

ViewSonic® Gaming Monitors Help School District Develop Successful Esports League



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— Don Soyinthisane, FUSD Director of Information Technology

INTERVIEWED

- ▶ Don Soyinthisane, FUSD Director of Information Technology

INDUSTRY

- ▶ Education

CHALLENGE

- ▶ Develop and equip an esports league to engage more students in extracurricular activities

SOLUTION

- ▶ Administration and IT partnership enabled fast development and execution
- ▶ ViewSonic XG2402 24" gaming monitors offered the ideal price point and features to support the league

RESULTS

- ▶ By its 2nd season the league had over 185 participants
- ▶ Attendance among members has increased considerably
- ▶ Previously uninvolved students are gaining new skills for future success
- ▶ The ViewSonic XG2402 gaming monitors deliver fast, clear images without lag to support league practices and tournament game play

PROFILE

Fresno Unified School District serves more than 74,000 students, from preschool through grade 12, preparing career-ready graduates through high-quality instruction, district programs and services, and resources. District administration is guided by four key goals designed to improve student outcomes, which state that all students will: 1. Excel in reading, writing, and math; 2. Engage in arts, activities, and athletics; 3. Demonstrate the character and competencies for workplace success; and 4. Stay in school on target to graduate. The district's 66 elementary schools, 15 middle schools, 9 high schools, 4 alternative schools and 3 special education schools are guided by these goals.

CHALLENGE

Fresno Unified School District structures its administration around four key goals. The second of these states that "All students will engage in arts, activities, and athletics." The growing popularity of esports presented a significant new opportunity to support Goal 2.

"The benefits of extracurricular involvement and a relationship with a coach to improve academics and social growth are well-documented," said Joe DiFilippo, Vice Principal on Special Assignment. "From a Goal 2 point of view, esports offered a great opportunity to engage students who would typically hustle home to get on their computer and engage with friends online. We wanted to bring this to the high school campus, to get these students engaging face to face with their peers and an adult coach."

The challenge was to develop a strong high school esports program at a time when few existed. Certain of the importance of the new activity (whether or not one agrees that it is truly a "sport"), the district was poised to be a trailblazer in this exciting new arena.

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- ▶ 144Hz Refresh rate
- ▶ 1ms response time
- ▶ AMD FreeSync™ technology

“We knew that developing an esports league would not only deliver all the benefits of extracurricular involvement,” said Don Soyinthisane, FUSD Director of Information Technology. “We also wanted to bring focus to a new lucrative and developing industry. We wanted our esports league to foster curiosity into technology and other STEM areas, as well as provide potential career paths to students.”



SOLUTION

Goal 2 administrators teamed up with the Fresno Unified Technology Department to tackle the task of developing a student esports league. They chose to model their league after a traditional high school sport, which according to Soyinthisane, is somewhat unique among high school esports leagues.

“Our league operates at a district level, like traditional sports,” said Soyinthisane. “Students from each of our high schools can compete against teams from other schools, just like they would with tennis or baseball.”

Dubbed the Fresno Unified Esports League better known as FUeL, the fledgling program began in 2018 with members training and competing on Rocket League. Thirteen district high schools participate in the league, practicing weekly then competing across an 8-week season, at the end of which a final tournament determines the district champion.

The IT department handles arena set up and technology procurement and maintenance. The Goal 2 group develops the schedule, runs tournaments and reports stats. The Goal 2 group’s extensive experience managing other athletic teams made for an easy learning curve.

When it came to equipping the league with display technology, Soyinthisane turned to ViewSonic.

“We’re standardized on ViewSonic monitors across the district, with several models that we buy from CDW-G to equip classrooms, computer labs and administrative offices,” he said. “I was hopeful that they would have a gaming-quality option for us, which it turned out they definitely did.”

The IT Team selected the ViewSonic XG2402 24” gaming monitor with 144Hz refresh rate, 1ms response time and AMD FreeSync™ technology to equip FUeL.

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RESULTS

In a short period of time, FUEl has attracted a large participation base. Switching to the popular game League of Legends for their second year, increased membership to around 185 participants across 13 district high schools. The league's size is matched by member diversity, which includes many female and special ed students as well as the traditional male esports athlete.



"Our esports league is giving more students an outlet to participate, to feel and to show school pride. They may not be kids who could make the soccer team, but they're super stars at esports," said Soyinthisane. "They have uniforms, just like any other athlete, and they wear them with pride on game days. They take it very seriously."

Seeing FUEl students represent their schools at tournaments exemplifies what the league's founders hoped to accomplish. Another is a measurable increase in attendance. Among students at the district's alternative education school, for example, teachers report that after joining FUEl student attendance rose from a discouragingly low 25% to around 92%.

"We're definitely reaching more kids and getting more students to be more active in school," said Soyinthisane. "These kids were probably gaming at home. Now they're showcasing their skills to the school."

The ViewSonic XG2402 24-inch gaming monitors have supported the league players well as they prepare for competition, said Soyinthisane.

"The ViewSonic monitors are great: a quality product at a price that is right for us. With the 144 Hz and 1ms refresh rate, the images constantly refresh. Everything is nice and clear. The students enjoy practicing on them," he said.

Team coaches have commented on the image quality as well, Soyinthisane added.

"Our coaches are a big part of the league success. They watch the students play. Rewind the game play and go over it with them – just like a traditional athletic coach would do after a game or training session."

Soyinthisane and DiFilippo agree that their efforts to build the league have paid off beyond their initial expectations.

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"The amount of engagement this program has created is almost hard to describe," said DiFilippo. "We've seen unbelievable growth with these students. The coaches are all young – in their late 20s and early 30s – and they have a real connection with these students."

Once they accomplish that, he added, everything else falls into place – greater focus in class, improved grades and better behavior – because just like with other school sports eligibility requirements apply.

Currently in the midst of its second year, expansion plans for the program include adding a Spring tournament.

"The Fall tournament is huge," said Soyinthisane. "We set up four arenas on a Saturday, equipped with gaming workstations and our ViewSonic monitors. We have student 'shout casters' commenting throughout. We want to replicate all that in the Spring and just keep making the program bigger and better and involving more students."

Beyond that, hopes for FUeL include building a dedicated esports arena and continuing to leverage the growth of the burgeoning industry to help students make the connection between their passion for gaming and real prospects for future career and college opportunities.

"There are more than 200 colleges and universities offering full ride scholarships for esports athletes. And there are opportunities beyond playing, such as coding, shout casting, the business aspects of gaming," said DiFilippo. "We see parents connecting the dots and realizing that this activity can really point their kids on a path in life."

Any expansion plans will most certainly involve ViewSonic gaming monitors, said Soyinthisane, who credits the monitor maker for a role in FUeL's success.

"We have a great relationship with ViewSonic as a supplier and appreciate their support of the growth of our esports league," he said. "They're a very strategic partner. They deliver good quality product at a good price, and the support from our account manager Lena Cull has been truly awesome."