



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Fosters Connection, Provides Opportunity by Launching District's First Esports Teams

FONTANA, CA – Celebration and laughter echo from Fontana and Summit High schools' computer labs as students in matching shirts huddle around their new teammates during the first-ever esports matchup between the friendly Fontana Unified School District rivals.

After months of planning, Fontana Unified has launched esports teams at Fontana and Summit high schools for the 2024 seasons operating under the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Esports Initiative.

Throughout the season, Fontana and Summit High schools are competing against esports teams across California in popular video game titles "Rocket League" and "League of Legends." Both are team-based strategy games requiring players to work together to overcome opposing squads in three-versus-three or five-versus-five formats.

"It is exciting to witness our District's dedication to acknowledging the significance of esports, which creates avenues for skill development, teamwork, and leadership," Executive Director of Middle Schools Dr. Roy Rogers said. "This endeavor not only engages students' passions but also unveils opportunities for a broad spectrum of talents."

The CIF Esports Initiative, overseen by the North America Scholastic Esports Federation (NASEF), aims to connect video gameplay and competition to educational opportunities to make high school esports a place where students prepare for global career opportunities as well as competition.

Esports is also creating stronger connections at each school site in Fontana Unified, with 33 students currently rostered on Fontana Unified's two esports teams. Teachers Brian Rivas and Jose Aldana coach Fontana High's 18-player team, while fellow teachers Jaime Perez and Manny Lopez coach Summit's 15-player squad.

"It's really cool because I didn't think I would get to have an outside hobby inside school," Summit High School junior Ethan Loc said. "Outside of school I already play games but I did not have anyone to play with, so for Summit to have this esports team, it helped me make connections and friends who I didn't know before."

The NASEF X CIF Esports Initiative League runs from January to May, with the postseason beginning in April. All matches are played remotely with students playing alongside their teammates on campus or even from the comfort of home.

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Prior to its launch, a multitude of Fontana Unified departments and staff rallied together to navigate a host of logistics in making esports a reality in the District.

For years, Fontana High School Principal Ofelia Hinojosa advocated for esports with the District's Board of Education before it approved the creation of the esports programs at its May 3, 2023 meeting. It started a mad dash to prepare for FUSD's inaugural esports season.

"Our District emphasizes getting as many students involved as possible and getting students in their seats. This is a great program for kids who maybe are not interested in other sports or activities but are good at video games," Aldana said. "This is a place to find comradery and build community. It all comes down to connection and making sure kids feel connected to the school and have a reason to come."

Both Fontana and Summit High schools assembled and organized teams and administrators secured practice spaces and materials. The District Tech Department guided all technology matters as they outfitted practice spaces with the necessary gaming PCs and equipment, and is still in the process of upgrading Fontana High's esports lab, which includes the addition of new computers, desks and chairs.

"Esports is an exciting new addition to Fontana Unified's offerings as part of our District's commitment to providing engaging, innovative CTE and STEM opportunities," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to thank our team of administrators, teachers and staff who went above and beyond to ensure FUSD students are equipped to pursue their passions."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_ESPORTS1: Fontana High School senior and esports "Rocket League" team member Margaret Perez prepares for a match. Both Fontana and Summit high schools have formed esports teams for the first time for the 2024 California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Esports Initiative season.

FUSD_ESPORTS2: Andre Cisneros, a Summit High School senior and esports team member, competes against Fontana High during a three-versus-three "Rocket League" scrimmage. This marks the first season Fontana Unified has sponsored esports teams.

FUSD_ESPORTS3: Fontana High esports coach Jose Aldana, right, advises student-athlete Justin Martinez during a "League of Legends" competition. Esports is also creating stronger connections at each school site in Fontana Unified, with 33 students currently rostered on Fontana Unified's two esports teams at Fontana and Summit high schools.

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