyone.

Educate Families and Community

For families and community members, such as businesses and colleges, their needs intersect with those of the district leaders and staff. Much of what has been shared in that section are



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similar here as well. In addition to building a common knowledge about esports and its positive potential for students' education and opportunities to become a stronger member of the school community, there are other concerns that may need to be addressed. Consider following these steps to address their needs and questions:

Step One: Form a committee of educators and students

This committee is likely different from the student committee as their purpose and audience is different. However, it is valuable to share information between the two, as well as coordinate with each other's plans.

Step Two: Collect data and plan the parent & community information sessions

Design a survey that serves two purposes: provides some information about esports including its potential benefits and collects perceptions about esports and its potential for students for college and career opportunities.

Use the survey results and informal meetings with community members to plan the informational session. Use the alignment document: Esports Alignment to District/School Purpose as a resource to help show the connection between the graduate profile and esports. Be intentional with sharing the positive implications and addressing any concerns that were collected from the survey and informal conversations. Consider including students and business people as co-presenters. Additional areas to address at the sessions includes:

- Debunk misconceptions
- Share Colleges and Career opportunities
- Gather feedback about the game options based on filtering criteria (violence levels and mature content)
- Explain the requirements for joining a team or club, as well as the tryout process

Step 3: Hold the parent/community meeting

Use this opportunity to inform participants about the district or school's intent with esports and address potential concerns as listed above. Use this opportunity to collect feedback to help inform the later work of program building. Identify participants who could be recruited to join the committee.

Step 4: Use the Committee as a Focus Group

As the program is built, questions will be raised that will need to be answered. The committee may raise questions themselves and can be a sounding board for ideas and possible solutions. Depending on their area of expertise, they could also be advocates and open access to people and organizations that can help the building of the program.

Build a 3-5 Year Strategic Action Plan for the Esports Program

Just based on the needs described above, developing a multi-year strategic plan for an esports program is important. Such a plan provides clarity and direction on what needs to be



accomplished, prepared for, and in what priority. Where a program begins is not where it should be in the succeeding years, if it is to grow and successfully meet the needs of many students.

Step One: Establish a committee of educators, students, and community members

Diverse stakeholder representation is important for the longevity of the program. District and building administrators, along with teachers and students, as well as community members offer value in their different perspectives and support networks that they can offer to the esports program.

Step Two: Review esports alignment to the school system's purpose

The committee would create or review the alignment of the esports program to the [values of the school system](#). This top-down view helps the team share a common understanding for the work of developing a long term plan.

Step Three: Design a 3-5 year esports strategic plan

Use protocols like Back to the Future to envision what the program would look like in 3-5 years. Based on the generated ideas and data:

- Craft 3-6 goals to accomplish over the course of the strategic plan.
- Develop multiple steps for each goal that maps concretely how the outcome can be achieved.
- Agree on artifacts that evidence progress and completion of the steps and the goal.
- Assign one or more people as the monitor of goals to ensure that the committee stays informed on the progress or lack of for completing goals.
- Include a review cycle for the strategic plan, such as every 3 to 6 months.

Suggest goals might relate to:

- Stakeholder Communications
- Development of Club and Team structures
- Courses on culture and career pathways, such as the Esports Learning Guide for Teachers and Coaches
- Funding, Grants, and Equipment logistics

Goal #	Year	Goal	Description of Steps	Accountable Monitors	Due Dates	Evidence



A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Goal #	Year	Goal	Description of Steps	Accountable Monitors	Due Dates	Evidence
3	0	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 0 - Identify potential solutions to the challenges.			Communication Toolkit - Solutions
3	1	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 1 - Present materials to stakeholders.			Schedule meetings
3	1	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 1 - List comm. Organizations that would be willing to help out. (STEAM groups, Library)			Communication Toolkit - Organizations
3	1	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 1 - List of private groups that are willing to work with us (esports arenas, Huntsmen/pro teams Riot Squad/Orgs)			Communication Toolkit - Private groups
3	2	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 2 - Invite stakeholders (parents students admin) to attend sessions with colleges and esports orgs.			Organize and scheduling meeting
3	2	3 Identify plan to bring more stakeholders in - admin, parents, lscs, community orgs.	Year 2 - Create community events w/ open invitations to parents.			Organize and scheduling meeting
3.1	0	3.1 Put together marketing pieces about why esports is important for our students (possibly a collaboration between our school's students) by the end of the year	Year 0 - Student video - what does Esports mean to you?			Communication Toolkit and Resource Guide

Example draft from an Esports Program in the Chicago area (template: [excel](#) and [sheets](#)).



