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Contact: Chelsea Vongehr

Phone: (209) 331-8043

Email: CVongehr@LodiUSD.net

Lodi Unified School District Gets in the (Online) Game

Tokay High School Offers Competitive Online Gaming to Students

LODI, CA (November 6, 2018)—Tokay High, one of Lodi Unified School District's (LUSD) four comprehensive high schools, has created and launched the first esports teams in the District's history and one of the only teams in the area. Kicking off their official season last week, esports, otherwise known as competitive online gaming, offers students the opportunity to play games online against other esports teams. Esports seeks to teach students about teamwork, logical thinking, problem solving, and the development of leadership skills.

Tryouts for Tokay High's esports teams took place prior to LUSD's fall break at the beginning of October. The 12 students who made the teams were assembled into Junior Varsity (JV) and Varsity Teams, each consisting of 5 "starters" and two "backups." This season, students compete while playing the "League of Legends" game during which they work together to capture the opposing teams' bases. Each competitive game lasts approximately 45 minutes.

"Tokay High encourages opportunities for students to learn leadership skills and teamwork building. Competitive sports are a great way to do that. We want all of our students to have the same opportunities to compete in their fields of choice, including online gaming," said Erik Sandstrom, Tokay High Principal.

Students echo these sentiments.

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“Being part of the esports team [gives] me an opportunity to be able to showcase my skills in gaming, bond with my teammates, and develop leadership skills,” shared Kevin Keith, a senior and member of the Varsity esports team.

Allyis Martinez, a senior and member of the Varsity team, agreed. “This experience has been a great opportunity for me to develop my skills [working] within a team environment,” she said.

Last week, both teams competed in their first games. The JV team narrowly lost to the Benjamin Holt Academy, while the Varsity team secured a win against the Langston Hughes Academy.

“I was thrilled to see my students play for the first time. The teams were prepared and worked well together, despite playing together for a few short weeks. They are learning a lot about strategy and teamwork. Esports has opened doors for my students to compete while playing something they love,” shared John Media, who is a math and advanced placement computer science teacher at Tokay High as well as the new esports coach.

A number of colleges, such as the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, Irvine now offer scholarship opportunities for esports. According to the National Association of Collegiate Esports in a recent Forbes article, college scholarships for esports have grown by five times over the last year.

“Our foray into the new space of digital competitive gaming is exciting. Technology is a priority for our Board of Education and a major part of our students’ everyday lives. With the implementation of esports, our students can compete and enjoy sportsmanship online, which is a huge feat,” said Dr. Cathy Nichols-Washer, LUSD Superintendent.

Tokay High’s esports teams will compete in one more game until playoffs, which will take place during the week of Thanksgiving break.

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Finals will be held the following two weeks.

LUSD plans to expand esports in the District in the next year so that all students will have the opportunity to pursue and secure esports scholarships to postsecondary education institutions.

Spectators can follow and watch the live games on Tokay High School's twitch channel.

About Lodi Unified School District

Lodi Unified School District is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. Home to 49 school sites, LUSD provides high-quality education to a diverse population of 29,000 students. LUSD encompasses more than 350 square miles, including the Cities of Lodi and Stockton as well as the rural communities of Acampo, Clements, Lockeford, Victor, and Woodbridge.

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