

MINUTES OF THE IHSA ESPORTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

April 9, 2019

The IHSA Esports Advisory Committee met at the IHSA Office, Bloomington, Illinois, on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Committee members present were: Derek Austill, Roxana; Mark Bacys, Danville (H.S.); Greg Gardner, Orland Park (Sandburg); Zack Gilbert, Normal (University); Mike Jacobson, Oak Lawn (Richards); Chris Kuntzman, Taylorville; Zachary Lamczyk, Salem; Jeff Pitner, Rockford (Guilford); Eric Wenckowski, Hoffman Estates (H.S.); and Amy Whitlock, Oswego (East). Also in attendance were Craig Anderson, IHSA Executive Director; Kurt Gibson, IHSA Associate Executive Director; and Raye McDonald, IHSA Director of Special Programs. Not present was committee member Todd McFarlin.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS:

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:

None.

ITEMS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION:

1. The committee heard a report from IHSA staff that outlined the responsibilities of an IHSA advisory committee and the general requirements a sport or activity must meet in accordance with IHSA Policy for that sport or activity to become 'recognized' by IHSA. In short, the committee learned that IHSA Policy 14 stipulates that, "The Board will entertain proposals to add a new state series when ten percent of the member schools engage in regularly scheduled competition in the sport or activity." Just reaching that threshold doesn't guarantee that a sport or activity will become 'recognized' by the IHSA, but the current popularity of the program and the opportunity for growth seem to indicate that the program is trending in the right direction to someday being 'recognized'.
2. The committee discussed the current state of Esports in Illinois in terms of the number of schools who are participating in the event. The committee reviewed the IHSA's Emerging Sport and Activity List, as well as a list from representatives of the Illinois High School Esports Association (IHSEA). While discussing school participation in Esports, several observations were offered. Among those included:
 - There are likely even more schools participating on some level in Esports than either reviewed list showed.
 - Some schools may be reluctant at this time to demonstrate their commitment to the event since IHSA has not recognized it. However, committee members shared their belief that as IHSA shows interest and moves towards recognizing the event, more schools will join the Emerging Sport and Activity List (ESAL).
 - Encouraging schools to join the ESAL is something committee members can do informally in their own areas of the state.
3. The committee discussed in general terms the types of competition models and games that are currently popular in the Esports community and some of the benefits and challenges of each. Among the observations were:
 - Not all games or competition platforms require additional costs (like registration or account fees) to players.
 - If a state series were to be created, offering a variety of multi-player and single player games would allow for more participation than if just one game were played. If a state series were to be created, consideration to maximizing participation should be considered. In selecting games, the committee

discussed the importance of making sure they are appropriate for a school setting/high school-aged participants.

- Looking to maximize participation will help students learn a variety of skills that will help them grow in academic and non-academic ways.
 - Looking to maximize participation will also provide a structure at member schools that will allow students of all demographic categories to participate. The committee expressed their concern that, if a state series is created, it should not be done in a manner that only allows those students who can afford some of the higher end technical tools to participate.
 - The committee shared their belief that, if a state series were to be developed, Esports should have the flexibility to change the games played each year based on recommendations from future advisory committees. Having that flexibility would recognize changes in the event and keep the event from becoming stagnant.
 - The committee discussed the many benefits Esports can provide a school. Beyond the benefits to participants, a variety of Esports-related ‘jobs’ can allow more students to get involved at a school. Shoutcasting, graphic design, and character writing are just some of the other ways students could be involved with Esports at their school.
 - The committee discussed various third-party gaming organizations who have or are working with schools or other states to conduct Esports events. In the course of that discussion, the committee shared benefits and challenges of working with such organizations in the future.
 - The committee discussed several possible games that may be of interest to member schools, in the event a state series is developed. Among the games discussed were League of Legends, Overwatch, Smash, Rocket League, NBA 2K, FIFA, and NHL.
 - The committee discussed possible times on the IHSA calendar when an Esports season might make sense. The committee expressed a desire to find a time/season, if possible, for a state series that would minimize conflicts with other school programs.
 - The committee discussed the opportunity Esports would offer schools to teach students about internet safety and proper online etiquette to use when competing.
4. The committee set May 13, 2019, as the date for their next meeting. The next meeting will focus mainly on games and timing for a possible IHSA Esports state series. Prior to the next meeting, committee members will:
- Work on creating a document schools can use to help develop a club or team
 - Work on creating a document that explains the benefits associated with having an Esports club or team
 - Encourage schools in their area to sign up on the IHSA Emerging Sport and Activity List
 - Establish dialogue with schools in their area to gauge game(s) and season interest for Esports
5. The committee requested IHSA staff to send each member school a copy of the committee’s minutes with an explanation of ‘Emerging Sports and Activities’ to encourage schools to know about the IHSA’s interest in Esports.