

# ESPORTS IN K12

## A "Getting Started" Checklist

Esports is proving to be a game changer for students, schools, and the broader global community. K12 schools looking to start their own program, however, are struggling with where to begin. That's where this checklist can help—providing you with what you need to know to start and maintain a successful esports program

### Esports in K12: A passing fad or here to stay?

THE NUMBERS WOULD INDICATE IT'S HERE TO STAY.

**1200+**

high schools belong to the High School Esports League (HSEL), **up from just 200** a year ago.<sup>1</sup>

**557M**

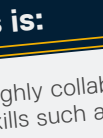
**projected total viewership for esports<sup>2</sup> by 2021.** That's more viewers than every other U.S. professional sports league.<sup>2</sup>

**\$1B**

**esports industry<sup>3</sup> with a 27% CAGR<sup>4</sup>** and is part of a bigger \$200 billion dollar gaming industry.<sup>3</sup>

### IT'S MORE THAN JUST A GAME. ESPORTS IS DRIVING STUDENT SUCCESS.

Esports extends to a large majority of the student population.



**97%**

of Teens Play Video Games<sup>5</sup>

Esports helps to break down barriers among diverse student groups and involves students who might not otherwise join a team sport.

Esports is leading students to a wide range of career pathways, including:

S.T.E.A.M. (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), finance, marketing, graphic design, programming, health and wellness, etc.

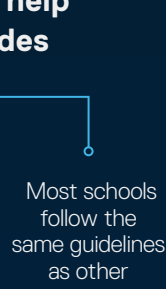
Players are being awarded sizable college scholarships and cash prizes.

**200+**



**200+ colleges and universities** offer partial or full-ride scholarships. TESPA, a collegiate league, has awarded students more than **\$3 million** in tournament winnings since its inception in 2013.<sup>6</sup>

There are academic advantages to esports.



#### Esports is:

- ✓ Highly collaborative—it helps to develop needed skills such as critical thinking and teamwork
- ✓ Inclusive with opportunities that extend to non-players involved in areas such as programming, shoutcasting, and management
- ✓ Technology-rich, giving students access to state-of-the-art technological tools and skills
- ✓ Integrated with the academic curriculum like game design theory, programming, etc.
- ✓ An opportunity to build understanding and practice behaviors that support digital citizenship

#### Esports can help improve grades

**A+**

It motivates kids to keep up their grades in order to be eligible to participate.<sup>7</sup>

**31%**

of students involved in extracurricular activities **maintained a 3.0 or higher GPA**, compared to just 11% of those who had no extracurricular involvement.<sup>8,9</sup>

Most schools follow the same guidelines as other extracurricular activities, such as the need to maintain a minimum GPA.

**70% of students involved in our program had no other involvement on campus, including 10% with athletics. This just amplified the reasons of why we're doing this.**

Kyle Berger, Chief Technology Officer, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD

### Where to begin: Start the conversation

#### WITH STUDENTS

- ✓ Begin here, where interest is likely high
- ✓ Consider surveying the student population to gauge interest
- ✓ More often than not, students are driving adoption
- ✓ Don't underestimate student interest

#### WITH THE COMMUNITY

- ✓ District leaders, school board members, parents, and other community leaders
- ✓ Address potential skepticism and concerns by educating stakeholders of the broad-ranging benefits and career pathway opportunities of esports
- ✓ Incorporate their feedback to help ensure long-term program success

#### WITH COLLEAGUES

- ✓ Administrators will need to approve the program—you'll need to address their specific concerns and requirements
- ✓ Teachers help align the program with the academic curriculum and student needs
- ✓ Athletic director (If your esports program will align with your broader athletics program)

#### INDUSTRY LEADERS

- ✓ Technology brands like Dell Technologies
- ✓ Gaming and esports production companies like Skillshot Media, Hi-Rez Studios, Riot Games, and Blizzard Entertainment

#### SCHOOLS WITH ESPORTS PROGRAMS

- ✓ Includes other K-12 schools and local higher education institutions
- ✓ Understand first-hand what kind of lessons need to be learned and to build off their successes

#### ESPORTS LEAGUES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ A direct source of knowledge in helping to grow your program and ensure you align with their policies and practices
- ✓ Here are just some leagues that you can reach out to:<sup>\*</sup>
  - EG Federation
  - PlayVS
  - National Federation of State High Schools Associations
  - EHSLS

#### IT

- ✓ Understand technical requirements
- ✓ Establish a baseline and set a goal of what's needed to get started
- ✓ Understand the technical requirements, including what types of gaming stations, network, infrastructure and supporting technology might be needed

**When we started our esports program, I anticipated having 5 or 6 interested students. I was surprised when 122 students showed up for the first session.**

Omar Ali, Instructor of Video Game Development, Northeast High School, Philadelphia

*\*This is a rapidly evolving area, and we recommend doing your own research to identify the correct league appropriate for your school.*

### Map out a strategy

#### Identify your academic goals

**What new academic areas of study and research will be added as part of the program?**

For example, game design theory

**What career and technical education (CTE) pathways will be associated with the program?**

S.T.E.A.M., marketing, finance, programming, graphic design, etc.

