ESPORTS PLAYBOOK

A Comprehensive Framework for Minecraft Education Esports Clubs, Build Challenges, and Competitive Events

SECTION 1
Purpose of This Playbook

Esports means organized, competitive video gaming. Minecraft Education Esports offers a unique approach to competition by prioritizing creativity, collaboration, and nonviolent problem-solving.

Unlike traditional esports titles that rely on reaction speed or elimination mechanics, Minecraft Education enables students to work in teams to design solutions, build collaboratively, and present their ideas in a structured, supportive environment. This makes it accessible to a broader range of learners, including girls, neurodiverse students, and younger grade levels.

This toolkit will provide inspiration and high-level guidance for building a Minecraft Education esports program in your organization, whether you are hoping to bring more diversity and creativity to your after-school clubs and existing esports programs or launch a large-scale event to engage every student across your district in a program that your community can rally around.

Watch this companion video to get inspired: aka.ms/EsportsTraining

This playbook is designed for:

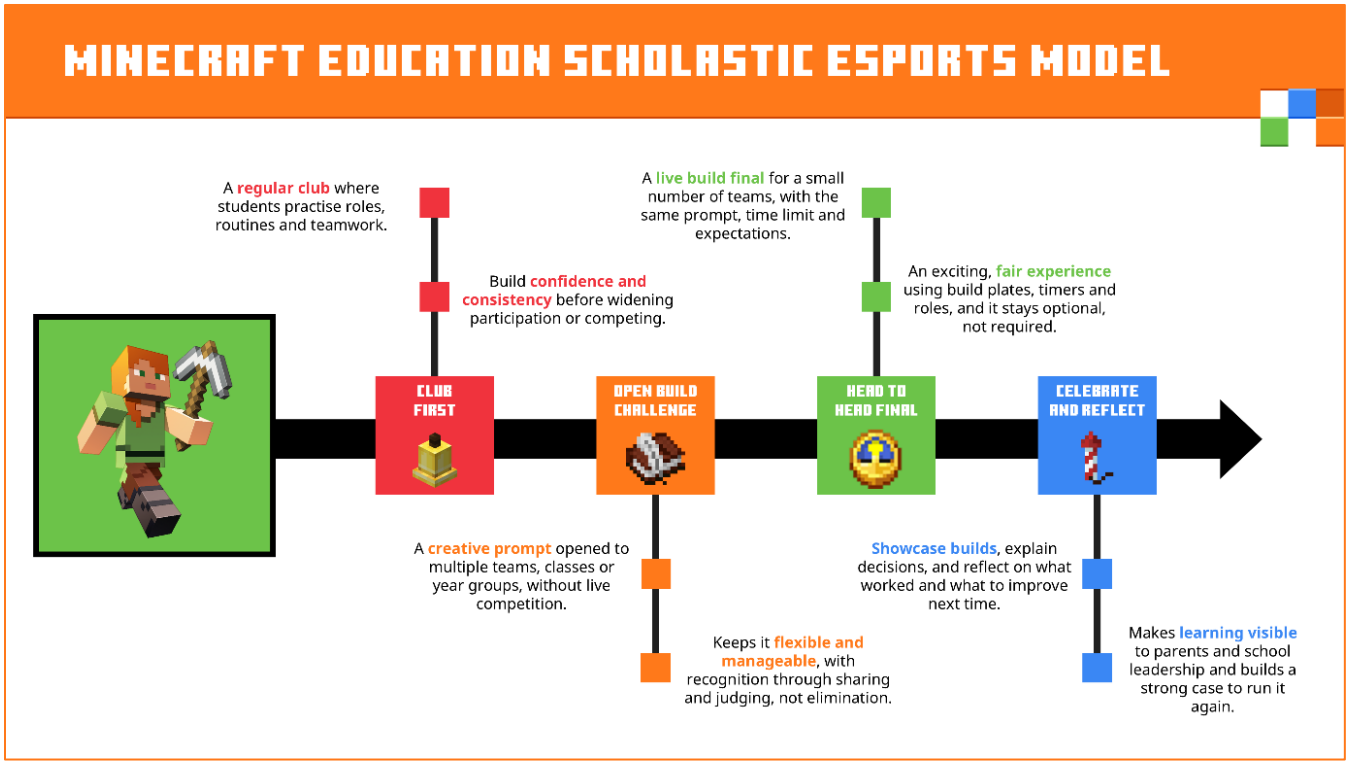
- **Educators** seeking to introduce creative competition into their classrooms or afterschool programs.
- **School leaders** looking to develop inclusive esports initiatives without requiring prior esports infrastructure.
- **District or organizational teams** planning largescale events to engage broad student populations.

SECTION 2
Minecraft Education and Scholastic Esports

Esports is a rapidly growing global phenomenon, with dedicated leagues, teams, and events that mirror traditional sports in structure and cultural impact. It teaches valuable skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, and strategic thinking.

Minecraft Education adapts these strengths into a school-appropriate format that emphasizes learning, wellbeing, and inclusion. In scholastic settings, esports becomes a vehicle for:

- **Belonging and inclusion**: creating spaces where students who may not participate in traditional sports or clubs can contribute meaningfully.
- **Teamwork and wellbeing**: developing collaboration, communication, and resilience through structured group work.
- **Creative competition**: engaging students in design challenges that require planning, problem-solving, and presentation.
- **Program design and delivery**: offering a scalable model that can begin with a small club and grow into school or district-wide events.