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Action Steps

Resources for New Learning	Questions for Reflection	Potential Tasks for Skill Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning Template (excel) • Interview: Esports Program Creator Kyle Berger – interview about how one district started their esports program. • NASEF Resources for Parents and Guardians & British Esports: Parents' Guide Two guides to help parents and communities understand the value of esports. • How to Make a Case for Esports: Podcast • Checklist for Establishing an Esports competitive team or club – A complete checklist to quickly craft an outline for an esports program action plan. • Pew Research Center: Online Gaming • 2020-21 Guide to K-12 Esports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does esports align with supporting your mission, vision, values, and goals? • What is the biggest concern your stakeholders have with esports? How would you answer that question convincingly? • How might esports be turned into a career pathway of courses? What benefits might that provide the school, students, and the community? • How might forming a district or school committee that includes representatives from multiple stakeholders help to support program planning and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a district or school committee to plan the esports program. Include at least representative stakeholders of students, staff, parents, and community. • Design an Esports Strategic Plan for 3-5 years • Create a one-pager case for your district or school's esports program. Model example in the Appendix or after this example - (http://esports.irish/2Vv3wbk). • Develop esports talking points. Next, reword them to communicate to different stakeholder groups: students, parents, staff, and local businesses • Use the parent resources from NASEF and British Esports to craft an awareness meeting for parents in your community. • Review the 2020-21 Guide to K-12 Esports. Use to address talking points that address mission (chapter 7), appropriateness (chapter 8), health (chapters 10-12), and college opportunities (chapter 13).



Prioritizing Structures

Where does one start? How formal or informal should the schools' involvement be for esports? What are the long-term goals and the stepping stones along the way towards success? What does success look like at the district and building levels (high school, middle school, and elementary school). It is important to keep the end in mind, while beginning at a point that the community can support and start to grow the program and culture.

What is not addressed here are such important topics as technical logistics, funding, equipment, infrastructure, and coaching staff. Many of these are addressed later. At this stage, identifying key structures for building the program foundation must be clear, as they impact many other decisions.

Evaluate & Decide: Teams, Clubs, and/or Courses

When starting an esports program the decision about where to start building a structure is not a simple one. Teams, clubs, and courses all have their value as a place to start. The work done to educate and explore esports with leadership, students, parents and other stakeholders can greatly affect the breadth of the start.

One of the first decisions will likely be about if the program begins with an esports team or club, or build both simultaneously. Each has their arguments for launching a program. Each will be examined below. Lastly, the place of starting an esports course or series of courses will be reviewed for it brings to the table when building a successful program.

Recruitment for Equity and Diverse Representation

Recruitment of players, club members, and students in the courses carries a special importance in esports. A [PEW study \(2015\) about who games](#) found that women were as likely to game as men. These are significant numbers. Yet, in the esports world from K-12 school systems, colleges, and professional leagues there is a severe lack of representation. While there can be reasons pointing as to why this is the case such as toxic online gaming culture, the hard reality is that organizations must do a better job of actively seeking out students to join the teams, clubs, and courses. Part of this process to succeed is to listen to all the students, from genders to other diversity factors, about their interests and perceptions of the obstacles and opportunities. Please keep this idea about recruitment in mind while proceeding through the rest of this document. Let's bring about the most inclusive equitable opportunities possible.

Building Teams

Starting a program with teams seems like the logical place. Like traditional sports, an esports program is about having teams that compete with other schools, inside the district, with neighboring schools, and/or across the country. Competing is an integral part to having a team.



Some benefits include:

1. Opportunity for more students to participate in school activities.
2. A leverage point for motivating more students to manage their grades for eligibility.
3. Expanded experiences that could lead to interest for and from colleges.
4. Increase community interests and involvement in watching and support school activities.
5. Raise inclusiveness and equity as an active focus to achieve.

Achieving these goals takes time and planning that makes these an intentional focus. Building teams first means addressing the following areas:

- Number of esports teams to field
- Student-Athlete Policies & Guidelines
- Code of Conduct
- Eligibility
- League Availability (Online or Local)

Number of esports teams to field

As discussed in the previous section, deciding on what esports to field a team is influenced by community views of the games themselves, such as game ratings, style of game (i.e. fps or moba), type of violence (realistic, cartoon, fantasy, level of graphics), student interests, and what's offered at the college level (ie. Scholarship opportunities).

The number of esports events chosen determines how many students get to participate and the number of adults needed to manage, support, and/or coach the teams. Currently, schools are exploring the best balance of how many esports events can a manager or coach support for a successful student experience.

Once the esports events are chosen, a related decision is how many players will be fielded for each team. Suggestions include maintaining at least twice the number of starter positions so that teams can scrimmage internally. Some schools maintain a varsity team and several JV teams, all of whom compete with other schools.

Student-Athlete Policies & Guidelines

Use the policies and guidelines that govern student-athletes in traditional sports for those who are chosen to compete in the esports program. Using these guidelines as a basis for the program brings both familiarity for the staff given the responsibility to manage the teams and for the school community to recognize that esports should be treated with the same fairness and accountability as traditional sports. There is a rich history of sports in schools. That narrative has evolved with the changes in sports and the culture that supports it. Esports can be viewed as another branch along the evolution of sports.

Code of Conduct



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The code of conduct for students is the basis for what students should follow and be held accountable. However, the digital world sometimes extends beyond what traditional code of conduct addresses. Additional language may be needed to make students aware that their social media and gaming communications can have a positive and negative impact on their school and professional career opportunities. Here is an [example by NASEF](#).

