

Join The Game Through ESports

With the decision to start the school year 100% virtually, Athletic Director Andre Criswell and his coaches faced a tough and last-minute decision this fall; participate in competitive sports or sit on the sidelines until a later time when it was safer for our student athletes. After much deliberation, Athletic Director Andre Criswell chose student safety, over playing. U Prep recognizes athletics as a healthy and important form of development for our scholars therefore following this tough decision made by Mr. Criswell, the coaches sprung into action to find an alternative, creative and safe way to engage our student athletes and get them moving.

Our Athletic Department's commitment to serving our student athletes resulted in the soon to be launched, U Prep ESports (Electronic Sports) Club that will be a pilot program until the end of the school year. This new club has two primary goals; the first goal is to establish a competitive platform for the 3 U Prep High Schools. The second goal is to have a non-traditional program as an option for students that may or may not participate in traditional/contact sports while having an opportunity to experience a team dynamic while being exposed to career fields associated with gaming, graphic design, engineering, and more. Connecting athletics and academics will provide students exposure to coding and game design through the Amazon Pathways Program where they will learn about the gaming industry and the many routes they can take within it. "There's a huge focus to educate our students on the gaming industry and present them with this information, experience, and access to apply for scholarships towards college." said Athletic Director Criswell.

Interactive videos and other educational content will be presented through the U Prep Sports Series; a multimedia program that will inform and educate subscribers on a variety of topics to include; mental health & wellness, physical training, and an exploration of career pathways within the gaming industry. Students will also have the opportunity to engage one-on-one with professionals on this platform.

When asked about the inspiration for the program, Director Criswell responded, "We've been fortunate to establish an athletic staff that has diverse experiences in sports on multiple levels. With this wealth of experience, we've been able to discuss the importance of being prepared and well-conditioned to tackle life's challenges. I strongly believe that a holistic approach is best for developing our students and this isn't limited to just the classroom. We challenge students to be scholars in the classroom, a phenomenon in competitive contests, and in order to do these things we must develop the best habits and skills that will help our students be and stay equipped with knowledge about themselves." He also added, "UPrep Schools are proud to be a network of schools that serves the educational needs and passions of all types of students, families and this adds to that effort. Our students will benefit from the ESports because we hope to develop the students to a level that'll make them competitive for scholarships to college and internships."



The athletic coordinators from each of the high schools will be the presenters for the UPrep Sports Series videos, posts, and workshops. Ray Haggard (USPM HS Athletic Coordinator) will host “Motivational Mondays” as we share inspirational mantras, quotes, lessons, and more that’ll help fuel your desire to be at your best. Keith Arnold (UPAD HS Athletic Coordinator) will host, “In My Professional Opinion” segment as interviewees shed light on their experiences and advice to our students. James Pollard (UPAD HS Athletic Coordinator) will host video instructions on physical fitness for the “Work Out Wednesdays” segment and Brittany Foote (UPA HS Athletic Coordinator) will host “Wellness Wednesdays” with a focus on nutrition and health. Esports will be led by Christopher Covington, (teacher at USPM HS) as he develops our curriculum and direction for the club.

Both the UPrep ESports Club UPrep Sports Series will launch via the Athletic’s Instagram platform @uprep_sports, in early November. The ESports Club is limited to our 11th and 12th-grade students as of this year. The hope is that the club will be developed to serve 9th and 10th graders next year. The UPrep Sports Series will be available to view on our social media platforms for all. If there are any questions please feel free to contact Andre Criswell, UPrep Schools Network Athletic Director at Andre.Criswell@UPrepSchools.com or 313-319-0481.