WHY MINECRAFT EDUCATION?

Minecraft Education is a game-based learning platform used by millions of educators and students across more than 115 countries. It supports collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and spatial reasoning, and includes features such as Code Builder for in-game coding. Minecraft Education is included in most Microsoft 365 software subscriptions for schools. Any school organizations that own these subscriptions have access to Minecraft Education at no additional charge.

Learn more at: aka.ms/mcedulicensingguide

Minecraft Education Esports emphasizes:

- **Creative problem-solving**
- **Team-based collaboration**
- **Non-violent gameplay**
- **Visible learning processes**
- **Equitable participation**

These themes form the foundation of our Four Pillars Framework:

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

Two major case studies illustrate how Minecraft Education Esports can scale:

New York City Public Schools — Battle of the Boroughs

New York City Public Schools built a program that was available to all one million of their students. It engaged over 600 student teams across five boroughs with its three-phase model featuring Build Challenges, Borough Qualifiers, and Finals. It culminated in the Mayor's Cup awarded to top teams.

For more watch: aka.ms/battleoftheboroughs

Ireland's Future Is MINE

Ireland's Future Is MINE was a national Minecraft Education competition and TV show created by Microsoft Dream Space and RTÉ jr. It challenged primary school students across Ireland to collaboratively design and build sustainable, accessible, and futuristic versions of their local communities. It involved 27% of all primary schools in Ireland and saw provincial qualifiers which led to a national final broadcast on television. It focused on sustainability and future-focused design challenges.

Check out this blog for more about this competition: aka.ms/Irelandfuture

These examples demonstrate that Minecraft Education Esports can be adapted to any scale, from a single classroom to an entire country!

SECTION 3
Starting With a Club

Starting with a club is the most practical and sustainable approach and entry point for launching a Minecraft Education esports program. This aligns with the realities of school schedules, device availability, and educator workload, while laying out the groundwork for inclusive participation, teamwork development, and future competitive opportunities.

WHY BEGIN WITH A CLUB?

A club provides a low-pressure environment where students and educators can build confidence with Minecraft Education, practice collaboration, and establish routines before introducing formal competition.

It removes any expectation of immediately running tournaments or large-scale events and instead focuses on consistency, belonging, and foundational skill development.

It becomes an ideal way to ease into esports.

A club first approach supports:

- **Belonging and inclusion** by welcoming students with diverse interests, abilities, and experience levels
- **Teamwork and wellbeing** through structured routines and shared expectations.
- **Creative skill-building** via low-stakes build challenges
- **Program sustainability** by allowing educators to scale only when ready

SETTING UP A MINECRAFT EDUCATION ESPORTS CLUB

A successful club begins with clear structure, predictable routines, and a manageable scope. The goal is not scale, but consistency.

Group Size and Scheduling

Clubs can vary in size depending on space, devices, and supervision. The key is selecting a schedule that can be maintained reliably over time.

As for size, 6–12 students is typical for early sessions. Larger groups (15–20+) are possible with established routines. Clubs can meet weekly, bi-weekly, or during designated wellbeing or enrichment blocks.

Technology Requirements

Minecraft Education is included in most Microsoft 365 school subscriptions. No gaming PCs, controllers, or specialized equipment are required, and is supported on Chromebook, iPad, Mac, PC, and mobile (Android and iOS).

Learn more about technology requirements and deployment here: aka.ms/edusystemrequirements

Early Sessions: Building Familiarity

Initial club meetings should focus on:

- Joining and hosting multiplayer worlds: aka.ms/MinecraftEDUMultiplayer
- Basic building and navigation
- Assigning roles within teams
- Practicing communication and collaboration
- Exploring pre-built worlds or simple prompts

These early experiences help students understand expectations and build confidence before competition is introduced.

Creating a Club Charter

A club charter is a shared agreement that defines how students work together. It is co-created with students early in the club's development, ideally in the first or second session.

Purpose of the Charter

The charter establishes norms for communication and teamwork and defines how mistakes and disagreements are handled. It clarifies expectations for roles and responsibilities and supports student wellbeing by creating a safe, predictable environment. It also becomes a reference point if issues arise.

Developing the Charter

Educators can guide students through questions such as:

- How do we want this club to feel?
- How do we communicate respectfully?
- What do we do when someone makes a mistake?
- How do we make decisions as a team?
- What happens if someone breaks the rules or disrupts the build?

The resulting charter should be short, visible, and revisited regularly. It becomes a living document that can be updated as the club evolves.

INTRODUCING BUILD CHALLENGES IN THE CLUB

Once routines are established, build challenges become the core activity of the club. These challenges are low pressure, collaborative, and designed to develop skills that will later support competitive formats.

Build challenges are the foundation of Minecraft Education esports. They are the most flexible, inclusive, and educationally rich component of the program, and they serve as the bridge between club level activities and school- or district-wide competitions.

Minecraft build challenges start by posing a challenge to students and inviting them to design solutions. Teams of students build their solutions in Minecraft Education and typically create a flyover video submission of their build, including a voiceover describing what it is they've built.

Here's an example aka.ms/flyovervideo.

Build Challenges offer a great way to engage students in building solutions for core school subjects, local issues, and real-world problems. The scale of the challenge is ultimately up to the educator and school leader to decide.

Challenges can be hosted at the classroom level, as part of an after-school club, or even bring together an entire campus, school district, or country to participate.

