Building an Esports Program for a K-12 Environment

https://tinyurl.com/esportsguide

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References

- [NASEF](#)
- [2020 Guide to K-12 Esports](#)
- [British Esports: Parents' Guide](#)
- [National Association of Esports Coaches and Directors](#)
- [List of games, documentaries, and esports celebrities](#)
- [PlayVs Resources](#)

Establishing an Esports Program Considerations

Considerations	Descriptions
Esports options	Will we start a school team, a club team, or a recreational club? ● School Team Sanctioned by the school or district as an official sport. Has access to all related resources and privileges provided to sports teams. Practices are held by a coach who is hired by the district, and matches are held by the school, and elsewhere. Transportation is provided by the school based on school and district guidelines. ● Club Team Competes just like a school team. However may not have access to related resources and privileges. Recognition by the school to represent in leagues and tournaments is dependent on the relationship and decisions by the site based leadership at the respective building. Practices are held by a coach who may be hired or a volunteer by the district or school. Matches are held at the school and elsewhere. Transportation might be provided by the school or be the responsibility of the club based on school and district guidelines. ● Recreational Club Participation is mostly internally, and informal competitions externally. Does not officially represent the school when competing. Typically meets once a week to build positive relationships through gaming. Any entry fees and travel is usually assumed by the club, depending on school and district guidelines. Which sport(s) will be chosen to field a team? Currently in Meta ● League of Legends: 5v5 Capture the Flag style play. Fantasy combat with cartoon/anime style champions. ● Smite: 5v5 Arena or Capture the Flag style play. Fantasy combat with mythology-based characters. ● Rocket League: 3v3 soccer played with cars. ● Overwatch: 6v6 team combat with scifi weapons, including guns. ● Super Smash Brothers: 1v1 fighting combat. What will the community (school staff and families) support and what will they not support? ● Survey stakeholders about their preferences regarding game

	options, violence levels, understanding of esports in general and related opportunities (ie. college scholarships & jobs) and other questions or concerns. ○ Students ○ Parents ○ Staff Potential Concerns for Consideration First Person Shooters (FPS) Use of guns in realistic combat. Violence level: Review ESRB description for games 1. Graphic: body parts, realistic violence, bleeding out 2. Blood: blood splatter from being hit. 3. No visible wounds: hits do not show realistic violence. Just loss of hit points/life bar.
Organization	Organization Structures Athletic Team or Club Team Based on one or more chosen esports, students go through a tryout for limited spots on the roster. A suggested roster amount is twice the number of starters, plus 2-3. For example, League of Legends: 5 starters means 12-13 players. This allows for full team scrimmages, plus coverage for absences. A head coach and possibly assistants (students/staff) support the team during practices and competitions. ● One assistant (student or staff) is responsible for live production of all matches. At minimum, this would be to stream and record games using OBS software in connection with Twitch (preferred) or Youtube. ● The team should sign a code of conduct contract for how to treat others online and in person to help support their development as digital citizens. Recreation Club Welcomes all students interested in experiencing and learning more about esports. Attendees want to play and have fun. ● Establish Norms for Professional Behavior Digital citizenship is an important practice within online gaming and treatment of individuals, especially girls. Have students establish the norms for professional behavior so that they have buy-in and hold each other accountable. This is one of the first activities that the club should do. Optionally, also include a code of conduct contract that students sign to show their agreement to expectations for being supportive

and positive.
- Provide structured and unstructured time.
  - Structured Time
    These are opportunities for students to learn about game strategies, mechanics, careers, digital citizenship skills, and/or production skills. These sessions are not lectures, although a portion of time can be used for direct instruction. Include time for students to experience and practice the skills topic and possibly set goals for their unstructured time. Topics might include: Countering Toxic Game Culture, Girls in Esports, Making the best champion build, tips for casting a game.
  - Unstructured Time
    During this time, students can explore and play approved esports that they are interested in or practice skills to improve. Connect this time with goal setting, so that students have a focus that they are striving for.They may want to work on content creation such as voice over for casting a recorded game or creating a highlight reel for a player or team. Have them report back periodically about their progress and/or possible needs for support. Having goal-setting keeps this student-driven time purposeful.
- Setup and run internal tournaments and/or leagues
  Include students in planning and running a tournament or league (intramural) for the club members to participate in. Competition can range from playing the matches to best game casting, or unique highlight reel development.

Course
Launch the elective esports course for students to take. Students learn about different aspects of esports from the competitive side to production, business, and digital citizenship. This course is best run in combination with an esports team or club.

Competition Options
- Esports League
  The school joins a league to compete with other schools in the region or across the country. The competitive season may be 5-8 weeks each semester, plus playoffs.
- Tournaments
  Like leagues, tournaments enable competition over 1-2 days where individuals or teams compete through brackets.
- Intramurals
  Schools set up internal leagues and/or tournaments for students to compete inside the building or district. This option enables more students to compete. Some rules would need to be added that limits the number of varsity players on any such team for balance.

Equipment	What are the hardware needs for an esports setup?
	
