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Holland Patent powers up to join Esports League for students

Posted Wednesday, February 27, 2019 4:00 pm

HOLLAND PATENT — Students in the Holland Patent school district have an opportunity to participate in the High School Esports League for competitive video gaming, said the district in announcing that it has joined the league.

The district noted that Playstations, Xboxes and other gaming consoles are becoming new sporting equipment for many high schools and colleges around the nation, along with such games as CS: Go, Fortnite and League of Legends.

With a spring season beginning in March for the video gaming league, the Holland Patent district said its Golden Knights have 11 students in grades 9-12 registered for it, with another 21 who have expressed interest.

All students are welcome to join, but they must maintain a 2.5 grade point average, have good attendance and follow the same behavioral rules as other varsity sports.

"Esports players at Holland Patent will be competing with other schools in North America," explained district technology specialist Margaret McNamara, who is leading Holland Patent's esports team.

"The students are currently working on skill-building until the season starts and then we will have playoffs and finals. Eventually we will be streaming our events in the high school gym, much like a basketball tournament," McNamara added.

Among benefits of an esports team as cited by the district: providing students who play video games a platform to compete and make friends; reaching students who are not otherwise participating in extracurricular activities;

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providing incentives to raise academic grades; promoting teamwork; increasing skills such as problem-solving; increasing reflexes and hand-eye coordination; preparing for careers that require mastery of digital media and technology; and providing increased interest in fields relating to STEM (science, technology, engineering, math).

"Esports means more than gaming to me," said Esports Club President Ryan McGahey, a junior at Holland Patent High School.

"This is an opportunity to use skills that previously were not recognized as legitimate. I hope to be part of something revolutionary," the Holland Patent junior added.

The High School Esports League is the premier and largest national esports league that provides high school students the chance to participate in competitive esports, according to highschoolsportsleague.com.

"Esports has allowed schools to transform athletic opportunities for students while promoting physical and mental health, as well increase pathways for college scholarships," said Holland Patent district Superintendent Jason Evangelist.

"We are excited to see what our students can achieve with this new league and where it will take them in their futures, especially for students who may not be considering higher education," the superintendent added.

The district said more than 475 of the nation's colleges support esports, with nearly 50 schools providing a total of more than \$59 million in scholarships to gamers.

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