In the next section, you'll see examples of how different organizations have shaped their esports programs, all starting with a build challenge that is open for every student to participate in, and then moving on to the competitive tournament portion, where teams compete head-to-head until one is crowned the champion.

Characteristics of Early Build Challenges

Early challenges should be:

- **Short:** we recommend (20–40 minutes maximum)
- **Collaborative** rather than competitive
- **Open-ended** to encourage creativity
- **Aligned to meaningful themes** such as sustainability, accessibility, or community design (there are some examples in the next section)

Characteristics of an Open Build Challenge

- **Flexible timing:** Students build during class, club time, or at home
- **Broad participation:** Any student or team can submit a build
- **Low pressure:** No live competition is required
- **Meaningful themes:** Prompts often focus on sustainability, accessibility, community design, or future-focused challenges
- **Structured evaluation:** Submissions are judged using a rubric
- **Celebration:** Recognition is given for creativity, teamwork, and alignment to the prompt

This flow can be adapted for club settings, with or without formal judging.

Gradually Introducing Competition

Competition should be introduced only when students are ready, and routines are well established. Early competitive experiences remain low stakes and internal to the club.

Internal Mini Competitions

Educators can introduce two teams building to the same prompt working with a shared time limit, simple rubric, and peer voting or reflective discussion.

These experiences help students practice working under time pressure, presenting their ideas, demonstrating sportsmanship, and applying the club charter in real scenarios.

Preparing for Future Tournaments

As students gain confidence, clubs can begin exploring, more structured build challenges, Make & Model maps, timed events, a variety of presentation formats and a rubric-based evaluation.

This progression prepares students for school-wide or district-wide events without overwhelming them early on.

Scaling from a small, consistent club to a broader school-wide or district-wide esports program is a natural progression once routines are established and when students (and educators) are confident, and everyone is ready to take it to the next level.

SECTION 4
Designing and Running Build Challenges

We showed that open build challenges are often the most impactful part of a program because they reach the widest audience. Here's how to expand it:

DESIGNING A SCHOOLWIDE BUILD CHALLENGE

All great Minecraft Esports programs start with a well-planned build challenge. Below are the steps needed to develop and launch your challenge, but if you'd like more guidance, check out our build challenge toolkit here: aka.ms/Buildkit.

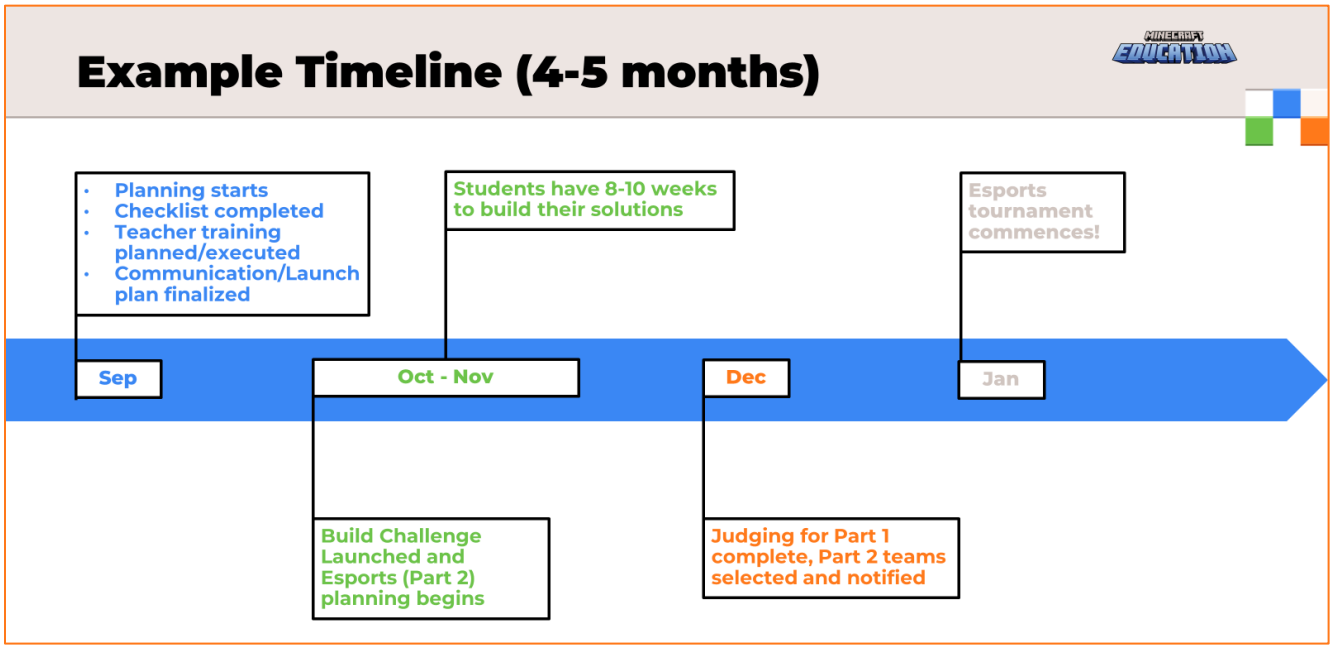
1. **Decide who will participate.**

   Any student from the district? Specific grade levels? Can students form teams, and with how many students? Will students be able to participate in the challenge as part of class time, or is this an after-school/supplemental activity? Is there a registration process to participate?