**How will you measure success?**

Consider monitoring academic performance to help grow your program

Consider requirements to participate: minimum GPA, attendance, behavioral standards, etc.

**How do you see the program impacting other aspects of learning?**

For example, campus culture, community, digital citizenship, and student success

#### Dell Technologies offers resources, developed in collaboration with education and esports industry experts, to help jump-start K12 esports programs:

- Esports Learning Guide for Teachers & Coaches
- Esports Professional Learning
- Esports Coaching Clinic
- Esports Getting Started Playbook

### Understand the logistics

1. **Will your program exist within athletics, intramural sports, computer programming, or other areas?**
2. **What games will you play?** Consider the genre, type of game, and ESRB rating  
**Popular games include:**
  - SMITE and League of Legends (Multiplayer)
  - Starcraft (Real Time Strategy)
  - Smash Brothers and Street Fighter (Sports and Fighting)
  - Overwatch, Hearthstone, Tetris (Miscellaneous)
3. **What leagues will you be involved with?**
4. **How many students will you accept into the program?**
  - Including number of players and those that play a supporting role
5. **Who will be involved?**
  - Senior-level manager to lead planning and execution (potential administrator)
  - Coaching staff (faculty or retired esports gamers)
  - Program supervisor to oversee competitive and recreational play
  - Administrative support for personnel, financial, and facilities management
  - Faculty for curriculum development

**Tip:** Think about leveraging talented student interns to fill notable roles
6. **How long will the program run?**
  - Consider aligning with your athletic program calendar.
7. **What are your policies and rules of engagement?**
  - Comply with state and federal guidelines: The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires schools to prevent students from accessing inappropriate content
  - Consider adopting your school's policies for sanctioned activities
  - Identify how you'll promote good user behavior, digital citizenship, and sportsmanship
8. **Will you have local tournaments and how do you leverage prizes/awards?**
  - Cash prizes and other awards remain effective ways to quickly build interest and discover talent
  - Hosting tournaments or events are good ways to bring in new revenue streams for your school

### Identify your technology goals

#### Gaming stations

- ✓ Options range from existing laptops to dedicating gaming hardware and peripherals (keyboard, mice, headsets, etc)
- ✓ Specs are dictated by the type of game, the number of players, and the type of play (club or competitive)
- ✓ Check with gaming manufacturers for recommendations

#### A fast, reliable network

- ✓ **Don't go wireless!**
- ✓ Minimize the impact of network latency with 100Mbps+ of Internet access to each gaming station

#### End-to-end security

#### For more advanced programs, consider adding

**Workstations** for supporting additional activities like production, video editing and game design.

**Storage** for broadcasting, management for analytics, as well as supporting arena or audience viewer experiences, and recording player statistics.

### Create a budget

It's easy to slowly scale as your program grows. Consider leveraging existing equipment and resources, like your computer lab when making **your financial plan**, and take into account these three areas:

#### 1 Faculty and administration

- ✓ Coaches and coaching staff
- ✓ Program supervisor and potential supporting staff, these may separate for both competitive and recreational play
- ✓ Administrative support for personnel, fiscal resource management, and facility management
- ✓ Support for curriculum development and research opportunities associated with esports and game design

#### Player equipment and miscellaneous

- ✓ School-branded jersey and other merchandise (like backpacks)
- ✓ Marketing/logo design
- ✓ Power strips
- ✓ Room decor
- ✓ Streaming webcams
- ✓ Keyboards
- ✓ Mice/mousepads
- ✓ Headsets
- ✓ Security locks
- ✓ In-house events
- ✓ Food/travel
- ✓ Decals

#### 2 Technology

- ✓ Gaming stations
- ✓ Storage
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Video editing and data analytics software/hardware

#### 3

**Tip:** You can help fund your esports program with CTE funding by aligning your program with career pathways like coding and graphic design.

### Get buy-in

Interest may start with the students, but buy-in needs to also come from administration, school board and district leaders, parents, and faculty.

**Build your case** (reference stats in this infographic)

**Start small, grow as you go**

**Refine, cross-pollinate, and extend out**

**Establish partnerships with industry leaders** like Dell Technologies

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