

7 Esports transformed Hong Kong teen with learning disabilities

By Rachel Yeo

1 **1** Fifteen-year-old Tam Kwong-kit, who has moderate learning disabilities, used to be unfocused in class, and refused to do homework or get dressed for school in the morning. When in a bad mood, he would throw tantrums in front of others.

2 But Tam's teacher said taking part in esports had helped the Form Three student change his behaviour for the better. Tam is one of twenty students with special education needs (SEN) involved in Caritas Lok Jun School's extracurricular esports team. He has always enjoyed playing casual games on the iPad, but his foray into esports started when the team was launched in September last year.

15 **3** Esports, or electronic sports, refers to online games played in a competitive setting, individually or in teams.

4 "I really like computer games and typing," Tam said shyly while playing a quick round of *Clash Royale* on an iPad, a multiplayer online game. Users in opposing teams compete with the objective of defeating an enemy king in a limited time frame.

25 **5** While Tam appeared reserved displaying his skills in front of journalists, teacher Ken Li Siu-ting shared that the teen could be jovial and lively when gaming with familiar individuals, deploying troops and casting spells at ease. "He smiles a lot when gaming with his friends and can be quite talkative

when discussing strategies," Li said. "It's quite obvious and we saw that his behaviour changed a lot this year. His mum actually encouraged him to continue to play more games, and teachers say he is more attentive in class."

6 The trend of applying esports at school is developing in Hong Kong, but Caritas Lok Jun School in Sha Tin, a special school for children with moderate intellectual disability, is one of the pioneering SEN schools in using esports.

7 Being exposed to popular games such as *Minecraft*, *Overwatch* and *Clash Royale* during after-class training sessions has helped students like Tam gradually become more creative, self-disciplined, respectful to classmates and capable of fostering good team spirit, according to Li.

8 A physical education teacher for over a decade, Li also believes video games can enhance hand-eye coordination. During esports sessions, students get to do simple relaxation exercises to prevent eye strain, while also stretching their arms, legs and hips.

9 Introducing esports to his students has also helped Li, who joins their gaming activities, foster greater bonds with them. "Playing games with my students helps me communicate with them better. We feel like friends and learn together," he said.

10 The school's esports team used to conduct their weekly training with external coaches at a dedicated centre at a Sha Tin hotel, with a government grant of HK\$47,500. Since the pandemic hit Hong Kong, the school has bought equipment — including monitors, special chairs and keyboards — and plans to continue with the training in-house. When classes are suspended, students can also play games at home on an iPad and be **coached** through video calls.

11 Victor Cheng, executive director of Hong Kong Education City, a company owned by the government to promote technology in learning, said SEN students could outperform their **counterparts** in terms of creativity. “The traditional ways of learning often require literacy skills that SEN students may not master as well as other students,” he said. “This opens up a new area they can compete for on the same level playing field as normal students.”

12 The organization is running an expo in December to showcase education strategies after Covid-19, including esports for SEN students.

13 Dr Victor Ching, an educational psychologist from Hong Kong Developmental Pediatrics Centre, said video games could **stimulate creativity** among SEN students and enhance greater cooperation with others. “It depends on the games selected and how

teachers follow up with SEN students [after the gaming sessions], it can be a good start,” he said.

14 However, playing video games in an educational manner is still not commonly accepted in Hong Kong, as excessive gaming can lead to negative effects such as **addiction**.

15 Dr Fanny Lam, a specialist in developmental-behavioural paediatrics, advised caution, saying there was still a lack of scientific research supporting the use of popular games to educate children. “Children with special learning needs are **prone to** developing internet gaming addiction,” she said. “If we balance the pros and cons and limit screen time it should be OK, but we have to think of consequences if these activities are not controlled by adults.”

16 Li also recalled the initial challenges of convincing parents to adopt the idea, but emphasized the importance of avoiding excessive gaming, such as setting timetables to monitor children's gaming time at home. “Parents were initially worried but became quite supportive after making observations on how [their children] are learning life skills through gaming,” Li said. “It's not just simply playing games as there are clear learning objectives in place.”



Comprehension

Answer the following questions using information from the article.

Vocabulary



Hint

1. What is the meaning of the phrase “throw tantrums” as it is used in line 5?

- A. have an outburst of anger
- B. toss food around
- C. hit people with objects
- D. refuse to talk

A B C D

Specific factual

2. What is Tam’s experience with video games at different periods in his life? (2 marks)

- i) before September last year: _____
- ii) after September last year: _____

Vocabulary

3. Find a word in paragraph 4 that means “aim”.

Inference

4. Which of the following best describes the different sides of Tam’s personality as described in paragraph 5?

- A. moody and energetic
- B. withdrawn and quiet
- C. noisy and argumentative
- D. shy and cheerful

A B C D

Specific factual

5. According to paragraphs 4–5, what kinds of games is Tam playing? Tick (✓) the appropriate statements below. You may tick more than one statement.

- i) games that involve soldiers _____
- ii) games that involve royalty _____
- iii) games that involve city settings _____
- iv) games that involve talking animals _____
- v) games that involve magic _____

Implicit information

6. According to paragraphs 6–8, are the following statements True (**T**), False (**F**), or Not Given (**NG**)? (4 marks)

Statements	T	F	NG
i) Caritas Lok Jun School is one of the first schools to use esports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ii) Tam does not throw tantrums anymore.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
iii) Tam uses esports during lessons and this has made him more creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
iv) Li thinks that elements of physical education can be incorporated into esports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Specific factual

7. What are two advantages of esports according to Li? (2 marks)

- i) _____
- ii) _____

Specific factual

8. What are the three locations where students have played or will play esports? (3 marks)

- i) _____
- ii) _____
- iii) _____

Reference



9. Who are the “counterparts” (line 68) of the SEN students?

Reference

10. What do the following refer to? (2 marks)

- i) “The organization” (line 75) _____
- ii) “it” (line 84) _____

Specific factual

11. What does Dr Fanny Lam think the consequences might be if internet gaming is not controlled by adults?

Inference

12. Below are comments made by some of the people mentioned in the passage. Match each person with one comment. Use each letter ONCE only. One comment is not used and you should select 'Not Applicable.' (6 marks)

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| A. Victor Ching | B. Victor Cheng | C. Fanny Lam |
| D. Tam Kwong-kit | E. Ken Li | F. Not Applicable |

Comments	Person
i) Esports are fine for students, but not just any game is suitable.	
ii) Esports is not just for fun, it can create social bonds between team members.	
iii) I am sceptical about using video games as a learning tool.	
iv) In certain areas, regular students may not do as well as SEN students.	
v) Video gaming has been proven to have a calming effect.	
vi) Learning to work in a team has benefited me at school.	