

Supporting Esports in Schools



The Potsdam Esports Club tabling at an event

With the goal of constructing ground-up resources for educators new to Esports, I spent over a year gathering information on esports, videogames, and the industry. I attended the DreamHack conference and educator’s panel in Atlanta, interviewed college sports coaches and collegiate esports leaders, and drew on my own experiences as a collegiate athlete and President of the Potsdam Esports club.



The new esports lab at SUNY Potsdam, in use

Special Thanks

Mentor Tony Betrus, the Potsdam Esports Club
Coach Christopher Bernard, Coach Chris Carlini, AD Mark Misiak, Ryan Calhoun, Zachary Siegel
Game Specialists Colin Michaud, Manny Tejeda, Kenny Gonzalez

Introduction

- Esports facilitates connection. At SUNY Potsdam, I have seen uninvolved students find a safe haven and make friendships
- Esports bridges the gap between videogames and athletics, and creates a sense of community
- When I realized the impact esports can have on school communities, I knew it needed more support
- Many of the educators tasked with starting programs don’t know enough about it, and struggle to support their students
- With his Tedx talk ‘Esports is Real Sports,’ Dr. Tony Betrus was able to get me started with information on esports in school settings and support my research

Related literature

Betrus, T. (2019, August 23). Esports is Real Sports. YouTube.



Objective

I wanted to create a collection of resources and information that can support educators and their programs from the ground-up, without expecting a basis of knowledge.



The new esports lab at SUNY Potsdam, while under construction

Athlete’s Perspective

I’m new to esports myself, and found that many of my athletic skills transferred over. The similarity between the two became one of the lenses for my project.

Methods

- Relied on Esports Club history and involvement for introductory information
- Attended Dreamhack Conference and Educator’s Panels in Atlanta, GA
- Interviewed collegiate sports coaches and esports leaders
- Connected with game-specialists to provide information about common games
- Summarized information into an educator-friendly resource (Website)
- Created a platform for educators to connect (via Discord)
- Contacted schools repeatedly to establish connection and understand needs
- Established connections between programs and shared resources



Problems

- Schools weren’t worried about student health, which was initially a main point of the project
- Students were being excluded from events because they weren’t considered ‘actual’ athletes
- Unfamiliar games
- Schools didn’t have contact with each other/know about other programs
- Dead-ends trying to get schools to communicate

Solutions

- Provided information on health and further resources, but not on going in-depth
- Focused on connecting Esports and ‘Real’ Sports
- Consulted game-specialists
- Developed a Discord server to facilitate communication
- Focused on getting schools to connect with each other

Results

- At the end of my project, trying to talk to schools proved difficult
- Educators I have talked to are thankful for the ground-up perspective and support
- More schools are creating programs
- There are a leagues now, but navigation can be difficult. Those new to the field struggle, but are eager to arrange matches with other programs
- I plan to continue facilitating connection between schools