



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
COVER SHEET – PART II
Application for Grant:
2025-2026 Funding Cycle**

Assigned Grant Proposal #: _____

Project Title: _____

Grade Level(s): _____ **# of Students DIRECTLY involved:** _____

Subject Area(s): _____

Amount Requested: \$ _____

Grant Focus Area(s): In order to be considered, Waco Education Foundation Innovation Grant proposals must fall under one or more of the E4 focus areas: early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance. NOTE: In addition to meeting one of the E4 focus areas above, grant readers are especially interested in creative and innovative grant requests that target fine arts, STEM, literacy, or enrichment.

(check all that apply)

Early Childhood Development

Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students

Fine Arts

Literacy

Extended Education for Staff

Emphasis on Student Performance

STEM

Enrichment

Proposal Number: #65

There's no I in STE(A)M: Learning career skills through ESports

Project Description: We would like to bring an ESports team to UHS so that students have another opportunity to be involved in an extracurricular activity outside of the traditional ones—Sports and Fine Arts. We would use funding to purchase consoles, computers and coaching from Vanta—a national leader in high school and middle school ESports. We would also use a small portion of it to pay a stipend for a teacher/coach to motivate and mentor students throughout the fall and spring seasons.

1. **Rational:** State wide schools are looking for creative ways to engage students and help them develop critical thinking, problem solving and collaborative skills. In the short term, those skills can help students perform better in class and on state/district exams. In the future, students with those skills will be able to market themselves better and as some studies have shown, will be more likely to choose a career path in the STEM field. Because video games tend to have a negative connotation attached to them, many of our students are not aware of the career paths in the field of coding/computer programing, video game developing, marketing, etc. An ESports team would engage students who otherwise do not find a creative outlet in the Fine Arts or in traditional sports where many students learn skills and lessons that they take with them and apply in their careers and life. Currently, we have many students who come to school just to spend time with their teammates, coaches or fine arts teachers because they enjoy being part of the team or have developed a good relationship with their coach or teacher. Also, students who are actively involved in some type of school activity—extracurricular or otherwise—tend to have better attendance and perform better in the classroom because they want to be available to participate in their chosen activity.
2. **Goals:** We want to give students a creative outlet to express themselves and their skills. Traditionally, students can join sports, band, theater, art, JROTC, and other extracurricular pathways, but we've not offered a path for students who have passions toward video gaming, coding, or other technology-based activities. This, in turn, will increase parental involvement as these non-traditional extracurricular students become more involved. We hope to recruit ten students in our first year of competing in ESports. This will create opportunities for ten families to participate more in their child's school involvement every year for the foreseeable future.
3. **Plan of Operation:** University High School has been planning for an extracurricular "rush" event for years, which will allow students to walk in a gallery-type environment to explore all of the various clubs and extracurricular activities offered at the high school. The conversation has begun again to follow through with this event in the fall of 2025. During this event, students will explore the various opportunities they have to get involved in school activities, including ESports. We will set up a booth highlighting the details of ESports and recruit students to participate.
4. **Communication and Dissemination:** Upon receiving this grant, the Waco ISD Education Foundation will be extensively displayed as a sponsor of the ESports team.

Additionally, when events are advertised through school communications, the recipients of this grant will ensure that the foundation receives ample recognition for their support. When team shirts are created for team unity, the Waco ISD Education Foundation will be printed on the shirts as a sponsor of the team. Finally, when ESports events occur, the foundation members will be cordially invited to attend. Currently, Baylor has partnered with both Vanta and TexSEF to sponsor and host Fall and Spring championships locally. This will allow us to invite family members, friends and even teachers to support our students as they compete with students from around the state.

