Australian Sportsmanship

TEACHING GUIDE
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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently in Australia, 98% of households with children have a video-game system (Digital Australia Report, 2016), and by the end of 2016, nearly two billion people worldwide will be playing video games (Newzoo, 2016). Despite this proliferation, video games came from humble beginnings. In the 1950s and ‘60s, computers were not only enormous but prohibitively expensive, limiting such machines to the large corporations or universities that leveraged them exclusively for business or research. The genesis of video games was largely due to their effectiveness at demonstrating the computational power of a machine or the technical prowess of bored university students. The introduction of smaller and more affordable computer chips in the 1970s and ‘80s would later pave the way for technology to enter homes and small businesses, and soon consoles and arcade machines were everywhere. Quickly, video games would mature from a trivial and largely unheard of pastime to a global phenomenon for all ages.

The content and application of games has matured, too. Today, video games are a powerful digital analogue for how we learn through play and practice. More than mindless entertainment, studies have shown that many video games help children and teens develop both mental and physical skills, increase perceived self-worth and self-efficacy, and improve social skills and empathy. Specifically, when played in moderation, video games have been shown to improve (Kovess-Masfety et al, 2016):

- Hand-eye coordination / fine motor skills
- Eyesight
- Social skills
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Fair play / good sportsmanship
- Capacity for learning
- Planning and problem solving
- Concentration
- Inductive reasoning and hypothesis testing
- Decision making
- Perseverance and resilience / handling challenges
- Coping (e.g. with short- or long-term illness)
- Handling (and reducing) stress
- Self-confidence and perceived self-efficacy
- Joy / well-being
Certain styles of games even encourage physical activity, teach fitness and nutrition, and/or provide real-world (or proto-real-world) skills, such as with simulators.

Humans are naturally drawn to games because they provide a system where mastery and growth are rewarded with discovery, improved skill, and special effects, mirroring how our brains are designed to learn. Games provide a framework to learn to think critically and make decisions, leading to a sense of autonomy and agency that a young person may feel is lacking in their day-to-day life.

As a result of technological advancement, many games today support playing with and against others from all over the world. This provides educators with a unique opportunity to teach teamwork, sportsmanship, and other important social and cultural skills, including empathy and ethical understanding.

This guide provides an overview of teaching sportsmanship through direct application of the national curriculum, including teaching materials as well as an overview of best practices for a teacher-facilitated esports club. The guide is intended to accompany additional resources found on the website.

A NOTE ON VIOLENCE AND VIDEO GAMES

Video games as a causal factor in real-world violence has been a hotly debated topic since the earliest arcade games in the 1970s. Numerous studies, however, refute any claim that there is a link between games and violence. In fact, video games, as mentioned above, are a healthy addition to a child’s life when done in moderation and with parental supervision (Ferguson & Kimburn, 2009; Kutner & Olson, 2008; Ferguson et al, 2008).
2. SPORTSMANSHIP

2.1 Introduction

“Aggression or sportsmanship can be learned and/or reinforced by significant others, the structure of the sport, and society’s attitude.”
— Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005

Broadly defined, “sportsmanship” refers to the set of values and the series of skills driving appropriate behaviour in social situations involving sports, play and competition. Ultimately a code of conduct, sportsmanlike behaviour is learned through example-setting, coaching, and peer mentorship, and is improved through practice, awareness, self-reflection, empathy, and habit-building (Wilson, 2010). This is where you, the teacher, come in: the average child is not likely to spontaneously develop sportsmanship, or necessarily have the environment in which to practise. By understanding the nature of sportsmanship and its detractors, we can help students develop these lifelong skills for all aspects of their life both in sports and day-to-day.

This section will provide an overview of sportsmanship, followed by an in-depth look at how teaching sportsmanship provides a direct connection to the national curriculum, and can help set students up for success in life and work.

2.2 Principles of Sportsmanship

“A code of acceptable behaviour for players to abide by in their pursuit of fair play”
— Madigan, 2016

Often ill-defined, the strictest concept of sportsmanship refers to the code of honour that gives competition meaning: in short, if a player is unduly influencing the natural course of a game through their actions, they are impacting competitive integrity. Meaningful competition means a level playing field upon which all players have a reasonable chance to win if played according to the rules. Practically speaking, this means that a player should seek to respect all players (including themselves), show self-control, and play fairly. More broadly, an individual should seek to demonstrate the key facets of sportsmanship in play, competition, and day-to-day life. For many, sportsmanship is a factor in individual character and a predictor of overall success in life (Delaney, 2016).

Here are the key facets of sportsmanlike behaviour and examples of how they are manifest:
TEAM-ORIENTED MINDSET
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Work well and cooperate with your teammates.
• Work to communicate effectively. Ask for help. Chat socially.
• Be a role model consistently; mentor other players.
• Form meaningful connections to other players (team cohesion); be friendly in and out of game.

RESPECT
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Be humble in victory and defeat.
• Recognise that your opponents are players just like you who want to win and learn.
• Show gratitude that you have others to play with you.
• Appreciate the perspectives, emotional states, and needs of others.

DISCIPLINE
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Make an effort every game to win and improve. Recognise that even professional players do not have perfect games every game – being “good” takes practice, dedication, and a “can-do” attitude.
• Recognise when you have negative thought patterns forming. Be disciplined in addressing such thoughts. Remove yourself from situations in which you feel yourself losing control. Never settle for “I can’t help it” as an acceptable answer to any situation.
• Pursue mastery of game strategy, mechanics, and tools.

