

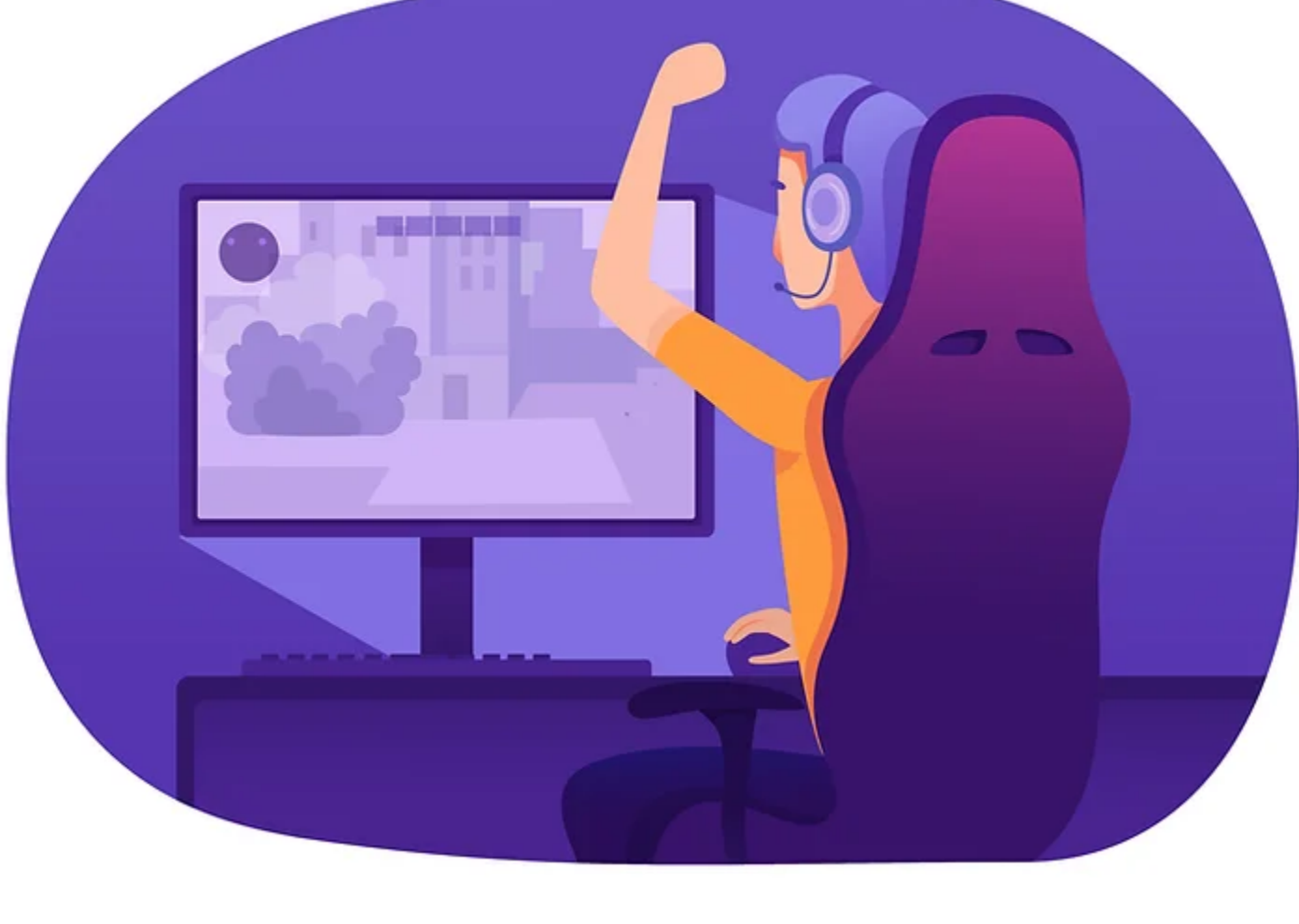
Benefits of Esports in schools in 2022

Online video game competitions, known as Esports, have evolved into a wonderful, healthy arena for K-12 and college educators to bring new game-based learning opportunities to students.

Schools across the globe are creating full-blown Esports programs because administrators and teachers have recognized the many benefits of Esports in schools. According to EdTech Magazine in 2021, "The North America Scholastic Esports Federation supports nearly 2,000 high school clubs across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico." And there are over 100 college teams as well.

So what are the benefits of Esports in schools, and are they really worth the hype?

As eLearning specialists, we believe they are. Let's review the latest ways that Esports programs are giving students a leg up, and benefiting their schools as well.