Starting with joining the team, student-athletes in esports represent the school and themselves in the digital world through their gaming and practices. There is opportunity to teach and coach students on how to eliminate toxic behavior from their actions and how to deal with toxicity from others in the gaming culture in a positive and professional way.

Plan how to teach and coach students on conducting a personal audit of their social media footprint for content posted in the past and clean any toxicity. This second need should be a learning approach and not a mandatory requirement. Students have their right to how they conduct their personal business. However, use news articles about students and professionals who have lost acceptances to college and job opportunities because of something found in their social media past. Armed with such knowledge, students may choose to do personal housekeeping.

Eligibility

Use the policies followed for student-athletes. This approach provides consistency for student-athletes between esports and traditional sports. Some schools have opted to raise the academic bar for esports athletes. Such a decision could create inequity by denying opportunities to students who may feel marginalized from the school culture. These students deserve an equitable chance to join a program that connects them to the school and potentially motivates them to raise their grades and thus improve their education experience. Such opportunities are partially why the guidelines for traditional sports student-athletes have the eligibility guidelines that they follow. Esports student athletes should have the same opportunities for their chosen sport.

Establishing Clubs

An esports club is a great way to include many students with diverse interests in different esports and games. Major benefits of a club over an esports team include:

- more students can be involved
- it's not selective by who is the best player
- chosen games can range from competitive pvp (player vs. player) to casual play

Where an esports team may field six to fifteen players, a club could have 30 to over a hundred members, and in some cases the number could be higher. Such interests should be embraced as students showing interest in being part of the school community around a strong interest. Many of the factors explored for building a team are similar. As a result, these will build on those concepts.



- Scheduling Club Days
- Club Policies & Guidelines
- Club Code of Conduct
- Eligibility
- Teaching & Coaching: Digital Citizenship and College & Career Opportunities

Scheduling Club Days

The logistics of how many times the club is offered will affect the number of students that can be supported. Traditionally, clubs may meet once a week. In the case of an esports club, if there are 50 or 150 members, a more creative structure may need to be developed. Some schools have gone the route of offering the club on more than one day, where students attend on a specific day of the week on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This is similar to a block schedule where students attend classes on 2-3 days a week instead of all week. Part of the decision is dependant on access to computer equipment and bandwidth access (topics discussed later in this guide). Number of attendees can be limited by these factors. Club sponsor availability or number of sponsors are also important planning considerations.

Club Policies & Guidelines

Use the school guidelines used for establishing and running any club. This approach keeps the esports/gaming club aligned to other student activities. Some language may need to be adapted. For example, if there will be tournaments or intramural leagues, consider pulling ideas from similar clubs that compete, like debate. Also refer to appropriate guidelines for student-athletes. However, if the club is more casual and used for building a positive social community, the traditional policies and guidelines for clubs should be mostly sufficient.

Club Code of Conduct

The school code of conduct for students is applicable here for student behavior. The one area that may be unique to an esports/gaming club is one's digital footprint. As discussed in the same section above for esports teams, use the club opportunity to teach and coach students on how to reflect and review their digital resume of behavior online and do a cleaning if needed for the past, while monitoring their present and future behavior. Here is a reiteration from the previous section.

Plan how to teach and coach students on conducting a personal audit of their social media footprint for content posted in the past and clean any toxicity. This second need should be a learning approach and not a mandatory requirement. Students have their right to how they conduct their personal business. However, use news articles about students and professionals who have lost acceptances to college and job opportunities because of something found in their social media past. Armed with such knowledge, students may choose to do personal housekeeping.

Eligibility



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Fair access to the club is important. The school policies used for other clubs should apply here. One possible exception may be for eligibility in competitions with other clubs or special tournaments. These could require following the academic eligibility requirements of student-athletes. This decision should be carefully considered and decided in what is the best interest of engaging students into the school culture.

Teaching & Coaching: Digital Citizenship and College & Career Opportunities

Clubs can be a vehicle for teaching and coaching many students about digital citizenship and college & career opportunities. There are resources that can be used to teach digital citizenship and esports career opportunities, which extends beyond the roles of player and coach. One resource that has much content that can be used to support this is the Esports Learning Guide for Teachers and Coaches by Dell and Advanced Learning Partnerships.

Offering Courses

Courses are a great companion to esports teams and clubs. They provide avenues for many students to explore content about the esports world and the many career opportunities such as, but not limited to, content development for journalism, sports casting, and video development.

There are many approaches and a range of content offerings that are available from various third-party organizations. Two examples include:

NASEF (North America Scholastic Esports Federation)

This organization offers a variety of [curriculum resources](#) for middle and high school. Become a member to gain access. A variety of topics are covered and includes esports concepts into traditional curriculum.

