



JCHS Launches Esports Room and Esports Team

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE - Jersey Community High School announced the launch of its new Esports Room earlier this month with gaming chairs, computers, headsets, and more. The school is now in the process of forming its first-ever esports team, with plans for the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

Esports, or “electronic sports” are video-game-based competitions, usually played in a multiplayer format by professional gamers. Joe Shipley, eighth-grade math and high school computer science teacher at JCHS, is the coach and sponsor of the JCHS esports program. He said the program helps prepare students for an emerging esports world at the college level.

“We saw a need for it - we know a lot of kids are on games anyway,” Shipley said. “Also, they’re beginning to give college scholarships. I know personally a friend of mine whose son is an Esports coach for a college, so it’s something that’s becoming a bigger deal year after year.”

Shipley said he’s now in the process of holding tryouts and narrowing down a team of about 16 members through a double-elimination tournament of their current game, Rocket League, for the fall.

“We’re probably looking at having three different esports a year - a fall, a winter, a spring,” he said. “We have 12 machines in a room and I have over 40 kids that have out, so I’m now in the process of having a tournament, looking at their grades and some other things to whittle that down to a team of about 16.”

Potential team members are given a basic hand-mouse aim test, and Shipley said factors like grades and behavior help determine whether they make the team, using a point-based system to eliminate bias.

Shipley said for him, the best part of the program is bringing students together in a new environment from a regular classroom.

“By far, the best part of this program is being able to see students in a different environment than just a typical classroom, and the happiness that it may bring to a student's day that would normally lack such an uplifting experience,” he said.

Shipley added that both gaming and education have come a long way.

“I could never have guessed that when I put my first quarter into a game of Space Invaders, I would be coaching and cheering on the students and gamers we have today,” he said. “The students are very lucky to have this opportunity.”