Esports in Middle, High & Higher Ed is on the Rise

Stats, Data & Benefits of Esports
Steps to Launching an Esports Program

Excerpts provided via Extreme Networks White Paper entitled, "Riding the Tidal Wave of Esports in Schools". 2019

Esports, or competitive online video gaming, is experiencing rapid growth in awareness, participation, and revenue. In 2016, seven colleges had Esports teams; today, more than 130 colleges have Esports programs.

Nine states recognize video gaming as a varsity sport: Alabama, Connecticur, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia. And that number is expected to increase.

Today 20% of schools have implemented an esports program and another 50$ are considering one.

According to the National Association of Collegiate Esports, 130 colleges now offer Esports scholarships, to the tune of $16 million being given away annually.

Just as with the football or volleyball team, Esports programs require tryouts, daily practice sessions, team captains, and solid academic standing.

Teamwork and strategy are essential to success. Students must learn all the same skills as they would on the athletic field: time management, how to balance academics and gaming, good sportsmanship, and how to cooperate to advance the team's goals. And the games do require a level of physical prowess, albeit not the same type as would be needed by a basketball or hockey player: Students' eyes ad hands are engaged constantly in a high-speed, precise dance of coordination that might rival the skills of the best airline pilot.

Just as in athletics, student teams often have many components. "I have online streamers, game analysts, a student who handles tech support, and students who handle marketing, graphics, and promotion," says Kyle Berger, chief technology officer (CTO) of Grapevine Colleyville Independent School District in Grapevine, Texas. "The athletes are only one part of the program."

What are the Greatest Benefits of Your Esports Program?

Esports programs provide a myriad of benefits for schools, including improving student engagement and retention, developing new courses and career opportunities, preparing students for future careers, and helping students develop soft skills.

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✓ Diversifies extracurricular activities	85%	
✓ Improves the overall campus experience	56%	
✓ Fosters interest in STEM	44%	
✓ Helps with student recruiting	38%	
✓ Provides a marketing opportunity	24%	
✓ Drives student retention	21%	
✓ Supplements curriculum	18%	

Esports is inspiring students to explore new careers in game design and development, professional gaming, and Esports management. A blog post by Indeed reported that Esports job postings have increased by 57 percent since 2015.

Contact PowerUpEDU to discuss bringing Esports to your School or District!

Bringing on an Esports team improves communication, teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership, and conflict-resolution skills.

Esports draws out kids who might be inclined toward social isolation. Instead of gaming away in solitary confinement, these students can be welcomed into a community and become part of a team.

Perhaps most important, Esports is inclusive. Unlike with traditional sports, Esports students are not defined by their physical attributes or appearance. Males and females can effectively compete on the same virtual playing fields, and students with disabilities that might prevent them from engaging in traditional sports can be superstars at their game.

How to Kick Off an Esports Program

Launching an Esports program requires a few key elements:

- A teacher/faculty member or administrator who is willing to be a champion and/or coach for the program
- Recruitment of students
- A space for the gamers to practice and play
- Potential infrastructure enhancements, including network upgrades, gaming PCs, and additional bandwidth
- Choosing a game

Equally important is providing a place to practice and compete. Many schools are creating dedicated gaming areas outfitted with advanced gaming tools and latest technology, but the investment doesn't have to be huge.

You'll want the gamers to be comfortable. Optimize their experience with the proper lighting (indirect reduces eye strain) and ergonomic chairs.

Schools can often use their existing hardware for an Esports program. Your school's existing computer lab might be enough – at least at first.