Esports Learning Guide for Teachers and Coaches

Dell Technologies and Advanced Learning Partnerships collaborated to design a learning guide. The guide uses a learner-centric approach to explore esports culture and college & career opportunities. The core of the guide is project-based learning. Once a copy is acquired, the creative commons license enables schools to fully customize their program using parts or most of the guide as it best supports their needs. The guide uses ISTE Standards for Students, Global Professional Skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) and writing standards as core to what skills students learn. Contact Professional_Learning@Dell.com to learn how to get a copy for your program.

When starting down this path, consider the outcome. Make sure that any course that is developed in-house or that uses outside learning resources is built to align with a district's portrait of a graduate skills and/or digital citizenship skills.



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- Single Course or Course Pathways
- Curriculum policies & guidelines

Single Course or Course Pathways

The benefit of having a single course focus is that it can serve as a companion to an esports team. If the purpose is to build awareness of the career opportunities and build digital citizenship skills, all students, not just those who deeply play a game, can explore the possibilities for working in a field that has many job roles. Also, starting with a single course in the first year, it gives time to decide and plan future pathways if that becomes an interest.

The course pathways approach can have a deeper and more robust impact for students. It gives them experiences where they can gain more skills that align with the esports world, such as video production, public speaking, business elements, and hardware repair/building certifications. Career Ed Tech and STEM programs can provide ways to build esports elements into legitimate pathways.

Curriculum policies & guidelines

For course adoption be clear on what are the district/school guidelines. When completing the application process be specific on the learning standards and skills being taught and assessed. Provide a clearly detailed explanation of how the course(s) align to the school's purpose for serving students (see this address in the first section about leadership buy-in). It is suggested that the team creating the proposal have a pre-meeting with the person or persons in charge of the approval process to ask questions and gain feedback on a draft before making the formal submission.



Action Steps

Resources for New Learning	Questions for Reflection	Potential Tasks for Skill Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Citizenship Toolkit from REMC MI • NASEF's Code of Conduct • Esports Learning Guide for Teachers & Coaches by Dell & ALP • NASEF Curriculum • How to Start a High School Esports Team & Benefit Your School • Example Computer Hardware Assembly Lesson Plan From Brookwood High School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What values in policies for traditional sports be transferred to esports programs? • Review the Esports Learning Guide for Teachers & Coaches. How might the content be used to support a club or course? • How can you ensure that diverse representation is a foundation to the recruitment process? • Clubs maximize student participation into school community. What other value can you identify for starting a club alongside a team? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a detailed outline for the structure of the esports teams and/or clubs that will be launched. • Explore and discuss digital citizenship resources to help grow the skills of the students involved in the program. • Develop a recruitment plan that intentionally addresses diversity. • Contact other schools that have an esports program. Interview them for how they started and who obstacles did they have to overcome. • Request membership to Dell's Esports Portal. Receive updates for the Esports Learning Guide for Teachers and Coaches (by Dell & ALP) via Professional_Learning@Dell.com



Esports Gaming Decisions

Competition and gaming experiences need a focus (game) and a partner (players and teams). There are several considerations for choosing a game, which will reoccur through this guide, and the choice will be impacted by community, interests, games, and imagination. Competition may be versus other schools, club teams, and/or internal to the district or school. What is planned in the first year might be the patient steppingstone to a more expanded structure. Or, you may choose to be more ambitious in the first year because the support, demand, and resources are available.

Choose the Esports

In an earlier section, "[Educate Leadership and Staff](#)", a list of esports was shared for exploring as possible consideration for launching at your school. They included:

- [League of Legends](#)
- [Rocket League](#)
- [Overwatch](#)
- [Smite](#)
- Super Smash Brothers
- [NBA 2K League](#)
- [Fifa Eworld Cup](#)

This list is continuously evolving as new esports opportunities rise and others fade away. Survey students and community about the games that are current or rising in interest. Look to colleges for what esports they are supporting, as that can be a pathway for students applying post-secondary. When choosing esports and games for students to compete there are several other factors to consider:

What age/grade levels will be included?

For many districts and schools, high school was their starting place. The reason for this could range from these are older teens with lesser restrictions to age-appropriate games to meeting the immediate need for access to colleges who field teams. There are many options to choose from with a team, club, or course. This is also true with middle school. However, within this age band, there are considerations regarding game ratings that are age appropriate, such as Teen is rated for 13 years and older and E10+ is for everyone age 10 and above. Such ratings could result in different access to games within a middle school environment. A similar consideration affects elementary school students. Game ratings are based on [ESRB](#), which has a [ratings explanation](#) and resources for [parents](#) that the school could also leverage.

How does the district/school address [Children's Internet Protection Act \(CIPA\)](#) for online gaming and competitions?

Compliance with [CIPA and related regulations](#) is important for schools to be mindful about. Since 2001, federal guidelines have been provided over the years that schools must follow. With



the emergence and growth of esports, many educators are tackling how to ensure compliance as they shape language that reflects the new complexity that comes with esports. For example, how do you address the need to protect children's private information with the need for each student to have a personal account to compete? Release forms that parents sign to give permission for their children to participate in online games that have potential exposure to a global audience is only one puzzle piece as districts and schools navigate following governmental requirements.