Benefits of Esports in schools in 2022

What is Esports in schools?

Esports, short for "electronic sports," is a form of competition based on video gaming, usually online video games. The phenomenon started years ago outside of the classroom, but since Esports has grown into an international industry, Esports programs have been popping up in schools worldwide.

In schools, Esports programs take on a somewhat different look than they do in the outside world, but they are generally played in the same way. There's just a greater focus on maximizing the educational benefits of Esports for all of the students involved.

Esports programs in K-12 schools and colleges are not simply after-school clubs with a few students sitting around playing Call of Duty.

They are complete sports programs:

- Played by dedicated teams with jerseys, practices, etc.
- Managed by Esports gaming coaches/teachers
- Equipped with spirited and robust gaming arenas
- Competitions watched by online and in-person audiences
- Snack/beverage sales at live competition events
- Properly funded with traditional and modern school fundraisers

Like a football or cheer program, Esports programs are treated the same.

So pump up your school spirit, and read on to learn more about the great benefits of Esports in schools today.

What are the benefits of Esports in schools?

Esports programs benefit both students and their schools in several ways.

Benefits of Esports for students

By bringing modern students' passion for video gaming into their education, schools are creating a fun, low-risk way to engage students and teach them practical skills.

The top benefits that Esports programs bring to students include:

- **Exposing students to different career paths**

The Esports field is made up of many different professionals needed to keep competitions running smoothly, manage teams, maintain equipment, design team logos, and do other related jobs. When Esports are brought into the school, students get to learn about these career options.

Students who enjoy public speaking, for example, might practice shoutcasting for their school's team. The shoutcaster narrates what is going on with a team's gaming performance, like a traditional sportscaster.

- **Introducing Esports career opportunities and scholarships**

Your school's gaming team members will be able to enter the world of professional Esports if they get good enough. That comes with scholarships and more.

According to Next College Student Athlete, the world's largest college athletic recruiting network, "175 colleges and universities are members of the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) and offer officially recognized varsity esports programs. These schools have coaches and offer partial or full-ride athletic scholarships."

- **Gamifying valuable career skills and life skills**

Building on our discussion of exposing students to new careers, let's talk about the specific skills Esports teaches in a game-based learning environment.

- Technology/CTE:** Short for "career technology education," CTE is ever-increasing in importance. By letting students take the reins in each aspect of your school's Esports program, including everything from maintaining the gaming computers to playing with the equipment itself, your school can expand its CTE offerings.
- Critical thinking & math:** The National Education Association says that "the specific games sanctioned for esports vary by state, but typically include well-known titles like League of Legends, Overwatch, Super Smash Brothers, and Fortnite." These games are known for demanding high-level thinking and mathematical fortitude to win.
- Team-building:** Video gaming on your own is one thing, and doing it as a team is a whole different ballgame. Esports teammates have to communicate with one another during matches to coordinate attacks against enemies, congratulate each other for great moves, and more.
- Hand-eye coordination:** Students who haven't played many physical sports or who otherwise struggle with basic coordination can benefit from video gaming. Low-income students in particular often miss out on the cutting-edge gaming opportunities that students with higher incomes have. Giving them access to video games at school could be the difference they need in hand-eye coordination skills.

- **Reaching marginalized students & fostering social engagement**

A 2022 article by the District Administration shared that "7% of the students gaming were from the LGBTQ community...Esports is capturing a marginalized, high-risk community, and we are helping them belong to something. It crosses a lot of social-economic boundaries."

Benefits of esports for schools

K-12 schools and colleges that implement Esports programs can benefit in these ways too:

- **Higher student engagement**

The High School Esports League says that "students who join esports programs have better attendance (+10%) and earn better grades (GPA +1.7)."

- **College program exposure and sponsorship revenues**

Esports is a billion-dollar industry with millions of regular viewers, and many thousands of dollars being poured into Esports ads and sponsorships. If your school has a popular Esports team, you may be able to gain prominence and raise money through partnerships with sponsoring brands.

Other ways to offer game-based learning to students

Game-based learning, or gamification, is at the core of Esports in education, and it sums up the benefits of Esports in schools. Game-based learning offers students a fun, engaging way to learn new concepts, receive digital feedback on their progress, and feel rewarded for their advancements.

Esports is only one way to gamify your students' learning experience. For more ideas about how to implement effective, game-based learning, check out this blog we wrote on gamification in the virtual classroom.

Whether your students enjoy Esports or any other gamified learning experience, these virtual experiences are the way of the future!