	● Desktop configuration that supports simultaneous video streaming and recording, video editing and publication, graphics card intensive work for producing a live esports event.
	● Desktop or laptop configuration that supports smooth play of the esports games chosen for competitions.
	● Enough devices (desktops and/or laptops) to field a team for competition and practice. For example:
	    ○ Competition: 6 desktops for competing and live digital production of the matches (the 6th desktop).
	    ○ Practice: 10-15 Laptops so that teams can scrimmage and practice skills in the practice tool and/or solo queue.

Technical Setup	What system will be created to enable access to the chosen online games, which are traditionally blocked by the school's filter system? 1. Create a separate vlan on a wired (preferred) network. 2. Then programmed 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 has 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.
References	● [Esports for Schools](#) ● [Viewership of Esports](#) (by Dell Technologies) ● [Growth of Collegiate Esports](#) (by Dell Technologies) ● [Why Esports Matters in K-12](#)

Checklist for Establishing a competitive team

- School Team
- Club Team

Esports Gaming Decision

- Establish criteria for choosing an esport.
    - Consider using School Code of Conduct as a guide
    - Review ESRB description for games
    - Watch or play demos of games
- Include feedback from key stakeholders (students, parents, community, and staff)
    - Focus groups and/or standing committee with representation
    - Surveys
- Check game availability on League Associations.

League Association

- Process for setting up matches
- Equity of unlocking all champions
- Unlocking level cap for competitive play
- Fee + Commitment Expectations (1yr, 2yrs, or more)
- Reputation and experience
- Examples of league organizations: NASEF, HSEL & PlayVS

Educate Families and Community

- Debunk misconceptions
- Share opportunities in Colleges and Career opportunities
- Feedback about the game options based on filtering criteria (violence levels and mature content)
- Explain the tryout process

Tryouts process

- Consider solo queue ranking
- Combo of vets and rookies (newbies)
- Digital Footprint: Professional vs Toxic Resume
- Academic eligibility
- Conflicts with other school groups commitments
- Contract agreement to commit time for all related esport events

Streaming Production

- Stream matches on Twitch or Youtube
- Record and upload vods on Youtube
- Editing experiences/expertise for highlight videos
- Sportscasters of the live matches
- Leverage in-district expertise to mentor student producers

Technical set up

1. Create a separate vlan on a wired (preferred) network.
2. Then programmed 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 has 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.

Equipment Needs (Suggestions)

- 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): Provides enough stations for full 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 is highly recommended.

- Consoles, ie. Switch (1): The number of consoles will depend on the chosen esport. For example, Super Smash Brothers is a 1 v 1 match that can be run with two players on one Switch console.

Checklist for Establishing a competitive team

([Click here to create a copy](#))
For each "Consideration" in the left column, write responses in the right column. Where indicated, use the bullet points as a guide for fleshing out your plan for addressing the need.

School or District:

Planners: Name	Email Address

Consideration	Decision - with details as needed.
1. Choose Team Format ● School Team - Formal representative of the school. ● Club Team - Informal representative of the school.	Which team format will you build? Consider the pros and cons for each. Explain the approval process to get permission for the team. School Team

2. Esports Gaming Decision: Choose the Esport
● Establish criteria for choosing an esport.
  ○ Consider using School Code of Conduct as a guide
  ○ Review ESRB description for games
  ○ Watch or play demos of games
● Include feedback from key stakeholders
  ○ Focus groups and/or standing committee
  ○ Surveys
● Check game availability on League Associations.
● Test game on existing equipment
	List the choice(s) and explain what factored in the selection using the guidelines on the left.

League Association (ie. NASEF, HSEL & PlayVS) ● Process for setting up matches ● Equity of game access (ie. unlocking all champions) ● Unlocking level cap for competitive play ● Fee + Commitment Expectations (1yr, 2yrs, or more) ● Access to member schools in and outside local region ● Requirements for having an adult as a sponsor or coach	Choose an association and explain the factors supporting the selection.

Equipment Needs (Suggestions) ● 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 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 is highly recommended. ● Consoles, ie. Switch (1): The number of consoles will depend on the chosen esport. For example, Super Smash Brothers is a 1 v 1 match that can be run with two players on one Switch console.	List out your equipment needs to support an esport team's practices, matches, and live streaming of games. Factor need for one computer having capability to spectate, live stream, and record matches.
Streaming Production ● Stream matches on Twitch or Youtube using OBS ● Record and upload vods 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	Review each bullet and list how each will be addressed or not addressed. Recommended minimum focus is implementing the first and second bullets.
Educate Families and Community ● Debunk misconceptions ● Share opportunities in Colleges and Career opportunities	Explain how you will address each bullet. For each, what are the key message points to be address. Strategically, frame esports relationship to practices with traditional sports.

● Feedback about the game options based on filtering criteria (violence levels and mature content) ● Explain the tryout process	
Tryouts process ● Consider solo queue ranking ● Combo of vets and rookies (newbies) ● Digital Footprint: Professional vs Toxic Resume ● Academic eligibility ● Conflicts with other school groups commitments ● Contract agreement to commit time for all related esport events	Review the suggested list to build your tryout process. List and describe how you will address the chosen bullet points.
Technical set up 1. Create a separate vlan on a wired (preferred) network. 2. Then programmed 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 has 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.	Review each item in this list. List which ones can be easily done. For the remainder, explain the possible obstacles, including at least one possible solution.