Contact schools and districts in your region for how they are addressing CIPA compliance for esports participation. Research league associations for resources and guides that they provide for schools in their program. Or, contact the schools in existing leagues for samples of their forms along with an explanation of how they came to the tools that they use.

Choose the Format(s)

There are many approaches that can be taken as a starting point that a committee should consider. The format followed here looks at options beginning with the most conservative to more opportunistic.

- Internal District/School competitions
- External District/School competitions
- Local or National Associations

Internal District/School competitions

Hosting competitions inside the school or with other schools in the same district provides students with immediate access to an esports experience. If kept inside a school, intramural leagues and tournaments can be competed face-to-face, which limits contact with people unknown in the gaming world. While this can be limiting it still helps provide for a positive social environment between students and schools. Internal competitions can have less reliance on outside organizations to run the matches, as the network needs are reliant on inside the building.

What is needed is a clear plan for equipment and internet access, depending on the game, and other related equipment. Parent release forms are still needed as with any sporting event, especially if one of the chosen games requires online sign-on and navigation through an internet connection. Matches and tournaments between schools inside the district can be all face-to-face meetings at agreed on school locations. Elementary and Middle schools should consider this option as a starting point to building their esports program.

Choosing this route gives schools the opportunity to establish the digital citizenship culture desired. It may also be an effective way to gain diversity of students participating, such as girls and boys, as internal events are like other traditional school events: face-to-face and welcoming.



External District/School competitions

Competing with schools outside of the district increases the opportunities to contest with other schools and get to know other communities. If the schools are close enough, competitions can be face-to-face, which gives more options for middle schools for more positive interactions. Otherwise, there will be virtual competitions that require addressing CIPA and other related compliance guidelines. High schools would have the most readiness for such an environment because the students are older. Such opportunities gives them exposure to greater competition and honing of skills that may prepare them for college recruitment and career pathways. Middle schools could have more challenges with virtual competitions due to some ages for ESRB limiting game options; however, a well thought out plan with clear policies in place can ensure a positive and safe experience for them.

Local or National Associations

The benefits of being part of a local association is maintaining more control of how tournaments and leagues including scheduling matches and establishing practices that naturally fit the region. The cost of local associations can be less significant than a national association. United, a group can sometimes leverage better pricing and/or share resources that enable members to offer high quality opportunities to its constituents. However, there are tradeoffs for such independence.

National associations have their benefits to consider. Scheduling matches, game access, and managing the meets can be time intensive and require people resources that some districts and schools are too stretched to fulfill at a quality level for their community. There are many associations that provide these supports such as NASEF and PlayVs. The benefits that these national organizations provide includes:

- Management and scheduling of matches
- Operationalize live matches with game lobbies
- Playoffs and tournament matchmaking
- Resources for starting teams and other aspects of a program

When researching these associations, the offerings can vary in ways that are important to the school. Consider the following questions:

- Which games are offered?
- Is the game unlocked for all players or is it BYOC, bring your own content?
- What is the cost: school? students?
- What expert support is provided before and during seasons?



Action Steps

Resources for New Learning	Questions for Reflection	Potential Tasks for Skill Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASEF FAQ Provides information about age appropriate games. • Children’s Internet Protection Act & related resources • NASEF, PlayVS, HSEL, • ESRB: ratings explanation & parent resources • Grants: ByteSpeed & HSEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might be the top 3 criteria that a game must meet to be approved for the program? • What are 3 criteria of which anyone would flag a game as questionable for the program? • How would equity be addressed to ensure access to games regardless of economic status, gender identity, or ethnicity? • What format would be best to launch the first round of the program, ie. league (locally or regionally) or tournaments? What format is the ultimate goal in three years? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using feedback from students, staff, and parents, compose a list of games that would be acceptable. • Create a list of pros and cons for being part of a local association and for a national association. • Develop a release form that is compliant with CIPA based on an online gaming experience for students.



Staff Selection Process

From team tryouts to choosing the right person to become a coach or club sponsor, these decisions need thought and foresight to the culture being grown. There are important considerations to factor when making or delegating these decisions.

Choosing Coaching Staff, Club Sponsors, and Course Teachers

Building a program requires staffing that understands the big picture and details to manage and monitor the different cogs. Every role shares common skills: organizing, empathy, relationship building, listening, and a level of knowledge about the games depending on the role. Here is a closer look at each potential position based on how the program is grown.

- Coaching Staff
- Club Sponsors
- Course Teachers

Coaching Staff

The best scenario is to have a coach and manager. Just like in traditional sports, the manager handles the logistics such as competitions, scheduling, academic grade checks, and other paperwork that keeps the program functioning. The coach focuses on the players, practices, and team strategies. The two people work as a seamless team.

Eventually, esports teams should operate in this collaborative way. Currently, actual practice looks different. The coach also acts as the manager. This puts much on their plate to handle. However, another challenge is that the person selected as the coach may not be as familiar or knowledgeable about the game as the students. These challenges lead to opportunities for the coaching structure. The adult who is chosen as the coach-manager can take care of all the management needs for the team and work collaboratively with a student or player-coach who handles practices and team strategy.