RESPONSIBILITY
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Adhere to the responsibilities of your role in-game. Don’t give up or get angry when things are not going well.
• If another player is struggling, offer encouragement and advice when appropriate.
• Pursue victory honourably within the context of the rules of the game and with respect to others. Be graceful in defeat.
• Acknowledge when you make mistakes and do not blame others.
• Play fairly, always.

RESILIENCE AND CHARACTER
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Be aware of when you are getting frustrated and develop strategies to calm down. Seek help with managing frustration and understanding what causes it.
• Don't give up when you are behind. Treat every game as valuable out of respect for your team and the opposing team, and as a chance to learn and practise. Understand it is possible to come back from a disadvantage and give every game a fair shot.
• Be trustworthy, honest (with yourself, your team and your coach), and considerate.

**POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
As a sportsmanlike player:
• Respect other players and their opinions on strategy. Respect and appreciate differences of style. Create opportunities to learn from different styles and approaches (no style is perfect, including your own).
• Support teammates when they make mistakes. Recognise that bad games happen to everyone. Being supportive will help everyone improve and increase the likelihood of coming back from a disadvantage or previous defeat.
• Recognise that making others doubt themselves will only lead to everyone playing more poorly.

### 2.3 Why Teach Sportsmanship?

Young values are dramatically impacted by sports and games experience. The high pressure placed on winning can have significant, negative impacts without the counterbalance of teaching sportsmanship, values, self-reflection, and perspective. Some of these negative factors that can be countered include (Wilson, 2010; Shields and Bredemeier, 1995; Vallerand & Losier, 1994):

• A “win-at-all-costs” mentality, which leads to a lack of concern and respect for the opponent, the rules, and/or the officials. This can further lead to an increased likelihood of cheating and consideration of doping. (Josephson Institute, 2009)
• Sportsmanship is “not worth it” and that being sportsmanlike somehow diminishes competition; a failure to understand the relationship of sportsmanship to competitive integrity and meaningful play.
• Motivational style – habits ingrained in an athlete or player can be a source of misunderstanding and misplaced motivations.
• Team sports, team cohesion, and even “school spirit” can lead to a lack of respect for the opposing team if not careful. Without intervention, especially in adolescents, team cohesion can form an unhealthy “us vs. them” attitude that dehumanises the opponent.
• Social pressures – undue attention on winning and the “spoils” of winning – create an enormous pressure to perform, leading players to de-emphasise or ignore sportsmanship altogether as “getting in the way”. It is possible to establish healthier social pressures that act against unsportsmanlike conduct through emphasising desired behaviour and being mindful of systems and cultural norms within the school or community that may undermine efforts.

• Athletes (and players) tend to be less sportsmanlike than non-athletes – thus sportsmanship is not an intrinsic value that develops through sport. Rather, the addition of competition to an adolescent’s life increases the likelihood that they will develop an unhealthy relationship if not accompanied by sportsmanship coaching.

Within traditional sports, good coaches inspire students to aim for what is ethically right, and provide a counterbalance to the many forces that drive the “win-at-all-costs” mentality. Competition does not have to mean unsportsmanlike play and negative attitudes. In fact, quite the opposite: through teaching sportsmanship, students can develop healthy, lifelong habits. In addition, sportsmanlike players play better: getting frustrated leads to poorer outcomes, negatively impacts your teammates ability to play well, and lessens the feeling of progression and mastery if you do win (Wilson, 2010). What’s more, the role of adults in helping foster sportsmanlike attitudes and values is crucial, while explicit sportsmanship teaching has a demonstrated impact (ibid.).

Exposing students to competition and sportsmanship at a young age is a determinant of later success. We all inevitably encounter competition in our lives, whether through our hobbies, careers, or even relationships. Equipping youths with the skills for productive competitive mindsets not only sets them up for success in those situations, but improves their overall character and likelihood for success in all aspects of life. Students who handle competition well are more patient, resilient to stress, level-headed, happier, and well-adjusted (Turman, 2009; Beauchamp, M.R. & Eys, M.A., 2008; Shields and Bredemeier, 1995; Vallerand & Losier, 1994).

2.4 What Makes Sportsmanship Hard?

Creating teaching environments for competition that facilitate mentoring, self-reflection, and positive social interactions are crucial to helping students develop sportsmanlike attitudes and behaviour. However, it is important to recognise that the very nature of competitive and online situations often directly contribute to poor behavioural habits. Understanding and appreciating these factors can help teachers work with their students to develop positive habits that lead to more robust and healthy attitudes.
2.4.1 Competition
Sportsmanship is a challenging concept in highly competitive games. The drive to win pushes us to consider behaviours we might not otherwise in non-competitive situations. Furthermore, we may find ourselves in the heat of the moment behaving inappropriately toward the greater goal of winning. How do we instill better habits so that when the heat is on, the default behaviour is the honourable one? Humans are more strongly driven to avoid loss than seek gains – a bias referred to as “loss aversion” (New York Times, 2002; Tversky & Kahneman, 1991). In sports, bad behaviour tends to emerge as the cost of losing is perceived to increase (e.g. anticipated decline in social status, lost prize, lost opportunity for “glory”). Key to overcoming the pressures that can lead to unsportsmanlike behaviour is creating a healthy relationship with winning and losing. As humans, we’re never going to be enthralled by losing, however we can help our students develop the tools to maintain a healthier perspective both in the match and out.