2. **Select a timeline.**

   When will the build challenge run? How much time will you give students to

build their solutions? When do you want to announce the winners? How long do you expect it will take to review submissions? A large-scale program may follow a 4–5-month timeline, but smaller schools can compress this into weeks or even days.



This example timeline is built for a larger program, but your build challenge could be run in one class period, or just one day!

3. **Design the prompt**:

   What is the challenge prompt? What problem are you asking students to design solutions for?

4. **Select a Minecraft World:**

   Choose a Minecraft world that supports creativity and clarity:

   - **Blocks of Grass** (recommended starter world)
   - **Biome worlds**
   - **Any world from the in-game library**
   - **Custom worlds created by educators**

   The goal is to provide a consistent, fair environment for all teams.

5. **Determine a Submission Format**

   Select a submission format and platform: How will students produce a video for submission? What tools can they use to capture their video? Is there a minimum and maximum time requirement? Is voiceover required? Where will they submit their final videos?

   Most build challenges use a short video (1–3 minutes), a narrated flyover of the build, and a clear explanation of the solution. Students can use tools such as PowerPoint screen recorder, built-in device screen recording, and third-party tools approved by the school. There's also a great tool here: aka.ms/msclipchamp

   Check out an example of a build submission from NYC here: aka.ms/nycnetzero.

6. **Create a Rubric**

   A rubric ensures fairness, clarity, and alignment to learning goals. Keep it tight (four criteria is plenty) and be sure to use clear language students understand. Make sure to tell them the rubric before they start building, because that's part of making it feel fair; they need to know before they start what success could look like. This makes your life easier, because judging becomes about real learning outcomes, not a debate.

SAMPLE RUBRIC: MINECRAFT EDUCATION CHALLENGE

	Beginning (Below Standard)	Developing (Progressing toward Standard)	Accomplished (At Standard)	Exemplary (Above Standard)	Score
	1	2	3	4	
Use of Theme	The submission doesn't address the theme.	The submission somewhat addresses the theme. The theme information is presented in a clear manner.	The submission addresses the theme. The theme information is presented accurately. There is an emphasis on positive social or environmental impact.	The submission addresses the theme not only in meaningful but also relevant way. The theme information is presented outstandingly clearly and accurately. There is a heavy emphasis on positive social or environmental impact.	
Originality & Creativity	The concept in the submission lacks originality.	The concept in the submission is somewhat creative.	The concept in the submission is creative. It solves a problem presented in the challenge.	The concept in the submission is original and creative, especially as compared with other submissions. It provides an original solution to a real-world problem.	
Collaboration & Project Management	Students lacked organization ability. They also struggled with sharing roles and responsibilities, requiring a lot of support from facilitators/ educators to help with sharing roles and responsibilities.	Students were somewhat well-organized about sharing their workload. They required some support from facilitators/ educators to help with sharing roles and responsibilities.	Students were well-organized about sharing their workload, splitting up roles and responsibilities.	Students were extremely well-organized about sharing their workload, splitting up roles and responsibilities. They also did an excellent job at communicating their solutions.	

Example rubric at aka.ms/Esportsrubric.

7. **Build a Communication Plan**

   How do you plan on communicating the challenge with your colleagues, students, families, and community? Will you create educator and student resources, and how will participants access those? Provide instructions, timelines, submission guidelines, and expectations.

8. **Select Judges**

   Judges may include teachers, school leaders, community partners, or even industry professionals. Judges evaluate submissions using the rubric and select finalists for potential tournament rounds.

9. **Determine Advancement Criteria**

   How many teams will move on to the tournament rounds? How big do you want your tournament/bracket to be? How will you notify teams that they have been selected for the tournament? *You may want to wait and plan your tournament until you see how many challenge submissions you receive.*

   If the build challenge feeds into a tournament, decide how many teams advance, define age groups, establish notification procedures, and prepare for head-to-head rounds.

10. **Moving to Next Steps**

    Now that you've developed and launched your build challenge, your students will have time to plan and create their build challenge submissions. Here is what your students will experience after you have launched the challenge:

    1. **Prepare**: Educators, students, and parents get access to the build challenge launch materials, learn how to participate, and get access to Minecraft Education if they do not already have it downloaded from aka.ms/download.
    2. **Explore**: Students learn the build challenge prompt, form teams, and start to research what solution they will be building in Minecraft Education.
    3. **Build**: Students work individually or in teams to build their solutions in Minecraft Education, bringing their research and plans to life!

4. **Submit**: Students record their submission video, showcasing and explaining their build. Videos are submitted through the chosen submission flow.
5. **Judge**: They identify top submissions as finalists, against the rubric.
6. **Celebrate**: Student success is shared and celebrated. Selected teams move on to the esports tournament rounds.

If you'd like to see some more examples of what final build challenge submissions can look like, check out this YouTube playlist from a previous Minecraft Education's Global Build Challenge hosted with UNESCO.

Moving to Head-to-Head Finals

Once submissions are judged, top-scoring teams can be invited to a **head-to-head final**. This is the competitive highlight of the program, but it is intentionally placed *after* the open challenge to ensure that most students participate in the creative challenge.

Characteristics of Head-to-head Events

- Teams build simultaneously in a Make & Model map
- A timer is visible to all participants
- Judges observe builds in real time
- Students present their solutions at the end
- A rubric determines the winner

Celebration and Reflection

There are many ways to recognize your students including shout-outs at school assemblies, creating certificates or digital badges, showcasing videos on school websites, and displaying screenshots or posters.

Reflection is equally important. Students should consider what they learned and how they collaborated, what they would change next time, and, hopefully, how they grew as a team. This all reinforces the educational purpose of esports and supports long-term program sustainability.

SECTION 5
Running Live Esports Events

Live esports events are the most visible and high-energy component of a Minecraft Education esports program. They bring together the skills students have developed during club sessions and build challenges (teamwork, communication, creativity, and resilience), and place them in a structured, time-bound, collaborative competition.

PURPOSE OF LIVE ESPORTS EVENTS

Live events serve as the culminating experience for top teams emerging from an open build challenge or school-wide program. They showcase student creativity and teamwork in real time and provide an authentic competitive environment. They can reinforce sportsmanship and collaboration under pressure, engage the broader school community, and they offer a structured, fair, and exciting format for determining winners

Minecraft Education's Make & Model maps, built-in timers, and protected build plates make live events accessible and manageable for educators without requiring specialized esports infrastructure.

MAKE & MODEL MAPS

Make & Model maps are pre-built Minecraft Education worlds designed specifically for esports competitions. They provide:

- **Designated build plates** for each team
- **Protected build zones** to prevent interference
- **Team colors and labels**
- **A built-in timer** visible to all players
- **Spectator areas** for judges, educators, or observers

Map Variants

Make & Model maps come in multiple configurations:

- **2-plate maps** for small finals
- **4-plate maps** for mid-sized events
- **5-plate maps** (as used in the NYC's Battle of the Boroughs example)
- **12-plate maps** for large tournaments

Educators select the map that matches the number of teams competing simultaneously.

Structure of a Live Esports Match

We recommended a 90-minute "run of show" for live events.

1. Team Introductions (5 minutes)

The host introduces each team, including school or class, team name, and interesting facts or highlights from their build challenge submission. This builds excitement and recognizes student achievement.

2. Prompt Announcement (5 minutes)

The prompt may be revealed at the start (NYC model) or be provided days in advance (Ireland model). Both approaches are valid; the choice depends on event goals.

3. Research & Planning Period (30 minutes)

Teams discuss the prompt, assign roles, sketch or outline their build, and identify key features they want to include. This period emphasizes teamwork and strategic thinking.

4. Build Period (30 minutes)

Teams build their solution within the Make & Model map under a visible timer. Judges and spectators can observe progress. This phase highlights collaboration, time management, creativity, and problem-solving under pressure.

5. Team Presentations (2–5 minutes per team)

Teams present their builds to judges, explaining their concept, how it addresses the prompt, key design features, and team roles and contributions. Presentations make learning visible and support communication skills.

6. Judging Period (10 minutes)

Judges evaluate builds using the rubric established during the build challenge phase. Criteria typically include alignment to the prompt, creativity, collaboration and their overall quality.

7. Winner Announcement (5 minutes)

The host announces the winning team and highlights what made their build stand out. This moment reinforces sportsmanship and celebrates student achievement.

ROLES DURING LIVE EVENTS

Live events benefit from clearly defined roles for both students and adults.

Student Roles

- **Builder**: constructs the solution
- **Planner**: organizes tasks and structure
- **Presenter**: leads the final presentation
- **Researcher**: gathers ideas and references
- **Timekeeper**: monitors progress
- **Tech Check**: assists with device and join code issues
- **Team Captain**: keeps the team aligned
- **Shoutcaster:** provides live commentary

Adult Roles

- **Host / MC**: guides the event
- **Judges**: evaluate builds
- **Technical Lead**: manages devices and connectivity
- **Facilitators**: support student teams

These roles ensure smooth operation and equitable participation.

In-Person vs. Virtual Events

Minecraft Education supports both formats.

In-Person Events

Students build side-by-side, and judges observe them directly. School community can attend, and these are ideal for finals or celebrations.

Virtual Events

Students join from classrooms or homes, and their presentations can be streamed. These may be more accessible for multi-school or district-wide events but require strong communication and technical coordination.

ENSURING FAIRNESS AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Fairness is essential for maintaining trust and enthusiasm.

Key Practices

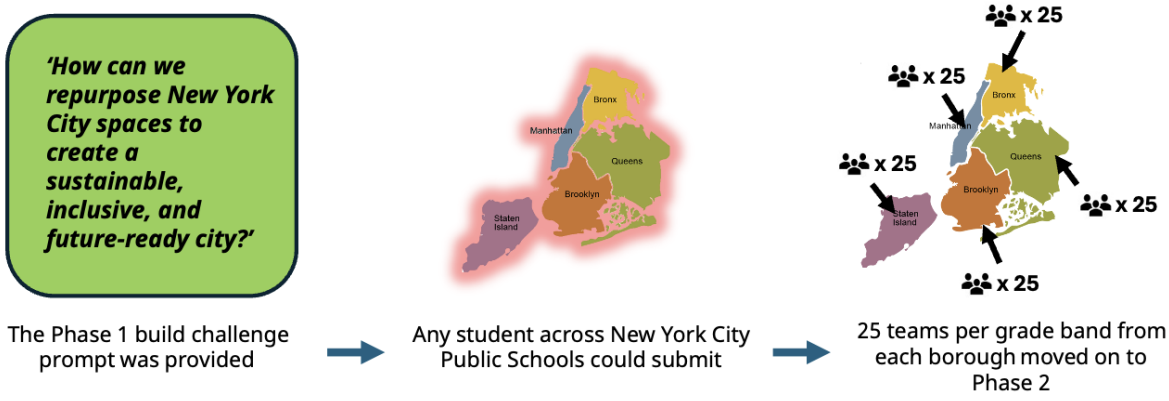
- Use consistent prompts and time limits
- Apply rubrics transparently
- Reinforce the club charter's norms
- Celebrate effort, creativity, and teamwork, not just winning
- Encourage respectful communication between teams

Sportsmanship is a core learning outcome of scholastic esports. Let's revisit our examples of large-format tournaments. Remember, these same formats can also be used on a smaller scale across a classroom, club, or individual school-site.