This approach empowers students to grow leadership skills under the mentorship of the teacher. Also, the teacher learns the game and strategies under the guidance of the student or player-coach. The teacher also manages the development of digital citizenship for the team's growth, based on the [ISTE Standards for Students](#), with particular emphasis on 2a and b.

- 2a. Students cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and are aware of the permanence of their actions in the digital world.
- 2b. Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.
- 2c. Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.



- 2d. Students manage their personal data to maintain digital privacy and security and are aware of data-collection technology used to track their navigation online.

Managers and coaches need to be organized, adaptable to the changing landscape of esports, open to working with and empowering students to become leaders as coaches, and be a good listener. The final characteristic is a passion for the sport, which can translate as following the college or professional leagues while learning the mechanics of the game. This last characteristic is what communicates to the students that the adult understands their interests.

Club Sponsors

Adults in this role share a similar passion as coaches and managers for students to have opportunities to game, develop positive relationships, and build digital citizenship skills through a healthy face-to-face community. Knowledge of esports is a bonus, it is more important to have a passion for gaming, which may be in the digital area or board games. The interactions and experiences can be similar.

Librarians, teachers, administrators, and coaches are good choices for this role. Their responsibilities are similar to the esports manager. They provide a space for students to game together, monitor and grow a digital citizenship culture, and support opportunities for tournaments and leagues that might be run in-house of the club or school. The students are leveraged for their gaming knowledge and should be mentored to grow their leadership skills by helping to plan and run gaming activities and events.

Course Teachers

Staff in this role should be a certified teacher for the best consistent results. Teachers have training for structuring learning experiences and managing how students take leadership roles as they explore the different modules and units. Depending on the course content, certification can vary. For example, using the NASEF English curriculum requires a secondary English certification. Using the Esports Learning Guide for Teachers and Coaches by Dell Technologies and Advanced Learning Partnerships can be used with any certification from elementary to secondary, in any subject area. Certified teachers teaching the course adds credibility to the experiences as not “just playing games.”

The depth of any esports course experience is intentionally empowering students to bring their knowledge and expertise about gaming into the planning and learning processes. Student-centered learning is a key part of gaming culture and should be reflected by teacher practices.



Action Steps

Resources for New Learning	Questions for Reflection	Potential Tasks for Skill Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager Role in esports (NASEF video) Watch, then read more here. • Digital Citizenship Toolkit from REMC MI • 2020-21 Guide to K-12 Esports • National Association of Esports Coaches and Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What qualities would you identify for a great teacher? How might those be used for identifying a club sponsor or coach? • How can students support a coach with no experience with the esports? • How can a coach with no experience in the esports support the players? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review chapter 3 of 2020-21 Guide to K-12 Esports for ideas about the role of manager and coaches. • With the help of students and coaches, design job descriptions for the manager and coach roles. Use this as part of recruitment. • While establishing a club, find students who are gamers and potential leaders. Use them to help shape the club format and to recruit students.



Logistics Decisions

This can be a “chicken or the egg” decision. Do you pick the game first, and then identify the equipment needs to support it? Or, do you look at your existing equipment and choose games that can be run by them? Choosing the first option opens many possibilities and might also require more expenditures. Picking the second option may require a lower budget to prepare equipment, however the tradeoff is fewer game choices. Throughout this planning process, including the technology department and the esports committee at the same table can help ensure that both options come seamlessly together.

Equipment Needs

What equipment to use is a matter that is dependent on the program’s focus. For clubs and courses, existing devices can sustain the learner experiences. The game selection resources requirements will affect what existing devices can run the game effectively.

Esports teams can also use existing devices. However, they will be limited on game choices if the computer or console is an older model. Having a robust device like a current desktop could reduce the number of incidents such as graphical glitches or overheating that can slow a player’s reaction to a gaming moment, among many other professional gaming issues that may arise from inadequate equipment. One approach that schools take is to purchase computers like desktops that can be used by different departments in need and can be easily upgraded with parts. By day, the graphics design, esports courses or coding classes use the desktops, while at night the esports and club teams use them. This approach helps to spread the value of what can become a big purchase. Another approach taken is that schools will order the parts and build their own machines. This can work if there is strong background knowledge of the current and sophisticated components.

Here are some ideas for starting to think about the needs. These are suggestions for reflection. The number of devices will be dependent on how the esports program is scaled over time.

- Desktops (6): Provides enough stations for a full team and for live streaming of matches without limited to no glitches. Used for competition and video production.
- Laptops (10-12): Provides enough stations for full varsity and junior varsity team scrimmages and practice. May be used for competitions if desktops are not available. However, in this configuration, having at least one desktop for streaming of games or running a server is highly recommended.
- Consoles, ie. Switch (1): The number of consoles will depend on the chosen esports. For example, Super Smash Brothers is a 1 v 1 match that can be run with two players on one Switch console.

Production



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Playing matches, hosting tournaments, and running scrimmages are opportunities to invite a wider audience to watch from their digital devices. The setup can be simple, and students often already have the expertise to get the program started. Ask them. Here is a list of guidelines for streaming production of esports activities.

