



## Why Esports for San Antonio-area ISDs?

***Because esports drives STEM engagement and puts high-needs students on the path to careers—and because esports is an engaging and supportive environment for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth.***

Esports is a major growth market. Its integration into pop culture, the global brands making investments, and media attention have led to a U.S. market growing 11.4% from 2020 to 2021 (Insider Intelligence, August 2021).

More importantly, esports has the full attention of today's youth. Students of all ages, ethnicities, economic strata and genders play video games. Streaming platforms have led to online viewership of esports competitions that rivals major professional leagues. Colleges offer scholarships to esports stars in the same way they do to five-star athletes in traditional sports.

While only a few students will “go pro” as an esports competitor, many, many more students will go pro in fields attractive to high-tech companies. Esports prepares students for careers of all types. Esports competitions require hardware, software, networking, security, organization, financial management, artwork, communication, branding, promotion, administration, logistics, and more. Organizations like the North American Scholastic Esports Foundation (NASEF) have developed programs and tools that connect esports to education standards, learning outcomes, and career pathways. For underserved students, going pro means lifting themselves and their families into the middle class.

SAMSAT will use esports to put area high-needs students on the pathway to high-tech careers. SAMSAT is uniquely well positioned to do so. SAMSAT's major sponsor and partner is Port San Antonio. The Port's Innovation Center will stand up in early 2022 with a gaming center and a 3,900 seat arena built ground-up with esports in mind. SAMSAT has served 128,000 mainly Title I students since 2012 through STEM outreach, hands-on STEM programs, museum tours, online classes, digital badging and special programs. A large degree of SAMSAT's efforts bring STEM programs to high-needs schools and non-profits like the San Antonio Housing Authority, SAMMinistries, the Salvation Army, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Boys and Girls Club, and more.

The skills of esports are the same skills needed by today's high-tech employers to build the advanced, accessible, resilient and secure products of the coming decades. Students in esports are learning these skills. They are learning the 4 Cs of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. They are doing so in a setting engaging to them and their support group of friends. For these many reasons, SAMSAT believes esports is here to stay. Delivered properly, esports provides strong learning and support experiences for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth.