Chapter 3
Urban Education Esports for Equity and Access:
A Case Study

Alexander K. Gibson

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4959-3276
William Penn Senior High School, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter dives into the real-world experiences that one educator experienced in his 14-year career teaching and mentoring students. The chapter explores using video games to connect and educate students as well as the use of varsity esports programs to drive student interactions during extracurricular activities. Through the chapter, the author will progress from the start of his career to finding new affiliations to help build a successful esports program within a high school setting. The anecdotal experiences will serve as a case study to help other educators find resources and develop a pathway to create esports opportunities in their own schools.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ESPORTS AND GAMING

Perceptions on video games have been evolving since the day they were conceived, and much like the radio was contributing to the downfall of society in the 1920s, TV was the downfall in the 1940s, now video games are perceived as one of the contributing factors to the downfall of society. The American Psychological Association (APA) has released several iterations of their account on the effects violent video games play on students' mental health, and most say that extensive long periods of time in gameplay of violent video games leads to aggression in youth (APA Council of Representatives, 2015). Although violence is within some video games, not all games are created with that in mind. Some are team based cooperative games, working to build critical thinking, fine motor, and communication skills (Baniqued et. al, 2014). Video games and their use with students is a widely discussed topic, and the $140 billion industry is projected to increase it is worth over the next few years, which also has an ever-

growing industry in the competitive playing field called, esports (Sebastian & Florian, 2021). This is a growing career industry that all students should be aware of, especially the students in urban school settings (Taylor, 2012).

Video games are not always violent, and using games that the industry has promoted, can allow for students to build a community with-in their building. Some research shows the importance of games and their ability to increase our brain plasticity through the play done in video games (Hodent, 2021). Others have found "purposeful play builds self-confidence and real-world problem-solving skills" (Mc-Gonigal, 2012). With the work that the North American Scholastic Esports Federation has done the past four years, there are opportunities to use esports and the ecosystem around the events to promote real career and technical skill learning (NASEF, 2021; Wood 2021). Students who are not involved in school events in one way, or another can find purpose in the esports realm, especially if there is a club within the school. Students who engage in at least one extracurricular are more successful in school, and the graduation rate of schools who engage students after school are shown to increase by 15-17% (Smith, 2004; Frederick & Simpkins, 2011; Delany & Cheung, 2020).

INCLUDING GAMES AND ESPORTS INTO URBAN CLASSROOMS

After school activities that involve video games is not a new concept, many teachers have been successful in running extracurricular activities that engage students, increase digital literacy tools, and allow for social interactions (Steinkuehler & King 2009). The research recently also shows that using gaming and esports can help students develop critical communication skills while in an afterschool program (Neilson & Hanghøj 2019; Rothwell & Shaffer 2019). As much as this is important for schools in suburban and rural areas, it is just as important for schools in urban areas to get involved. In "The Esports Education Playbook: Empowering Every Learner Through Inclusive Gaming" Bradford Harris, lead trainer for digital learning at Aldine Independent School District in Houston, states, "I am really big on making sure I expose as many black and brown children to esports as possible because it's not being seen. That is the reason I jumped into it. So, every time I go somewhere, I start asking the hard questions" (Aviles, Isaacs, Lion-Bailey & Lubinsky, p.3, 2021; Gray 2020).

THE EARLY YEARS

Mr. Gibson's Narrative

"Finding a way to incorporate video games into the curriculum became a very important personal journey of professional development for me. As a recent college graduate who started teaching at William Penn Senior High School in the fall of 2007, it was a series of many firsts. It was the first job out of college. With no clue of what to expect in a bigger city school or how it may vary from any other school I could have walked into. During the first year of teaching, I was assigned to teach Algebra I to freshmen. The first year is always tough for every new teacher. We spend time figuring out our teaching styles and, in many cases, professional assistance is not readily available or only offered for a short time. Starting my first-year teaching in an Urban District challenged me to adapt and evolve thought processes more than anything else. The teacher across the hall, Mr. Eric Shipe, was an avid gamer and an instant, last-

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/urban-education-esports-for-equity-and-access/285080

Related Content

Gamification Meets Mobile Learning: Soft-Skills Enhancement
Affah Mohd Apandi (2022). *Research Anthology on Developments in Gamification and Game-Based Learning (pp. 1280-1299).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/gamification-meets-mobile-learning/293704

Game-Informed Cooperative Assessments and Socially Responsible Learning in Public School Math Classes
Sandra Schamroth Abrams (2021). *Esports Research and Its Integration in Education (pp. 168-184).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/game-informed-cooperative-assessments-and-socially-responsible-learning-in-public-school-math-classes/285089

Effectiveness of Game-Based Learning as a Pedagogy Among the MBA Students
Karthigai Prakasam Chellaswamy, Nagarjuna Gururaj Rao, Sharon Varghese, Georgy P. Kurien, Sreedhara Ramanand Anand Shankar Raja Manivannan (2022). *Handbook of Research on Acquiring 21st Century Literacy Skills Through Game-Based Learning (pp. 122-137).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/effectiveness-of-game-based-learning-as-a-pedagogy-among-the-mba-students/294922

Design and Implementation of an Escape Room About the Discovery of the Periodic Table
Pablo Rosales, Lidia Ruiz Díaz, Andrés R. Tejedor, María M. Condeand Jorge Ramirez (2022). *Handbook of Research on Using Disruptive Methodologies and Game-Based Learning to Foster Transversal Skills (pp. 397-422).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/design-and-implementation-of-an-escape-room-about-the-discovery-of-the-periodic-table/295650

Math Teacher Perceptions About Gamification Strategies: An Exploratory Study in the Spanish Context
Francisco Javier Palacios-Hidalgo (2022). *Handbook of Research on International Approaches and Practices for Gamifying Mathematics (pp. 326-353).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/math-teacher-perceptions-about-gamification-strategies/304161