- Stream matches on [Twitch](#) or Youtube using [OBS](#)
- Record and upload videos on Youtube
- Editing experiences/expertise for highlight videos
- Sportscasters of the live matches or post-production recordings
- Secondary video stream of the players competing
- Leverage in-district expertise to mentor student producers

As an important reminder, be sure that release forms are used that protects the students and school based on the Children’s Internet Protection Act addressed earlier in “[Choosing the Esports.](#)”

Technical set up

Network access is a critical component to a successful program. Most esports games are dependent on a strong and robust internet network. Without it, only in-house competitions can occur with games that do not require a network connection. Here are advisory steps shared by [Kyle Berger](#), Chief Technology Officer and esports expert from Grapevine-Colleyville ISD in Dallas Texas:

1. Create a separate vlan on a wired (preferred) network.
2. Then program certain ports just for the gaming lab itself. This helped tremendously to whitelist gaming servers and troubleshooting without disruption to the district instructional network.
3. Create an internet filter group for esports so that you can avoid filtering sites needed for esports, especially the ability to stream competitions and related content such as Sports Casting.
4. Use a wired network as much as possible. Wired networks have greater reliability of reduced “slows” for esports competition. Only use wireless when necessary, as “slows” such as high ping count can disadvantage and frustrate your players and give opposing teams a competitive edge.
5. Do weekly checks for updates on the games as well as some high-end gaming units’ software, ie. system updates.



Action Steps

Resources for New Learning	Questions for Reflection	Potential Tasks for Skill Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist for Establishing an Esports competitive team or club Use to complete an overview plan for an esports program. • Chapter 5: Equipment, Space, and Cost of 2020 Guide to K-12 Esports by Ramsey Jamoul • Support references for building an esports program: Dell, NASEF / PlayVs / Bytespped / HSEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What departments and course could benefit from sharing use of computers? • How can equipment cost be spread across the needs of multiple departments? • How might production streaming of games raise community interest in the school? • What value is added if more students have leadership opportunities with production to raise engagement in academics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a chart of available equipment and space that could be used for an esports program. • Review the Checklist and complete the related section about Logistics. • Review the Dell Esports brochure on pages 12-17 for examples of equipment support • Explore chapter 5 of 2020 Guide to K-12 Esports for additional ideas regarding equipment and space needs.



Reference List

Provided here are a list of articles and related references that support the work of this guide, which can further develop one's understanding and that of the group that drives this work.

- [Checklist for Establishing an Esports competitive team or club](#)
- [NASEF](#)
- [2020-21 Guide to K-12 Esports](#)
- [British Esports: Parents' Guide](#)
- [National Association of Esports Coaches and Directors](#)
- [How K–12 Schools Can Start an Esports Program](#)
- [Interview: Esports Program Creator Kyle Berger](#)
- [List of games, documentaries, and esports celebrities](#)
- [The Academy of Esports Podcast](#)
- [PlayVs Resources](#) and [Parents' Guide](#)
- Grant opportunities: [ByteSpeed](#) & [HSEL](#)



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Appendix

Esports Rationale Alignment for a District or School

Based on the district's mission, vision, values, and goals, detail how esports supports each component to show clear connections to the district's purpose for students through esports:

	District/School Language	Esports Alignment for Learners
Mission		
Vision		
Values		
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		
Goal 4		



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Esports Rationale Alignment at Hesperia Unified School District

Based on the district's or school's mission, vision, and goals, detail how esports supports each component to show clear connections to the district's purpose for students through esports. Here is one [example model](#). The following is another:

	District/School Language	Esports Alignment for Learners
Mission	<p>Canyon Ridge High School promotes opportunities for personal insight and growth, improved social skills, and academic achievements by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Powerful teaching in small classes by a caring staff in a safe environment ● Authentic connections to content, the ability to develop a voice in a conversation, and an investment in the Raven Community. ● Promote a healthy social and emotional learning environment. ● A means to graduate from high school and make a positive and productive future 	<p>ESports creates a positive social environment for students as scholar gamers to learn in a STEM program that is of interest to them. This helps scholar gamers to develop a voice for themselves in their chosen content area and to deepen their research of a STEM field that is ever changing and growing in addition to exploring other career opportunities. A formal esports program promotes a culture of professional behavior that is positive, constructive, and supportive of everyone. Digital citizenship skills are developed by scholar gamers that empower their future choices with careers, training, and colleges.</p>
Vision	<p>Canyon Ridge will take a Growth Mindset approach in order to be a catalyst to ignite passion for learning through social and academic growth. Canyon Ridge will inspire students to set goals and further their education so they can develop positive attitudes and habits to fulfill their ambitions and dreams and be a contributing member in society.</p>	<p>A formal esports program promotes a mindset for social and academic growth through competitions and collaborative game play for scholar gamers who share a common interest. Through formal structures scholar gamers gain extensive experiences with goal setting and planning for media production, skill development, and collaboration. Scholar gamers explore career opportunities for post secondary graduation. The typical scholar gamer will spend hours alone, or online at home playing. However, with an esports program, these same participants will be able to become a part of the school community through meeting others with common interests, face to face, and can interact in a positive manner noting the nuances of conversation without the ambiguity of text based chat.</p>
Vision	<p>Hesperia Unified School District is to establish a learning environment that inspires, challenges, and prepares our students and families with the passion and intellectual power to make positive life choices and become architects of their future in a democratic American society.</p>	<p>Esports is a perfect STEM vehicle for helping scholar gamers make positive life choices to affect a future that has an impact on student passion. There are various fields of study within esports that can produce a wide variety of educational and professional dividends ranging from college eligibility to career experiences and training.</p>
Goal 1	Academic: students are being prepared and	Esports programs challenge scholar gamers



