I am writing an addendum to the eSports article after reading the Carroll Magazine article on eSports in Carroll. There are several points in the article that hasn't said enough about previous attempts at eSports and the efforts by MAGIC to bring an eSports arena to the Townmall at Westminster.

Three companies were interviewed in the article; Savepoint, Tables&Towers and Laughing Coffin. None of the three actually offer eSports and all three have other interests in gaming or entertainment instead of a focus on eSports.

Savepoint has been in the Townmall before moving to Union Bridge. While in the mall, mall management had expressed an interest in eSports or online gaming. However nothing materialized of it and Savepoint eventually moved to Union Bridge. There has been in the past a lack of interest in their Free Game Day in link with the MAGIC collaborative.

Tables&Towers occupies three retail spaces in the mall that were previously used by a storefront called Battlegrounds that did offer online gaming (though I don't recall a focus on eSports). Battlegrounds eventually left and now Tables&Towers hold those locations. Again a lack of interest in online gaming venues.

Laughing Coffin is a location most people never heard of, including myself. There is no successful track record for online gaming there. Along with the other two, they expressed an interest in expanding to eSports but clearly have made no attempts to do so. All three are interested but no plans exist. If these locations did offer eSports what would be the point of a dedicated arena ?

The Townmall had at least two previous attempts at eSports or online gaming, this is after losing the video arcade years ago due to lack of interest. We are now supposed to expect more success with a third attempt and at millions of cost to the City of Westminster ?

The article proceeds to explain what eSports is by using an independent school and the games League of Legends or Overwatch. First, this shows a lack of interest in Carroll County for eSports if there isn't a greater presence than just one non-public school. Second, using a game that requires in-game purchases and is part of the harmful community I mention in the previous short essay is not helping your cause for eSports in the county. Most online games require ongoing purchases of items and costumes to maintain competitive edge against other players that also spend money to win. There is no mechanic within such games by which you compete based on your own merit of skill and ability.

If the school wished to teach technology and skills at developing games or other software I could be more supportive but the current gaming culture and community does not support such a curriculum. The fact that it is a art and film teacher in charge of the class raises some interesting possibilities (like further educating students on writing and art content in games).

But the articles focus on teamwork and communication is a bit of a red herring as these games are not concern with such attributes to win, rather how much you can spend to win. They also mentioned Fortnite which is another game which requires ongoing costs to win rather than one's own ability.

These games are not sports and shouldn't be addressed as such. Legal recognition as a sport is meaningless without the focus on ability and skill rather than accounts and purchases. I could welcome gaming competitions using video games tournaments much as chess tournaments express a gamers skill and strategy but unfortunately that is not how these games are established.

The article goes on to discuss shortly Ninja Code for teaching game development to students. However most of these develop programs do not use current technology or practices found in the actual industry. Most computer programs (games or otherwise) are still developed in C (or C# more recently) using established tools and not toy languages used by these education programs like Scat or Python. Student will not learn techniques used in the actual workplace or workforce.

The article makes a comparison with Seoul, South Korea. A city and nation that has invested in broadband networks to bring over 1.5 Gigabit speeds (at an approximate cost of $40-45 per month in 2012) and art assets in games that are over 4k quality (about same time frame). The only reason for their success is a willing investment in technology and networks as well as a community that desired it in the first place. Neither of these things exist in Carroll County.

However even Seoul has had to deal with an abusive gaming culture from both the game publishers and the gamers themselves.

The Carroll Magazine does not address these concerns or gives an accurate picture of gaming communities and eSports leagues. These games are corporate properties only concerned with profit. Players are regularly abused and even banned from competition for making statements in other social media platforms. This just happened in Heartstone competitions (another for profit eSports league sponsored by Blizzard/Activision). Where a gamer could not make statements supporting democracy in Hong Kong, as Blizzard would not allow statements that go against Chinese interests.

Corporations that publish these games and leagues use gambling mechanics and require ongoing purchases to pad their bottom line to the tune of billions in a single annual quarter. The CEO of the aforementioned Activision has been known to make billions of dollars pay no taxes and get hundreds of thousand of dollars in his tax returns. The UK, Netherlands and Australia have already investigated these games and companies for promoting gambling (what the companies call 'lootboxes'). The Netherlands have already legally recognized it as gambling and UK/Australia are still on the fence regarding recognition and what regulations to put in place.

STEM and education programs still refuse to teach actual workplace skills using actual tools from the related industry. These tools exist and can be obtained for free if they bother to look for them.

We need to address the issues of no successful plan for eSport let alone any actual desire for it except for one collaborative that has no track record. We need to make sure that abusive and greedy corporations do not use such leagues and competitive entertainment to prey on school children any more than they do now. Such abuse should not be part of any curriculum. Education programs (these third-party programs and STEM branded products) need to start teaching actual workforce skills and not use software and technology not found in the workplace.