



Mifflinburg High School students Romeo Valle-Torres, 15, left, Nickali Conklin, 17, and Aaron Pachucki, 15, talk with students from King's College about esports on Thursday at the CSIU in Milton during the PSEL Region 4 conference.

Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

Speaker: Esport programs foster teamwork and leadership skills in students

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MONTANDON — Administrators explained the value of scholastic esports to Valley educators at a Thursday morning conference, held at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit.

The morning session began with a basic discussion of esports.

“Esports are competitive video games,” Matt Swan, representing the state esports league, PSEL, said. “Here you have players, some as individuals, others on a team. But all of whom are trying to achieve the same goal.”

The overarching theme of the day was: Esports connections to the scholastic realm. Esports are more than just competitions, Swan said.

“We love being able to connect high school juniors and seniors to different workforce opportunities,” added Colleen Epler-Ruths, STEM consultant with CSIU.

Training staff was a major reason for educators being at the conference, Epler-Ruths said.

Attendees were advised how to build, coach and grow successful esports teams, as well as how to integrate teamwork, leadership and technology into their school programs.

Through esports, students learn soft skills, such as collaboration and working to achieve a common goal, Swan said.

Best practices for team management, community building on Discord,

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and promoting teams through streaming and social media were other topics of discussion.

The conference featured presentations from experienced esports coaches and experts on designing and launching an esports gaming lab in schools.

Breakout sessions included: Keynote and Gameplay Improvement; starting Your Esports League and unified teams; Minecraft EDU; Shoutcasting, Cur-

riculum, and gaming showcase.

"In a way, we are teaching teachers about the benefits of esports," Epler-Ruths said. Esports started in the Intermediate world four or five years ago, starting with teams out of Philadelphia. Now more than 200 teams are playing in the PSEL across the commonwealth.

"A lot of what we're seeing going on with esports ties in with standard computer science, career pathways, and general skills that students are building," Swan said, "Such as understanding ba-

sic network infrastructure. Or coding. For those students with such interest, these are future pathways to post-secondary school career.

"There is a job for every student you encounter, based on their school-level interests — jobs such as organizers, entrepreneurs and content creators," Swan said.

"There was a time when I knew little about esports and their educational value," Epler-Ruths said. "I began as a skeptic. Now, I am a proponent."