2.4.2 “Us vs. Them”
Anonymity is an often-cited reason why online games tend to lead to poorer sportsmanship than traditional games. Behaving freely without repercussion, however, is not the complete picture – more important is that anonymity means it is harder to feel like you are part of a team. The low likelihood of encountering the same players again (or knowing who they are), combined with the large population of players, means that a player is likely to cultivate an “us vs. them” attitude even among their own teammates. Alongside other biases, such as the Dunning-Kruger effect in which we tend to overestimate our abilities thus leading us to blame others for losses (and “blame” ourselves for wins), this creates an unstable ecosystem that inhibits player resilience when things go wrong (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Playing with others who are physically located in the same space can immediately help address this issue as a shared space in the same setting (school, club, etc.) increases group cohesion (Beauchamp & Eys, 2008). First learning to be sportsmanlike in this setting will greatly improve sportsmanship in more anonymous settings once those habits are instilled.

2.4.3 The “Accepted” Norm of Sports
How we, as mentors, frame opponents and teammates when talking about our own games/sports or even commenting on professional sports, will dramatically affect how our students default to thinking (Wilson, 2010). The first step is to cultivate good habits within ourselves. Overcoming the accepted norm of sports (e.g. fighting as an accepted/expected part of a sport) is challenging. Part of our work here is not to remove all examples of unsportsmanlike conduct in the world, but to help students develop the skills to identify and reflect on what they see. Furthermore, we help create the foundations of sportsmanlike habits that will generate resilience in students and help the next generation of players improve.
People often talk about “healthy banter” in competitive situations. While a certain degree of poking can be fun, and actually increase the sense of fun and camaraderie, it can very quickly go too far. Just as it’s never OK to use hate speech in real life, it’s never OK to use such language in a game.

Also, many people do not understand that sportsmanship isn’t “nice for the sake of nice”. Oftentimes, kindness and sportsmanship go hand in hand. However, certain situations such as throwing a game out of sympathy for the opposing team isn’t actually sportsmanlike, since it fails to uphold the competitive integrity of that game. While it may be the right thing to do in certain situations, teaching the difference is important to helping students understand sportsmanship as distinct from positivity.

### 2.5 Challenges of Online Sportsmanship

The goals of sportsmanship in esports are largely the same as in traditional sports. What is unique, however, are some of the challenges and frustrations faced by players that can lead to unsportsmanlike conduct. Like any highly competitive situation, tempers can flare and the tendency to blame others can lead to unproductive behaviours and poor habits. With online play, however, limited communication channels (many games requires one hand on the keyboard and mouse, meaning typing is itself a stressful act) and mixed skill levels can raise frustration even higher.

The nature of a sport played online and frequently anonymously can give rise to distinct and non-productive behaviours when a player becomes frustrated, including closing the program or quitting the game (this is generally referred to as “AFKing”, where “AFK” stands for “away from keyboard”), no longer playing seriously, or even explicitly assisting the opposing team. Part of sportsmanship in esports is learning to respectfully play each game to its natural conclusion - behaviours such as walking away mid-game are no more acceptable than walking away when playing a traditional sport. This resilience is something that can be taught to students by helping them frame loss and disadvantage more productively.

The sense of “team” is sometimes weaker in esports because online gaming does not require co-located players, thus there is a high likelihood that players are complete strangers. Part of the goal is helping students recognise that sportsmanship and good citizenship are not limited to players you are physically next to, but extend into the online world as well.

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1 Refer to the appendix for a description of esports (also, e-sports or electronic sports)
This section takes a look the specific national curricular goals for Australia and frames how teaching sportsmanship as a core value aligns with these learning outcomes.

### 3.1 General Capabilities

The goal of the Australian Curriculum is to help support young Australians in developing the skills and capabilities to live and work successfully as adults in today’s modern world. The “Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians” (Educational Goals, 2008) outlines several key aspects of a child’s education, including “successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens”, which resonate strongly with the core values of sportsmanship. In particular, the goals highlight that students:

- Have a sense of **self-worth, self-awareness** and **personal identity** that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing.
- Develop personal values and attributes such as **honesty, resilience, empathy**, and **respect** for others.
- Relate well to others and form and maintain **healthy relationships**.
- Embrace opportunities, make **rational and informed decisions** about their own lives, and accept **responsibility** for their own actions.

To this end, it is anticipated that teachers will create content and assess along seven general capabilities as outlined in the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, 2016). The following looks at how each of these capabilities are addressed through teaching sportsmanship.

#### 3.1.1 Literacy

Communication and understanding of the world around us is a vital capability. For students, this means developing the “knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society”. Additionally, we must help students in learning to use language in a multitude of contexts, including online, to understand and analyse their surroundings, interact well with others, as well as express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions in a healthy manner.
Literacy and communication are important aspects of sportsmanship and practised when discussing, understanding, and presenting strategies, as well as harmoniously communicating with teammates, coaches and officials. Within the context of video games, students must be able to understand and assimilate complex rule sets, and discuss assumptions and interpretations around evolving strategies and game mechanics. This includes finding effective ways to communicate despite the intensity of competition, the limitations of online interaction, and differing opinions among teammates.

### 3.1.2 Numeracy

Like literacy, students develop numeracy as they grow their skills and confidence in purposefully applying mathematics to better communicate and navigate their world. Although less directly relevant, esports can help introduce a healthy appreciation of mathematics and an opportunity for students to practise through the understanding of game systems. Within League of Legends, for example, students can incrementally explore the mathematics behind the efficacy of champions, items, and other in-game variables. While such in-depth knowledge is not necessarily required to play successfully, it can provide a powerful touchpoint for students who may already be inspired to understand the numerical details of the game.

### 3.1.3 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability

To thrive, students need to develop the skills to understand, apply, and evolve with society’s rapidly growing technological sophistication. This includes the confidence and ability to apply ICT in all aspects of their lives to improve communication, knowledge transfer, learning, decision-making, and problem-solving.