	<p>challenged for higher education through the programs provided at CRHS. Students are challenged to grow beyond their comfort zones and engage in activities/programs that will better facilitate a future they can be proud of.</p>	<p>through analysis, problem solving, innovating, and collaborating through games, STEM, and career opportunities. Colleges provide degree pathways and scholarships for scholar gamers to research for a fit.</p>
Goal 2	<p>Skills based/vocational: students are being prepared and challenged for vocational studies that can be implemented after some college or straight out of high school through the programs provided at CRHS. Students are challenged to find a vocation that they are passionate about and to immerse themselves in the courses that will best prepare them for working in the field of their choice.</p>	<p>Esports has a very large range of vocational training including competitor, coach, human resource, marketing, tournament manager, caster, content creator, coder, and computer building.</p>
Goal 3	<p>Social: students are provided with a safe environment where opinions can be shared and expressed about their passions and ideas without fear of bullying or harassment for said ideas. Students are encouraged to speak their mind about the things they are passionate about and are directed to programs that may best suit these interests to help shape them for their future.</p>	<p>Esports programs focus on creating a positive and inclusive culture for all scholar gamers, including a focus on ISTE standards for digital citizenship. For a portion of the student population, esports is a fresh new gateway to becoming part of the school community as opposed to the perception of being an outsider. Esports allows students who would normally go home and play alone to come together as a group and share in their common interest without others chastising or bullying them for their choice/passion for such a hobby.</p>
Goal 4	<p>Lifelong Learning: CRHS is committed to producing students who are lifelong learners as the world at large is always continually changing. Students are taught how to find learning on their own, how to collect resources, and how to adapt to an ever changing world.</p>	<p>Esports changes almost monthly with continual updates, new software, new hardware, modifications that change games and competitions that make keeping up sometimes daunting. To remain competitive, scholar gamers study the next update and changes so as to improve. Being a lifelong learner is not only needed, but inherent to the esports community.</p>



Children's Internet Protection Act and related references

- [Children's Internet Protection Act \(CIPA\)](#)
 - Outlines regulations for student internet safety for eligible schools to qualify for discounted technological services (internet service/E-Rate funding).
 - Protection measures include filtering access to pictures of an “obscene nature; child pornography; content that could be considered harmful to minors (for computers to be accessed by minors).”
 - Outlines 2 CIPA certification requirements including monitoring online activities of minors and providing digital citizenship training for students according to the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

- [TITLE XVII--CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION](#), <http://ifea.net/cipa.pdf>
 - The full CIPA Bill verbiage.
 - The bill describes provisions/requirements to prevent minors from accessing obscene/sexual/sexually explicit/pornographic content on the internet utilizing school computers meant for minors to access. This ensures certain schools/libraries are eligible for E-Rate funding for the purchase/leasing of equipment and technological services/internet services at a discounted rate. Also see the previous CIPA link for a summary of requirements in layman's terms.

- [Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act Amendment \(PDF\)](#), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/protecting-children-21st-century-act-amendment>
 - Continued reference with CIPA to further detail connection to preceding communications acts including amendments to Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act and the Communications act of 1934.
 - Directs E-rate qualified schools to become CIPA certified in order to maintain discounted internet services.
 - The committee was cited on multiple notes to decline to detail specific procedures, curriculum or what constituted as “harmful to minors” indicating that a local authority should be responsible for those decisions.

- [Providing ESports Websites to K12 Students while navigating the Children's Internet Protection Act \(CIPA\) and other concerns: One District's Journey](#), prepared by: Jeremy Davis, Chief Technology Officer, Capistrano Unified School District And Chris Santos, Network Engineer, Capistrano Unified School District July 17th, 2018, <https://4.files.edl.io/729b/01/14/20/183843-e80576a2-6f6b-4e7a-9d0e-3f841b1f288e.pdf>
 - A brief description of the Capistrano School District navigating CIPA requirements in order to enable their high schools to join the county League of Legends high school league including web access, user access, and internet



service privileges and the challenges they presented to a school following CIPA guidelines.

- [Sample Gaming Permission Release Forms](#)

Enclosed are some examples of permission forms used in some schools that required parent consent for students to participate. Any form used, modified, or created must go through the district and school procedures to ensure compliance with governmental laws and guidelines.

