

Westchester Country Day adds esports

BY ENTERPRISE STAFF

HIGH POINT —Extra-curricular opportunities for Westchester Country Day School students leveled up with the introduction of the school's first esports team.

Esports is competitive multiplayer video gaming, a growing activity in the U.S. and around the world. Teams of players across the globe compete in organized events for a variety of popular video games.

Westchester's new esports team will compete with students from other independent schools during a seven-week spring season. Westchester is among the first schools in the state to participate in organized esports competition within the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association. The team is coached by WCDS faculty member Andy DiMattia, a math teacher who is an experienced gamer.

"Esports uses similar skills to what you need for sports — mental fortitude, hand-eye coordination and reaction time — minus the physical aspect, so it's very inclusive. It takes some practice to get



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The Westchester Country Day School esports team competes in multiplayer video gaming with other independent schools from across the state. Eleventh-grader MJ Edwards, foreground, plays defense in the vehicle soccer game Rocket League against Cannon School. Also competing are teammates Finn Fleming, far left and Ben Hunsberger as coach and math teacher Andy DiMattia looks on.

to a certain level, but anyone can jump into a game," DiMattia said. "It's a whole world where there are global tournaments for some of these games, and it's been

slowly building up steam since 2010 when people started looking at gaming as more than just playing on their living room sofa."

Esports at Westchester is

open to students in grades 9-12. The team meets after school in a technology lab outfitted with specialized equipment for gaming and robotics. The lab includes

six gaming computers with 34-inch monitors equipped with the refresh rate and resolution to

support fast-paced games, as well as wireless keyboards, mice and headsets. The lab also includes a smart interactive television, gaming desks and chairs, and a seating area for hosting small groups of spectators, students or meeting participants.

"These are gaming PCs, but they run more than games," DiMattia said. "They can be used for broadcasting and video production, graphic design and more. We hope to broadcast some of our games much like sporting events, and that will be student-led. They will learn technical skills colleges are looking for, also, communication, leadership and teamwork."

The esports program is part of a broader initiative to enhance technology education at Westchester, which also includes robotics and an academic emphasis in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, or STEAM, for grades K-12.