As well, students must be equipped to understand and effectively handle the social and cultural considerations of a connected world and the challenges such communication brings. Success in the modern world necessitates an enormous amount of online communication, sometimes in the absence of any face-to-face or even vocal communication. The relative newness of our digital world means that the subtleties of effective communication, connection, and etiquette are evolving every day. Effective online communication is not necessarily intuitive, though it remains an integral part of modern day life.

The shared context of an online game provides a natural and fertile framework, helping students learn to connect and work with others digitally. Central to the tenets of sportsmanship are communication, respect, and empathy, which are key components to any successful online interaction. When facilitating playing together digitally, teachers can help students practise respectful communication online, as well as understanding the perspectives of others.
3.1.4 Critical and Creative Thinking
Critical thinking involves the ability to recognise, establish and support an argument, reason about the world and others within, and use information to solve problems. Similarly, creative thinking helps students generate and apply new ideas in both known and new contexts. Increasing capability in these two areas is crucial for success in our complex and evolving society, particularly with the growing sophistication of our digital world.

Within esports, both critical and creative thinking are required when working with teammates to understand and respond to the changing game environment. In particular, esports necessitate hypothesising and reasoning about strategy, identifying and evaluating the strategies of others, constructing new ideas and responding to dynamic conditions, and collaborating with others to reason about complex situations, all of which provide an opportunity for teachers to facilitate the development of critical and creative thinking skills. Sportsmanship in general directly encourages the dispositions enhanced by critical and creative thinking, including “reasonableness, intellectual flexibility, open- and fair-mindedness, a readiness to try new ways of doing things and consider alternatives, and persistence” (Australian Curriculum, 2016). Video games provide an opportunity to improve metacognition as what is learnt is carried forward to subsequent games. The tight rules and game environment provide an excellent setting for students to critically reflect on past and future games in the context of applied learnings.

3.1.5 Personal and Social Capability
Personal and social capability can be broken into four areas as laid out on the Australian curriculum’s website:

- **Self-Awareness.** Developing an awareness of one’s own emotional states, needs, and perspectives. Students should:
  - Identify and describe the factors that influence their emotional responses.
  - Reflect on and evaluate their learning, identify personal characteristics that contribute to or limit their effectiveness, and learn from successes or failures.

- **Self-Management.** Developing the metacognitive skill of learning when and how to use particular strategies to manage themselves in a range of situations. Students should:
  - Effectively regulate, manage, and monitor their own emotional responses, and persist in completing tasks and overcoming obstacles.
  - Develop the skills to work independently and to show initiative, learn to be conscientious, delay gratification, and persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
• **Social Awareness.** Recognising others’ feelings and knowing how and when to assist others. Students should:
  › Learn to show respect for and understand others’ perspectives, emotional states, and needs.
  › Define and accept individual and group roles and responsibilities.
  › Build their capacity to critique societal constructs and forms of discrimination, such as racism and sexism.

• **Social Management.** Interacting effectively and respectfully with a range of adults and peers. Students should:
  › Learn to negotiate and communicate effectively with others; work in teams, positively contribute to groups, and collaboratively make decisions; resolve conflict and reach positive outcomes.
  › Build skills associated with leadership, such as mentoring and role-modelling.

These facets are particularly relevant within the context of sportsmanship. Social play situations necessitate a strong sense of others as well as the ability to identify and manage one’s own behaviour and emotions. This is magnified in competitive team situations, during which the desire to win can lead to non-productive, individualistic thinking, and for which success depends on strong teamwork. Online team games provide an excellent opportunity to practise and reflect on personal and social capabilities, while representing an aspect of student lives that is relevant both in and out of school.

### 3.1.6 Ethical Understanding

The capability for ethical understanding comprises three main aspects:

• **Understanding ethical concepts and issues.** Developing an understanding of ethical concepts and issues. Students should:
  › Learn to recognise ethical concepts and explore ethical issues in context.

• **Reasoning in decision-making and actions.** Reasoning when making decisions and acting ethically. Students should:
  › Consider the consequences of and reflect on ethical action. They analyse the reasoning behind stances when making ethical decisions and evaluate the intended and unintended consequences of actions in an increasing range of scenarios.
• **Exploring values, rights and responsibilities.** Identifying and examining values and exploring rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups in a range of contexts and practices. Students should:
  › Use instances of expressed values to explain social interactions and to determine rights and responsibilities in social and legal domains. They recognise and interpret points of view in ethical contexts.

The growth and development of ethical understanding in a digital world is a crucial piece to setting up students for success in work and life. Sportsmanship provides a concrete instantiation of these values in the context of sports and esports, and a framework for teachers to help drive reflection and discussion among students.

### 3.1.7 Intercultural Understanding
Similar to ethical understanding, intercultural understanding relies on the ability to recognise and appreciate others and other cultures. There are three key aspects:

- **Recognising culture and developing respect.** Identifying, observing, describing, and analysing increasingly sophisticated characteristics of their own cultural identities and those of others. Students should:
  › Compare their own knowledge and experiences with those of others, learning to recognise commonalities, acknowledging differences, seeking understanding, and engaging in critical reflection. Students recognise and appreciate differences between people, and respect another person's point of view and their human rights.

- **Interacting and empathising with others.** Developing the skills to relate to and move between cultures through engaging with different cultural groups, giving an experiential dimension to intercultural learning in contexts that may be face-to-face, virtual, or vicarious. Students should:
  › Demonstrate empathy toward others. Empathy assists students in developing sense of solidarity with others through imagining the perspectives and experiences of others as if they were their own. Empathy involves imagining what it might be like to “walk in another’s shoes” and identifying with others’ feelings, situations and motivations.
• **Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility.** Developing the capacity to process or reflect on the meaning of experience as an essential element in intercultural learning. Students should be encouraged:
  › To reflect on their own behaviours and responses to intercultural encounters and to identify cultural influences that may have contributed to these. Students learn to “stand between cultures”, reconcile differing cultural values and perspectives, and take responsibility for their own behaviours and their interactions with others within and across cultures.

Like the internet in general, esports provide an opportunity for students to encounter a wide variety of other cultures and perspectives. Through facilitating an esports club, teachers can help students develop their skills for understanding and appreciating other cultures. Especially in the context of an esport, there are ample opportunities to reflect on the thinking of others, including in observing the other team’s strategies, communications with others, and in learning about the game in general.
4. LEAGUE OF LEGENDS CLUBS

4.1 General Benefits
Led by a dedicated teacher, the right club environment can be created which educates students on the importance of sportsmanship and helps instill values that the student gamer aspires to maintain for the rest of their life. Specifically, a club leader can support:

1. Understanding the social processes by which new ways of thinking, working, and organising become routinely incorporated into everyday life.
2. Explicitly helping students take these values out of the club/classroom setting and into other parts of life where they are likely to encounter folks not being sportsmanlike.
3. Recognising that there other people in online games and the internet, in general, that do not demonstrate sportsmanlike values, and discussing what are likely to be complex feelings around these inconsistencies. (E.g. How do we continue to be good citizens even when others around us are not? What do I do when I see someone else being racist/sexist(et cetera?)
4. Mentoring new students who join the club (perhaps initially because of their excitement about the game) and transforming them into experienced peer mentors who advocate for sportsmanship.

4.2 Teaching Sportsmanship
An esports club can provide a controlled and well-defined environment for the teaching of sportsmanlike values. Given that sportsmanship is not likely to arise spontaneously, as a teacher you should consider focusing on the following areas.

4.2.1 Framing Loss
In any team-versus-team game, 50% of players will inevitably lose (rarely are ties an acceptable end state); keeping this in mind can help students maintain perspective in any loss. Being outplayed is a learning opportunity, not a defeat. While we cannot remove the disappointment because that implicitly downplays the value of the experience, we can help students develop the tools to channel disappointment into positive, controllable and stable factors, such as learning opportunities and small successes.

4.2.2 Framing Victory
Similarly, when winning, celebrating honourably means reflecting back on the other team’s performance with respect and creating learning opportunities for your own team. A win does not mean perfection, it means that certain variables aligned (and
in any game, some did not) that led to that win. Understanding and unpacking those specifics can deter the arrogance that can accidentally arise from a win. Celebration is healthy, and shouldn’t be de-emphasised, but it should be balanced with reflection and learning, and a show of respect to the opposing team.

4.2.3 Player Empathy

Often it is difficult to recognise just how challenging a role that you don’t normally play can be. In Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBAs), for example, there are countless champions that you could be playing or facing, and it is almost impossible to be an expert in all aspects. Professionals recognise that they cannot know everything and that part of the game is dealing with surprises; they focus their attention on a subset of champions that they practise regularly, while spending time learning general-purpose techniques that help them deal with the unexpected.

As an example, when a player doesn’t appreciate another player’s perspective, it can seem like another player is “intentionally” playing poorly when they may simply be having a bad game. In online gaming, however, it can be incredibly hard to develop this empathy as you may never play with these individuals again thus no strong connection is formed, and there is no coach to help build cohesion and shared perspective. Compounding this, adolescents have been shown to process other people’s intentions differently than adults and therefore empathise differently (Blakemore, 2007). By helping students develop empathy as a habit, however, they are more likely to default to this more inclusive line of reasoning. Teachers can provide the opportunity to explicitly discuss and practise these values through facilitating games in the classroom.

4.2.4 Team Cohesion

The relationship between team performance and cohesion (sometimes called the Team Performance-Cohesion relationship) has been studied extensively over the past decade (Beauchamp & Eys, 2008; Turman, 2003). A cohesive team is one that remains united during hardship but can be undermined by low collective efficacy, poor communication, dynamic conditions, competitive stress, attitude/mindset, and even poor social cohesion (which speaks, in part, to the uniqueness of anonymous, online play). When a team has the opportunity to organise together for regular play, such as in traditional sports, a coach typically plays an instrumental role in driving cohesion.

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2 Refer to the appendix for a description of Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBAs).

3 Note that if a teammate is intentionally playing poorly, having discussions with your students on how to handle those situations is also important, and with the player themselves if they are present.
Like a coach, teachers have a similar opportunity to create a stronger, shared perspective (helping player empathy and collective efficacy) and can identify and work directly on areas undermining cohesion. By providing students the tools to recognise what can negatively impact team cohesion, we empower them when facing more challenging online situations where, aside from a shared goal, cohesion is already naturally low and collective efficacy is also likely low due to natural biases.

Helping students develop a healthy respect for the other players on their team and empathy for their position is important in developing skills for life in general, as well as improving team efficacy. Research has shown that teams that believe in one another’s capabilities in coming together to achieve a shared goal significantly outperform those teams with low estimates of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997; George & Feltz, 1995).

4.2.5 Setting Positive Examples

We are often acutely aware that the examples that we set for our students and children are absorbed at an impressive rate, affecting their views of the world as well as their day-to-day behaviours. The context of sportsmanship and demonstrated character is no different. How we talk about the games we play, the people we play with, and even professional sports has an enormous impact on young minds watching (Wilson, 2010). Watching a game on television or online and cursing at the opponents teaches youth that this behaviour is not only acceptable, but admirable. In short, this means that to teach sportsmanship, we have to be committed to improving ourselves. When we’re not perfect (which we won’t be), we need to create opportunities to discuss with our students how we improve and learn.