Example #1: New York City's Battle of the Boroughs

New York City Public Schools built a program that was available to all one million of their students. New York City is divided into 5 boroughs and had students compete initially within their own boroughs, and then later against other boroughs. Below are illustrations of this three-phase competition.

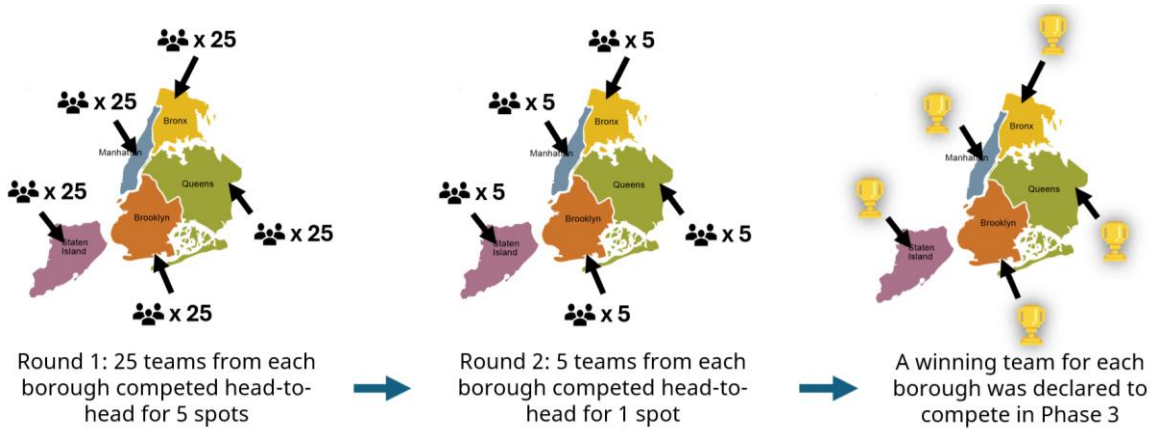
Phase 1 – Build Challenge:



3 grade bands: (Elementary, Middle, and High School)

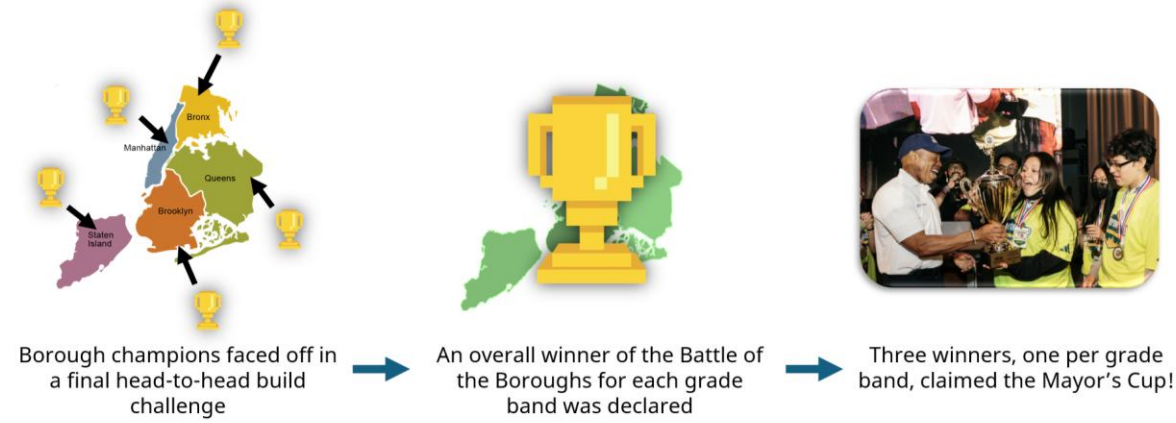
Phase 1 engaged over 600 teams of students. After judging the 600 video submissions against their rubric, 375 teams moved to Phase 2, the Borough Qualifiers.

Phase 2 – Borough Qualifiers:



At the end of Phase 2, 15 total teams moved on to compete for the Mayor's Cup in the Finals.

Phase 3: The Finals



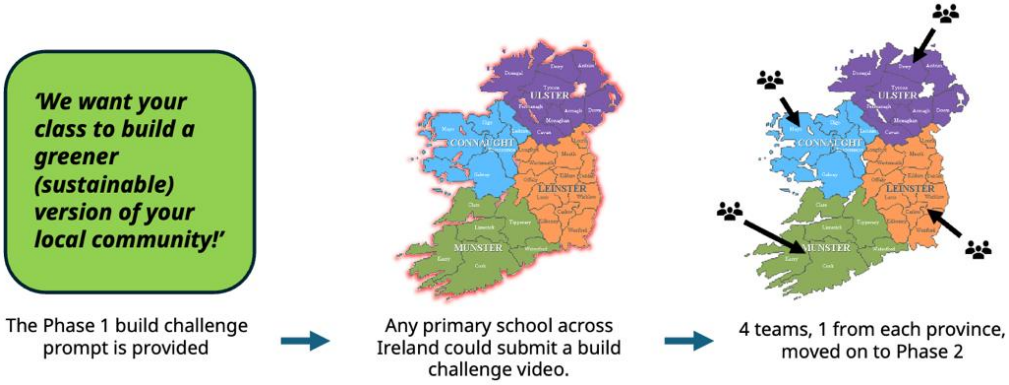
3 final teams, one from Elementary, Middle, and High School, won the Mayor's Cup awarded by New York City Mayor, for their home borough, making them the Battle of the Boroughs champions!