5. **Evaluation:** Student interest will be our initial method of evaluation. Upon receipt of this grant, the teacher sponsors will communicate with students in class and through Parent Square our intent to recruit participants. During the high school activity rush in the fall of 2025, we will have students sign up who are interested and we will host meetings for students to discuss next steps. Our team will function much like sports teams or Fine Arts/CTE competitions in that students will need to have passing averages in all of their classes and will need to be attending class in order to participate. All of this will be outlined at the beginning of the year and students and parents will sign a participation contract stating that they will comply with grade and attendance requirements.
6. **Long Term Implications:** As the ESports program competes in future years, the program will grow and become more competitive. It is our intent to give students the opportunity to compete at the high school level with some even being able to compete at the university level. Currently, there are college teams that compete in ESports around the country and they actively recruit students that compete at different ESporting events. Students will be able to network with other gamers and colleges essentially opening the door for more opportunities for students that are competing in or interested in competing professionally. Locally, Baylor University has teamed up with both Vanta and TexSEF to bring the ESports championships to Hurd Welcome Center during both the Fall and Spring. This competition could potentially give our students the opportunity to gain exposure and be recruited to universities looking for students that are interested in STEM/STEAM fields.

Below we have added a few links with more information from both Vanta and TexSef that can give you more information about the program that we would like to bring to our school and other long term implications for students who join the team. We have also added a PPt of a study that was conducted into ESports.

[TexSef](#)

[Vanta](#)

[Study Conducted on ESports](#)

7. **Key Personnel:** We would need to have at least one sponsor and for at least the first year we would be involved in actively recruiting students who are interested in ESports to join in different capacities. Our team would be made up of a coach, players for different

games and gaming systems, managers and even a social media manager that would be able to showcase what students are doing as part of the ESports team.

8. **Budget and Budget Narrative/Justification:** After conversations with our principal, Technology and students we have decided that the best course action would be to purchase a bundle from Vanta--which will be a vendor for the district soon. Vanta is regarded as one of the leaders in ESports in the state and country. Below we have outlined what each of the items in the bundle are and the benefit for our ESports Program. We would like to point out that purchasing a bundle from Vanta does not mean that we must exclusively compete through Vanta, we will also be able to compete on the TexSEF platform--though this will require us to pay a membership fee which we may be able to fund through fundraising or local funding.

- a. **Gaming Tech:** The bundle includes the necessary gaming equipment for students to be able to compete in a variety of games. We will get 5 gaming laptops with all of the necessary hardware and accessories--mice and headsets. We will also get 1 gaming TV with a Nintendo Switch and 4 controllers. This will allow us to be able to easily store the laptops and use any classroom as a lounge for practice and competitions until we are able to find a dedicated space for our practices and competitions. All of the hardware and accessories will be used for years to come and will not need to be replaced from year to year.
- b. **Coaching and Professional Development:** We want our students to see this opportunity as more than just a time to play games with friends. We want them to benefit from professional coaching so that they can elevate their skill level and even learn how to code using the Python programming language. These sessions will be taught by Vanta coaches who are top professional players in the games that students compete in. Our team coach will also receive coaching so that they can run team practices in a way that is beneficial to all students. Though this training will need to be purchased every year we believe that students who become part of the team in the 9th and 10th grades will benefit from the coaching even giving them the opportunity to compete for ESports scholarships.

We have attached a link that gives a detailed description of what we have summarized above:

<https://app.vanta.gg/marketplace/intro-laptop-bundle>

Waco Education Foundation

Grant Budget Form

Assigned Proposal #	65
Project Title:	There is no I in STE(A)M
Number of Students Served by Grant:	10 to 20

Qty	Budget Item	Verify Vendor (Y or N)	\$ Requested from the WISD Foundation	Other Secured Source	\$ from Other Source (if applicable)	Total Amount
Consumable Supplies						
1						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Consumable Supplies			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Technology						
	Intro Laptop Bundle (Vanta)		\$ 8,499.00		\$ 4,000.00	\$ 12,499.00
						\$ -
total Technology			\$ 8,499.00		\$ 4,000.00	\$ 12,499.00
Long-Term Supplies / Equipment (items that will last beyond the grant year)						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Long-Term Supplies			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Contracted Services						
						\$ -

						\$ -
total Contracted Services			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Personnel						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Personnel			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Travel / Other						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Other			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Totals		Total Requested from the WISD Foundation		Foundation Cost Per Student	Total from Other Sources	Total Cost of Project
		\$ 8,499.00		#VALUE!	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 12,499.00