Understanding that it is normal to get stressed and lose our temper from time to time in inherently stressful situations is important. If we demonise what is a normal reaction, then we force students to hide such behaviour, rather than helping them develop a healthy relationship with their feelings and the tools to improve how they deal with negative emotions.

4.3 Why League of Legends?

As one of the largest esports currently in the world today, League of Legends (LoL) provides a great opportunity to teach the values of sportsmanship in the digital realm that is centred in an accessible, fantasy universe. LoL is a free, well-structured, team-based esport that many students are already playing.

By creating a well-structured environment in which to play, eager students can be playing a game they normally play outside of school, but with the added benefit of mentorship and learning, finding other students with similar hobbies, and improving their overall gameplay.
A LoL club is intended to promote authentic, relatable learning experiences, and an opportunity for students to explore and model the key competencies and values of your school and curriculum. The social, competitive nature of League of Legends provides an engaging and relevant setting for encouraging and monitoring student development in relating to others, managing self, and fostering values.

The high school LoL club environment should create opportunities for student gamers to assess their level of sportsmanship and grow to believe in these values inherently. Likewise, a team of students learning the value of and displaying sportsmanship through group discussion, peer review, and play, may reinforce these values. As students advance their understanding, opportunities may emerge for them to develop leadership skills, learn to communicate effectively, and resolve conflict as a role model for their peers and teams in game.

### 4.4 But I’m Not a Player! (Or Expert!)

Not to worry! As a club leader, your goal is to create learning opportunities centred around sportsmanship, not to be an expert League of Legends player. In fact, not being a player can create potential ways to better connect with your students. If you are learning from your students as well, you can invite other students who are curious, and create an opportunity for peer mentorship. By working with student leaders, you can together craft positive examples of teaching and sportsmanship to inspire others, and to solidify those behaviour patterns in the mentors.

One of the reasons League is so popular is because it is a great spectator sport. Even if you’re not an avid player, watching and learning about League is certainly still possible. What is important is that you understand the key beats of the game, and create purposeful discussion and student-led reflection opportunities.

In addition, identifying mature and skilled students with positive attitudes to help in leading the club through replays, guides/tutorials, terminology, and videos can provide excellent opportunities for these students to practise productive framing and mentorship. Due to the broad spectrum of players and resources on the internet, reviewing all content ahead of time is highly recommended to ensure that it is appropriate for your club and school.

Refer to [website](oce.leaguehighschool.com) for more resources.
4.5 Assessment & Learning Objectives
The Sportsmanship Info Pack includes a recommended set of learning outcomes for a unit on sportsmanship. These outcomes are intended to grow with the students. No student (just as no adult) is expected to be perfect in achieving all outcomes. Success comes in the form of continued growth, as well as habits that lead to self-reflection and reframing when we find ourselves becoming less sportsmanlike, and long-term behaviour change and resilience.

4.6 Bringing Online Sportmanship into the Classroom
The following is a list of suggested activities or seeds of activities that teachers may wish to explore with their club. Each section attempts to support a different aspect of teaching online sportsmanship through the context of esports and League of Legends. (Note that a link to student discussion cards can be found on the website.)

UNDERSTANDING SPORTSMANSHIP
- Show and discuss examples of both poor and good sportsmanship in League of Legends (reflecting on club values).
- Together, come up with a list of what it means to be sportsmanlike in League of Legends. Discuss why this matters.
- Explore opportunities to practise and celebrate sportsmanship outside of the club.
- Select different sports to review. E.g. Have students select a favourite sport or esport player and create a list of ways in which that player is or is not sportsmanlike. Discuss how that affects their games and their teammates. Discuss how watching this player conduct themselves affects their fans and sets a good or poor example.
- Have the students collect inspirational quotes that reflect sportsmanlike values and how keeping your cool, for example, can make a game-changing difference. Create posters with these quotes and post them around the school, in the gym, et cetera.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE
- Create a club code of conduct that is posted somewhere for all students to review (perhaps in the hallway for other students to see, as well).
- Create a sportsmanship pledge (perhaps together with the students) and have club members sign it. The intent is uphold this pledge not just in the game/club, but in life. Create reflection points and story opportunities for students to share how they uphold their pledge in their day-to-day lives. (See the Appendix for a sample pledge.)
- Post-game reflection: in-club honours for sportsmanship (e.g. who was the most resilient in the face of defeat, who kept a positive attitude, who was most encouraging).
• Facilitate a discussion with the students using the student discussion cards, which can be found on the website.
• Select opponents to honour with a follow-up discussion of why they were worthy opponents.

PLAYER EMPATHY
• Play games where everyone must play a new position and/or champion to help students appreciate the complexity of the game, and to build patience for other players who may be learning or who may be playing outside of their comfort zone.
• Play games in pairs, where each position has two students, one playing and one watching. Swap the pairs between games (between playing and watching), then discuss afterward. E.g. when a student is getting too frustrated.
• Do “360 reviews”: have students provide one thing their teammate did well, and one point of growth for next time.

TEAM COHESION / COLLECTIVE EFFICACY
• Play games with other, anonymous teammates to practice team cohesion and create discussion points around collective efficacy.
• During the game, have students take turns “shot calling” what the team should do next. Students should demonstrate that they value one another’s opinions on strategy.
• Work together as a team to plan builds (runes, masteries, shop items) for each student’s favourite champions. Create opportunities for more experienced students to practice mentorship.