Example #2: Ireland's Future is Mine Competition

Ireland's Future is Mine was open to every primary school across Ireland, with 27% of all primary schools participating! Ireland is divided into four provinces: Connacht, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster. Schools submitted challenge videos from these provinces with the hope of being the chosen school to represent their province in the tournament.

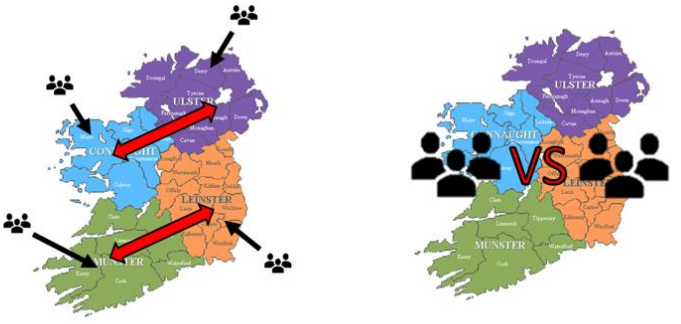
This program was also broken down into 3 phases but had fewer teams participating than NYC, making it a simpler esports model with the same opportunity to engage as many students as possible.

Phase 1: The Build Challenge:



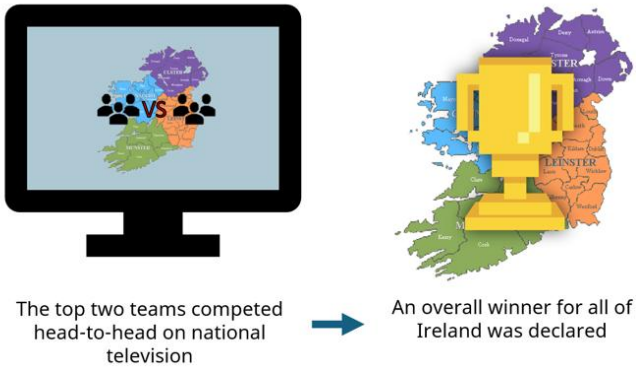
The Phase 1 build challenge prompt is provided → Any primary school across Ireland could submit a build challenge video. → 4 teams, 1 from each province, moved on to Phase 2

Phase 2: The Provincial Semi-Finals:



2 Semi-Final, head-to-head, matches were conducted in Dublin → The two winning teams would move on to the finals

Phase 3: The Finals



Almost 900 classrooms participated in the build challenge with the hopes of moving on to the provincial semi-finals. Following a thorough judging process, only 4 teams, one representing each province, moved on to the esports tournament. Phase 2 had the 4 teams go head-to-head in two semi-final matches hosted in the Microsoft office in Dublin, creating solutions for 'accessible transport of the future'.

The two finalists competed in Phase 3, the Final event, where students were tasked with building a 'fun fair of the future' which broadcasted on national television.

For more see: aka.ms/Irelandfuture

An overview of Minecraft Education's 'Build Battle' maps

Minecraft Education provides free pre-built worlds, or maps, for students to use in the tournament rounds. Minecraft Education has a Subject Kit for Esports located in the in-game library. The Subject Kit includes a "Build Battle" collection featuring a series of worlds to explore. These Make and Model maps promote organized and collaborative play, where student teams have a designated build area, or plate, to build their solutions against the clock next to the other competing teams.

This image is from a tournament being hosted using the 'Make and Model' 12-plate practice arena, where 6 teams are competing head-to-head.

No matter the size of your tournament, or how many teams you'd like to compete head-to-head at the same time (remember, NYC had 5 teams competing at once in a 5 build-plate Make & Model map, and Ireland only had 2) – Minecraft Education will have a Make & Model map that meets your needs.

All the maps have the same features, including designated teams and colors, protected build spaces, room for observation (for those not building), and an in-game timer.

To learn more about how the specific Make and Model features work, and to understand the different types of maps that are available for use in your own tournaments, check out this 'Make and Model' video: aka.ms/makeandmodel.

SECTION 6
Using Copilot as an Educator Support Tool

AI tools like Copilot can significantly reduce planning time and enhance the quality of esports experiences.

1. Designing Prompts and Challenges

Copilot can help generate age-appropriate challenge prompts, variations for different subjects, extensions for advanced learners, and even simplified versions for younger students.

Example:

"Write a Minecraft build challenge prompt for ages 10-12 about "a more accessible school." Include: a 2-sentence brief, 4 build requirements, 1 optional stretch goal, and 3 judging criteria. Keep it positive and student friendly."

Example:

"Create 6 role cards for a Minecraft Education head-to-head build match: Builder, Planner, Timekeeper, Presenter, Shoutcaster, Tech Check. For each: 2 responsibilities, 1 sentence "what good looks like" and 1 reminder for sportsmanship."

