

Education

# Showcasing esports excellence

Val Verde Unified School District

In partnership with Lenovo, Val Verde Unified is inspiring more students to get involved in esports through its academic programs and a high-profile annual esports tournament between schools across the district.



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## Who is Val Verde Unified School District?

Val Verde Unified School District operates 22 K-12 schools across Perris and Moreno Valley, California. With approximately 19,300 students, Val Verde Unified aims to cultivate a positive environment that produces life-long learners. The school district includes elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and adult education programs, and employs more than 2,000 people.



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# The Challenge

Esports is growing rapidly in popularity. Today, esports events attract more than [285 million frequent viewers](#) worldwide and generate more than [\\$1.7 billion in annual revenues](#).

Doug Henderson, Director-STEAM at Val Verde Unified School District, says: “Parents and teachers alike are starting to appreciate that esports are about more than playing video games. Esports can impart a range of valuable skills, from teamwork and collaboration to time management and leadership.”

He continues: “We see academic esports as a massive opportunity for K-12 students at Val Verde Unified. We want to take esports to the next level by making it part of our curriculum, wrapping it into other disciplines, and integrating esports into career pathway programs.”



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“We began exploring esports several years ago, using Lenovo Legion desktops for learning during the day and for esports clubs after school. When we decided to put on our first large-scale esports event, we knew exactly who to turn to.”

**Doug Henderson**

Director-STEAM, Val Verde Unified School District

# Putting on a **show**

Using Lenovo Esports Event Service, Val Verde Unified successfully ran its first esports tournament in the spring of 2022—a seven-week Overwatch tournament between schools in the district that culminated in a championship match between the two top teams.

“Lenovo’s help in planning and executing our first esports tournament was invaluable,” recalls Henderson. “They provided lots of great advice and technical support, and helped us set up 10 of our Lenovo Legion desktops at the venue for the big final. The event was a triumph, and the support we received from Lenovo Esports Event Service helped everything go off without a hitch.”

## Services

Lenovo Esports Event Service  
ggRock Spec Ops – Lenovo  
Server Configuration  
ggRock Spec Ops – Daily  
Managed Updates

## Hardware

Lenovo 500e Chromebooks  
Lenovo Legion 5 gaming towers  
Lenovo Legion gaming monitors  
Lenovo Legion gaming accessories,  
including keyboard, mouse,  
mousepad, and headset  
Lenovo ThinkStation P350 towers  
Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Yoga laptops  
Lenovo ThinkPad X13 Yoga laptops

## Software

ggLeap  
ggRock

## Sparkling performance

The 2022 championship was such a success that Val Verde Unified put on another tournament in the spring of 2023. The district worked with a subcontractor that was part of the event team in 2022.

Now, Val Verde Unified is gearing up for its third—and biggest yet—esports tournament, scheduled to take place in April 2024. Based on its experiences of the previous two years, Val Verde Unified chose to partner with Lenovo again and has engaged Lenovo Esports Event Service to provide an end-to-end service, including the delivery and setup of industry-leading Legion desktops, monitors and accessories, ggRock game server rental, project management, on-site assistance, and consulting.

“For the upcoming tournament, we need to set up 100 gaming stations at the venue,” says Henderson. “We have plenty of gaming PCs in the school system—180 desktops and 215 laptops—but we don’t have the time or the resources to bring all that equipment to the venue, configure it, and then disassemble and collect it at the end of the tournament. Lenovo will do all that for us as part of the Lenovo Esports Event Service.”

As part of this service, Lenovo will provide all the equipment Val Verde Unified needs for the tournament, set up the gaming stations at the venue and help run the event. When the tournament is over, Lenovo will pack up and remove the units, too. Lenovo will also provide networking services and a custom-built ggRock game server to help speed up IT integration and game management. “Lenovo will configure an isolated environment from the rest of the campus to securely run our Discord server and Twitch streams for the event—and when everything is finished, they will even pack it all up for us,” confirms Henderson.



“If we went it alone, just setting up the IT infrastructure for the event would take us weeks. With Lenovo Esports Event Service, all we need to do is give the Lenovo team the Wi-Fi password for our venue, and they will take care of the rest.”

**Doug Henderson**

Director-STEAM, Val Verde Unified School District



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## Results

Val Verde Unified's first two esports tournaments were hugely successful. The district's 2022 tournament saw 154 students sign up during the two-week registration drive, including 12 female athletes. Val Verde Unified fielded 20 teams in its augural year.

With the event now entering its third year, momentum is building—200 kids have signed up for the 2024 tournament to compete across three games.

“Our esports teams compete twice a week after school over an eight-week season, culminating in the annual tournament,” says Henderson. “Esports is still in its infancy, but it’s going to grow really big really fast. Thanks to our work with Lenovo, we’re in prime position to promote and grow the sport.”



Plug-and-play gaming systems



Dedicated project management



Easy equipment setup and pickup



# Unlocking the potential

In partnership with Lenovo, Val Verde Unified is transforming esports into an opportunity to deliver new learning experiences for K-12 students.

“We wanted our tournament to be run for kids, by kids—and Lenovo has helped us to do just that,” says Henderson. “For example, our graphic design students designed all the logos for the event, as well as a team jersey, and we assigned our marketing class with the job of creating the advertising plan for the tournament along with promotional materials to drive participation and attendance. We even got our video production class to produce walkout videos, which we screened ahead of the final on our Vimeo and Twitch channels.”

Building on the momentum of the event, Val Verde Unified plans to further develop its academic esports programs. Henderson adds: “Many kids play video games, but parents and teachers are only just waking up to the fact that they can actually turn their passion into a career.”



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“Having Lenovo as a partner takes a big load off my mind when our annual esports competition rolls around. With Lenovo Esports Event Service, we know we’ve got everything we need to run a gripping tournament.”

**Doug Henderson**

Director-STEAM, Val Verde Unified School District

# Why **Lenovo**?

Val Verde Unified began to build its esports program before COVID-19, but the pandemic forced the organization to put its plans on hold. When schools reopened in California, Lenovo was ready to help Val Verde Unified ramp up fast.

“To help esports get off the ground at Val Verde Unified, we needed our first tournament to be a big success,” says Henderson. “With Lenovo Esports Event Service, we knew we were in safe hands.”

Lenovo is a long-term technology partner for the school district, providing Chromebooks for students and ThinkPad laptops for teachers and administrators. And Val Verde Unified continues to work closely with Lenovo to enhance the esports program. “Lenovo isn’t just here to sell me products—they want to help us improve what we’re doing with esports,” confirms Henderson. “I have very high standards, but Lenovo always delivers.”



# How can schools run outstanding esports events?

With Lenovo Esports Event Service, Val Verde Unified School District breaks down the barriers to putting on high-profile esports tournaments.

[Explore Lenovo Esports Solutions](#)