BUILDING RESILIENCE (FRAMING LOSS / FRAMING VICTORY)
• Agree to a “no-surrender” rule for a game. Students practice identifying new objectives, remaining patient, focused, and sportsmanlike, and improving even when at a disadvantage. If students default to surrendering when at a disadvantage, then they miss key learning opportunities as well as opportunities to turn the game around. This helps teach the value of a well-fought victory.
• Outside of the context of a given game, discuss when surrender is appropriate. It should not be at the first sign of frustration or minor failure, or to deprive the opposing team of a full victory if they are just about to win.
• Watch game replays as a team and discuss what went well, what didn’t, and have the students come up with a list of things to work on for next time (for both wins and losses).
• Have students write down their own self-reflection on a game immediately afterward and submit. Wait at least 24-hours (perhaps one week) to watch a replay and have students then repeat the exercise and compare. It is hard to recognise that your perspective is fundamentally shifted in the heat of the moment.
• Have students reflect on and discuss moments during a game that frustrated them. Help them explore why those moments were frustrating, how that impacted their performance and reasoning, and how they can reduce frustration in the future. Key is helping students understand that while frustration is a normal reaction it is not out of their control.

4.7 Impact Factors
The teacher plays a central role in maximising learning and opportunity, but there are many factors that impact the success of any club.

TEACHER PHILOSOPHY
Teachers should spend time reflecting on their goals for their club and students, and how their philosophies align with a League of Legends club (e.g. thoughts, beliefs and values about video games and League of Legends). Even though execution will improve with time, it is important to have confidence in the underlying values of the club. This in turn helps drive critical reflection in how to promote moral values.

CULTURE OF ONLINE BEHAVIOUR AND VIDEO GAMES
The rapid rise of “internet culture” has led to many poor behaviours online that are only perpetuated without helping subsequent generations improve and set better examples. We have a shared responsibility to impart strong values that have the best interests of society in mind both online and offline.

LEVERAGING ENGAGING MEDIA, SUCH AS VIDEO GAMES
When students are already engaged by the underlying medium, this can set up teachers for effective education of moral values through a strong framework. It also provides an opportunity to practise these values outside of the classroom in a more natural setting for students, better reflecting their actual application in day-to-day life.

BEHAVIOUR / MINDSET
Teachers should regularly assess if student behaviour is framed around personal conduct, accepting authority, and supporting referees, as well as help students drive self-reflection and improvement.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
While not always ideal due to factors we cannot control, it is important to consider the right environment for effective learning. While a student’s context drives connectivity, which is key for learning to take place, it is also constantly changing, particularly in the online world. Factors include social interaction, community, culture, and inter-relationships between the student, the activity, and the context. Teachers are encouraged to regularly reflect on the learning environment, and strive to be flexible and responsive.
This also helps set an example of resilience and adaptability for students that echoes their lessons in sportsmanship.

**LEARNING FRAMEWORKS THAT DRIVE MORAL VALUES**

Teachers play a key role in how to develop moral values in students and in helping students understand why their actions are moral or immoral. For example, teachers:

- Teach students moral implications, not coping strategies to avoid punishment;
- Promote time for moral reflection (e.g. sportsmanship criteria can be found on the [website](oce.leaguehighschool.com));
- Place responsibility for action on the student;
- Support student learning.
5. APPENDIX

5.1 Introduction to Esports

The growth in popularity of online, competitive gaming coupled with dramatic improvements in internet connectivity has led to the framing of such electronic games as sports. In its broadest sense, “esports” (i.e. “electronic sports”) refers to competitive video games that share certain similarities with sports, namely timing, skillful execution, teamwork, and a consistent playing field. Like traditional sports, esports exist on a spectrum from the casual pick-up game to the professional formalisation into leagues, a “pro scene”, and governing bodies (though due the relative newness of esports there exist few governing bodies). At the professional end of the spectrum, there is a commercial component, and as of 2016, professional esports games can draw tens of thousands of viewers to watch key matches at stadiums, while drawing in even larger numbers of online viewers.

What separates the games that are considered to be an esport is a consistent arena. Whereas a substantial portion of digital gaming is centred around exploration/discovery, esports are centred around skill that has evolved on a consistent playing field. Variation arises as a result of the skills of players themselves. In many esports, such as first-person shooters (FPSes), which rely on the skilled and timely tagging or shooting of opponents, or multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs), positions exist as they do in traditional sports. Whereas in rugby you might have Forwards and Backs, et cetera, in a MOBA you will have a “Top Lane”, “Jungler”, et cetera.

Presently esports are primarily divided across several genres:

- Real-time strategies (RTSes) such as StarCraft
- First-person shooters (FPSes) such as Overwatch, Call of Duty
- Card games such as Hearthstone
- Fighting games, such as Street Fighter, Super Smash Bros.
- Multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs; also called action real-time strategies, or ARTS), such as League of Legends (LoL), Defense of the Ancients II (Dota 2), or Heroes of the Storm (HotS).

5.2 Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBAs)

A multiplayer online battle arena or MOBA generally has two opposing teams whose objective is to systematically destroy the other team’s base (usually victory is achieved when a key central structure at the heart of the base is destroyed). Games are normally played over 30-60 minutes with two teams of five players (although three-player games are also somewhat common in casual play). The gameplay mechanics are similar to the real-time strategy (RTS) games from which they evolved.
Unlike RTSes, however, base structures are provided automatically at the start of game, and cannot be upgraded or modified, only destroyed (usually permanently). While MOBAs also share similarities with action role-playing games (ARPGs) in that they feature leveling up of player characters, there is no persistence in character statistics outside of a given match. Each time a new game is played, all players start at the same level. Core to the gameplay is working to build your team up to a strategic advantage such that you can overpower the opposing team and destroy their base.

