

① ESports School is a Good Option for Some Students



Esports continue to gain popularity. Last year in Spring, Japan opened its first gaming high school in Shibuya called “eSports High School” (e スポーツ 高等学院) and welcomed it’s first class of 22 boys. It provides gamer students with many benefits, from improving their lives both socially and academically to giving them career opportunities, eSports is a good option for high school.

In Japan, high schools that teach trades aren’t uncommon. eSports High School itself isn’t

advertising that its graduates will be rich from winning esports tournaments. The school says, “Pro gaming, as a job, is very difficult, so our goal is to provide students with skills that can be used not just in competitive gaming, but in a variety of ways.” Basically, eSports High School is a trade school for the growing gaming media industry. Graduates may become pro gamers, but they have other job possibilities too such as streamer, game developer, virtual YouTuber, game journalist, programmer, esports commentator, and 3-D CG designer.

Since some of those jobs probably require more education after high school, eSports High School also provides general education for students hoping to go on to university and help to plan their futures. While the Shibuya e Stadium is used for lessons and practice, students also study core subjects such as English, biology and math.

ESports is also giving students the chance to create new relationships. ESports is a team activity and students have to work together. They also practice together, strategize, and spend time with their teammates. So, by sharing the same interests and goals, they can also strengthen their relationships which is especially important for students who have difficulty socializing.

One student, Torahito Tsutsumi, 17, had left school after bullying caused him deep depression. He spent all day in his room reading comics and playing video games. When his mother, Ai, confronted him about it, he told her that his life was “meaningless.” However, by the school year’s halfway point, Torahito had made progress. Even though he hadn’t made as many friends as he hoped, he arrived at school every day on time and had become more optimistic, his mother said.

Like football, basketball, and soccer, esports often helps bring students together. With these new relationships, students usually have a greater social-emotional balance. And with that balance, they can feel more comfortable at school and improve academically as well.

As the world becomes more modern, schools should accept modern focuses and subjects such as eSports. ESports high schools should be supported because they can greatly improve students’ motivation to attend school and help them plan for careers in the growing digital world.

② ESports In Schools are Nothing but Trouble

Last year Japan opened its first gaming high school called “eSports High School” (e スポーツ 高等学院). While eSports are gaining popularity, there are many possible issues with a school focused on teaching eSports. From finances to physical injury and gender discrimination, eSports schools may not be worth the trouble.

The first challenges of opening an eSports school comes from the costs of gaming equipment and finding a space to practice. As eSports is just becoming popular recently, there are not many facilities able to host eSports practice. If practices are at school, it is another problem for the school to buy expensive gaming equipment.



But there are some longer term effects. Just as sports come with some injury risk, esports can also lead to injuries. ESports can lead to joint pain and other physical effects. Holding the controller for long periods of time and doing the same movements can lead to hand and finger pain. Also, unlike in other sports, they are not moving around and running. Students could have bad moods and bad sleep schedules. Some even say that a lack of movement and natural light could lead to depression.

Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and spending these past few years looking at screens, eSports might not be the best thing. Students spending too much time gaming could lead to less meaningful relationships and have other negative effects on their lives. ‘Gaming disorder’ is one common problem of eSports. This happens when people prioritize gaming over everything else—something that’s obviously not good. It could lead to an addiction and worse mental health.

It may be true the number of college eSports scholarships is growing, but they are still rare and only top players will get them. While eSports could help students improve their grades, college recruiters probably won't look for a student with poor grades. Students need to have discipline in high school, work to improve their grades, and have other roles in their school community.

Also, eSports is very male-dominated. Female students can enter eSports high schools, but may not want to go to school if they don’t feel welcomed. Many girls may not be interested even though eSports could be a truly equal sport. Esports scholarships aren't based on strength or speed, they're based on strategy, commitment, and students’ ability to solve problems calmly with their teammates. Even so, making esports available to all people may remain a challenge.

An eSports school will only distract students from what really matters. Students need to spend time forming good relationships with their classmates, teachers and families. They need to focus on studying and gaining real life skills. Because of the cost of eSports and the negative effects it could have on students, eSports should continue to be seen as hobbies, not careers.