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Let's talk about gaming in education! Bet you didn't see that one coming. If you did, it's likely because you've seen the latest research trends showing the potential positive impacts of gaming and the growing list of gaming jobs and eSports career paths.

Or perhaps you've noticed the explosive growth of eSports in education since the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) began recognizing eSports as an official sport in 2018. In 2021, the National Education Association (NEA) reported that since that time, roughly 8,600 schools had developed an eSports team. Since knowing things is kind of important to schools, it's fair to assume there's something convincing educators that eSports has a place in education.

Research on Cognitive Benefits from Gaming

It may seem like all fun and games, but eSports growth has been aided by growing research showing benefits to cognitive development for students. Even beyond gaming, these studies are crucial to providing parents more information on how to effectively allocate screen time. In the study linked above, when comparing three types of screen time—*watching* TV or online videos, *socializing* over social media, text, or video chat, and *gaming*—it was found that "gaming positively impacted the amount of change in intelligence so that children who played more video games at 9–10 years showed the most gains in intelligence two years later."

Dr. Constance Steinkuehler, Professor of Informatics at UC-Irvine, describes it as "turning screen time into activity time."

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Esports Career Paths & Jobs in Gaming

The general cognitive benefits of gaming in education are impressive, but perhaps more so is the variety of career opportunities connected to the eSports industry. This can include career paths within the gaming industry, which can be anything from player to analyst to coach. And don't forget shoutcasters!

In addition, eSports in education opens numerous career pathways resulting from STEM and STEAM skills developed by event participants. Dr. Steinkuehler points out that gaming is a cerebral, smart activity that includes high-end theory crafting and data science. It applies advanced STEM concepts that require discipline, teamwork, and leadership.

Thanks to a growing professional presence, eSports has blossomed into a billion-dollar industry with a projected market revenue of $1.8 billion by 2025. This has resulted in many gaming career paths within eSports.

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Diagram Citation: Anderson, Tsaasan, Reitman, Lee, Wu, Steele, Turner & Steinkuehler (2018)

Image Credit: Foundations for Esports Curricula in Higher Education, Figure 1

Esports researcher Nico Besombes went a step further by displaying a still-growing graphic that shows the many career paths outside eSports that can result from the knowledge and skills gained from within the eSports construct.

These include general gaming skills like STEM/STEAM and coding, but eSports also requires the growth of expertise in other areas. The gaming infrastructure also needs marketing, communications, human resources, sales, leadership, analytics, accounting, and many more.
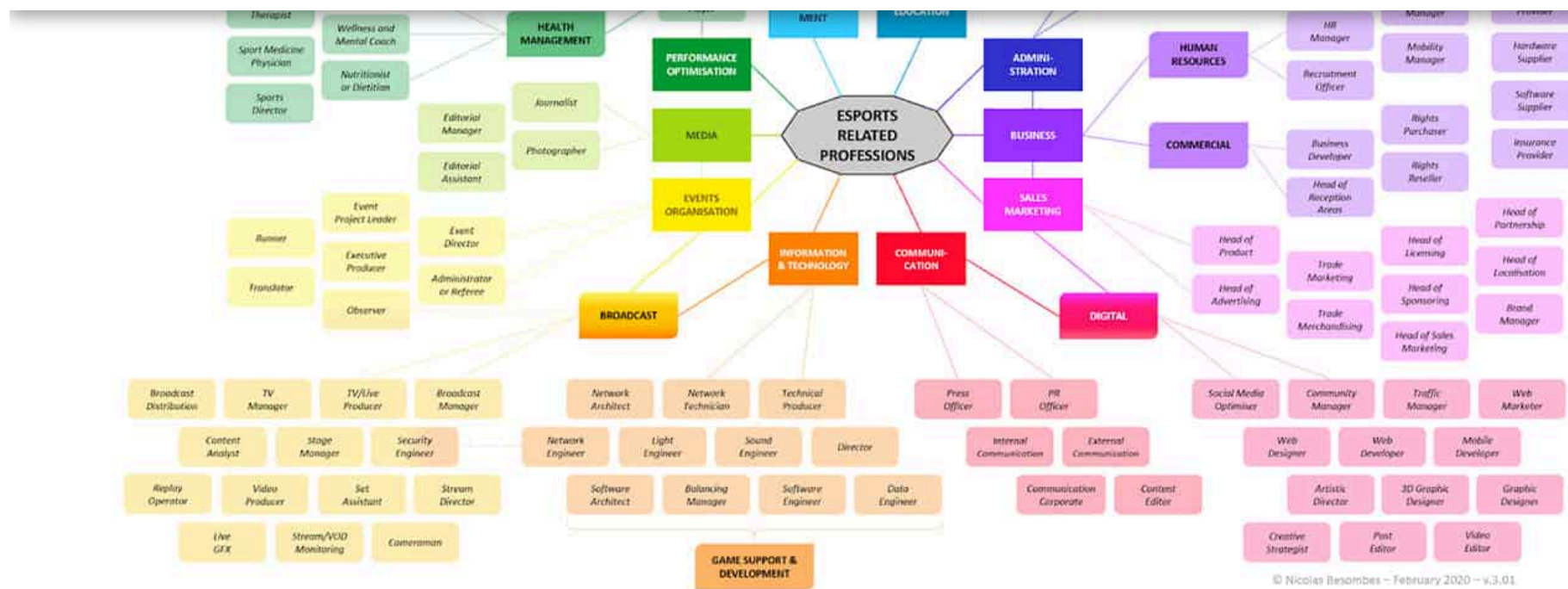
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Image Credit: Foundations for Esports Curricula in Higher Education, Figure 3

Versatility of an eSports Lab

This has given schools much to consider when developing new learning environments. Administrators are well aware that funding needs strong justification.

There may not be enough research yet to convince parents and community members that a gaming space has a place in education. That's where the utility of an eSports lab can be highlighted. Dr. Sue Ann Highland advises that this can be a learning space full of unique opportunities.

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Getting a competitive program started in such an environment can be challenging. But those in the eSports world say the key, quite simply, is to start where you are. Find a space and make it accessible. You'll quickly find that interested students and community members will create ways to level up your lab!

Esports Lab Design

School Specialty and the College Football Playoff Foundation teamed up to design an eSports lab for Morningside High School. Follow the links below to see design ideas and read more about this state-of-the-art classroom makeover reveal and where you can find the same gaming chairs for *your* school!

Read More: CFPF & School Specialty Build Esports Arena for Morningside High School

Shop Classroom Select Gaming Chairs

📁 Tagged With: Gamification, Learning Environments