Players use the mouse to navigate their “champion” or “hero” around an arena, directing them to attack the opposing team members, structures, as well as small, non-human-controlled enemies (frequently called “minions” or “creeps”). Defeating these earns the player gold as well as team advantage, while advancing the entire team toward the overall goal of destroying the opposing base.

During the course of the game there is also a gold “drip” that continually adds to the player’s ability to scale their champion. On returning to base, a player can purchase items that “buff” their champion, and allow them to customise their champions based upon their opponent’s strengths, weaknesses, and playstyles. Crucial to winning the game, a player must not only outplay the opponent, but seek opportunities to outpace them in earning gold and claiming objectives to overpower the other team.

Most MOBAs take place on a symmetrical map with three primary lanes protected by towers/turrets, and surrounded by a jungle that is populated with other non-player-controlled monsters. Because of the lane structure, MOBA teams usually support five key positions, one for each player:

- Top
- Jungle
- Middle
- Bottom
- Support

Typically a player will play the early part of the game in their designated lane, with the exception of the Jungler who will instead roam the jungle fighting monsters, and taking the opportunity to support key objectives, and help teammates in their various lanes. As the game progresses, the team will come together more often to group up to take objectives, fight the opposing team, and attack the opposing base.

MOBAs also feature various specialised units that are well-suited (or not) to playing particular positions. Unlike a traditional sport, a player may “field” multiple champions, creating an added level of variation/challenge from game to game (only one champion may be played per player per game).
Identifying key synergies in champion features as well as individual play styles on both teams is a crucial aspect of advanced play.

5.3 Resources & Further Reading
Refer to the website for more resources.

5.4 Audit Documents
At the planning, implementation and review stages, teachers and managers may wish to refer to website for audit documents to support change management and monitor progress.

5.5 Sample Pledge
As a suggested activity, teachers may want to ask club participants (including the teacher) to sign a pledge stating their commitment to upholding the values of the club and sportsmanship in their day-to-day interactions. Here is a sample pledge that can be adapted to fit your needs:

I, [__FULL NAME__], will embrace the spirit of sportsmanship and fair play while playing competitively. I will strive to be a role model within my club, my school, and my community. I will refrain from engaging in all types of disrespectful behaviour. Instead, I will show support to my teammates even when I may not know them, or be physically located with them, and I will thank those who support me. Win or lose, I will treat my opponents with dignity, and show gratitude for the opportunity to play and compete.

I know the behaviour expectations of my school and hereby accept the responsibility and privilege of representing this club and this school whenever I play online.

Signature:
Date:
6. REFERENCES


7. AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

DR. KIMBERLY VOLL
Dr. Kimberley Voll holds a PhD in Computer Science and an Honours degree in Cognitive Science, specialising in artificial intelligence, psychology, linguistics, and digital design. A lifelong lover of games, she has spent her career studying how people learn, communicate, process experiences, and relate to one another through digital media. Kim has a long history in pedagogy at both the university and high-school level. As a faculty member at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Kim led various science-education research initiatives, working closely with universities and companies like Google and Microsoft to develop their outreach programs; she also helped coordinate and run SIGCSE, an annual computer-science education conference, for six years. In 2010, Kim was a recipient of the Killam Teaching Award, UBC’s most prestigious teaching honour, for her work teaching computer science at UBC. On the side, Kim was the volunteer director of the UBC TechTrek Program, working with K-12 teachers to develop curriculum for their schools, and running weekend workshops, after-school programs, and summer camps to teach programming, game development, and robotics to all ages. In addition to her teaching career, Kim has worked extensively in the games industry as a consultant and an independent developer, and has released several games of her own. Currently Kim works as a researcher and designer at Riot Games, studying social engagement and how we can make online games a better place through sportsmanship.

DR. KRISTINA SWANENBURG
Dr. Kristina Swanenburg has a PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh, specialising in groups and reaction to deviance. Her focus is the application of Social Psychology to games in order to improve game design and understand player behavior. Kristina has years of experience teaching a variety of university level courses from Introduction to “Social Psychology” to “Learning and Motivation”. She also has experience as a coordinator for a Summer Science Outreach program, which sought to get students excited about their ability to conduct scientific research. In 2009, she received the Dr. Ruth L. Myers Memorial Graduate Award for her research on deception detection and cheating. She is currently a researcher at Riot Games, specialising in improving the player community.
IVAN DAVIES
Mr. Ivan Davies has a BSc (Hons) Degree in Sports Psychology, specialising in Group Cohesion and Collective Efficacy, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. In 2005, he became a Teacher of Physical Education in the UK, where he delivered lessons for students aged 11-18 years in a co-educational Specialist Sports College. During this period, he worked with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to carry out two high school investigations on Assessment for Learning and led an “Out of School Hours Learning” school initiative, which provided a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for students. Outside of teaching, he has worked with professional sporting athletes across multiple sports and was recognised in 2008 to be an ECB Scholar for Excellence to Cricket. Currently, he works for Riot Games in Oceania, leading the High School initiative.

BRYAN BASKIN
Mr. Bryan Baskin is the Regional Player Support Lead for Riot Games Oceania. In 2009, he joined Symantec as a Customer Support Representative and quickly became a champion of advocating for customer needs. This saw him take on an Analyst role in Support Operations Management and was the start of a career designed to help customers. Bryan is an avid gamer and works alongside Ivan Davies to promote sportsmanlike behaviour between students as part of the High School Initiative at Riot Games.