2. Creating Rubrics and Assessment Tools

Ask Copilot to adapt the sample rubric to specific learning goals, create differentiated rubrics for diverse learners, and even draft reflection questions or self-assessment tools.

3. Supporting Team Roles and Collaboration

Use Copilot to generate role cards, suggest teamwork norms, write communication scripts, and provide conflict-resolution prompts.

4. **Drafting Communications**

   Prepare parent letters, principal briefings, student instructions, event announcements, certificates and celebration messages with Copilot.

5. **Technical Troubleshooting Guidance**

   Copilot can provide step-by-step instructions for multiplayer setup, suggest steps, and draft checklists for device readiness.

7. **Differentiation and Accessibility**

   Use Copilot to support simplified instructions for multilingual learners, create visual supports, offer scaffolded planning templates, and suggest alternative presentation formats. These capabilities help educators focus on facilitation and student engagement rather than administrative tasks.

SECTION 7
Technical Requirements: Licensing, Devices, Multiplayer Setup & Dedicated Server

A reliable technical foundation is essential for running Minecraft Education esports programs at any scale.

LICENSING AND ACCESS

Minecraft Education is included in Microsoft 365 A3, A5 bundles or as a standalone license, enabling students and educators to sign in with their organizational accounts. No additional esports specific licenses are required.

Minecraft Education Licensing Guide: aka.ms/mcedulicensingguide

Key points:

- Licensing is organization-wide, enabling multiplayer across devices within the same tenant.
- IT administrators can deploy Minecraft Education at scale using standard management tools.
- Students and educators authenticate using their school Microsoft 365 credentials.

SUPPORTED DEVICES AND PLATFORMS

Minecraft Education runs on a wide range of devices commonly found in schools so please check here for the latest information: aka.ms/edusystemrequirements

INSTALLING MINECRAFT EDUCATION

Schools can install Minecraft Education through:

- Direct download: aka.ms/download
- Managed deployment via Intune, SCCM, or other MDM tools
- App stores (Microsoft Store, Apple App Store, Google Play where available)

IT administrators can reference the IT Admin Guide for deployment, configuration, and troubleshooting: aka.ms/admingetstarted

MULTIPLAYER SETUP

Multiplayer is central to esports events. Minecraft Education uses picture-based join codes, making it simple for students to join a shared world. Here is how multiplayer works:

- One device **hosts** the world.
- Other players **join** using a four-image join code.
- All players must belong to the **same Microsoft 365 tenant** (some tenants could have multiple domains attached to them (i.e. a student.domain.net and a domain.net)
- About a dozen players can typically join a single world, depending on host device performance but test your set-up before your event with the same hardware to be used!

Hosting best practices use a stable, up-to-date device for hosting, keep the host device plugged in and stationary, and avoid running other heavy applications during the event.

Encourage students to join early to confirm connectivity. The host can generate a new join code at any time. Students should avoid switching apps during the session to prevent disconnects.

Dedicated Servers for Large-Scale Multiplayer

Minecraft has introduced **Dedicated Servers**, a major advancement for multiplayer reliability, scalability, and cross-school collaboration. Dedicated Servers allow educators and IT administrators to host persistent, high-capacity Minecraft Education worlds without relying on a single student or teacher device. Get the latest about this evolving service here: aka.ms/DedicatedServer

Why Dedicated Servers Matter for Esports

Dedicated Servers significantly expand what is possible for scholastic esports:

- **Higher player capacity** for multi-team build challenges and district-wide events.
- **Improved stability**, with worlds remaining active even if individual players disconnect.
- **Cross-tenant collaboration**, enabling inter-school competitions across different Microsoft 365 organizations.
- **Persistent worlds** that remain available across sessions for long-term projects or multi-round tournaments.
- **Reduced device strain**, since hosting no longer depends on a single classroom device.

These capabilities make Dedicated Servers ideal for largescale esports programs, regional competitions, and multi--school collaborations.

Using Dedicated Servers in Esports Programs

Dedicated Servers enhance every stage of an esports program, making it feasible to run events similar in scale to NYC's Battle of the Boroughs or Ireland's Future Is MINE without relying on local hosting limitations.

- **Clubs and practice sessions**: persistent practice arenas and multi-team scrimmages.
- **Open build challenges**: multiple classes can join the same world at different times.
- **Head-to-head competitions**: reduced risk of disconnects during timed events.
- **District-wide or regional events**: cross-tenant support enables inter-school tournaments.

Best Practices for Dedicated Server Events

- Preload Make & Model maps onto the server
- Test cross tenant access before multi--school events
- Use passcodes to control access during competitions
- Disable broadcast during finals to prevent unplanned joins
- Monitor server status before and during events

Network and Connectivity Requirements

For more information on how multiplayer in Minecraft Education works, or other considerations for your esports events, check out these articles:

- **How To Set Up a Multiplayer Game:** aka.ms/MultiplayerGame
- **Dedicated Server FAQ:** aka.ms/DedicatedServer
- **Multiplayer Esports and Event Technical Considerations:** aka.ms/MultiplayerTech

Preparing Devices for Events

Before a live event:

- Ensure all devices have Minecraft Education installed and updated
- Confirm students are signed in with their school accounts
- Charge devices fully or keep them plugged in
- Test Wi-Fi in the event location
- Prepare microphones or headphones if needed for presentations
- Set up projection or screensharing for judges and spectators
- A short “tech check” session reduces stress and prevents delays.

TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON ISSUES

Common issues and solutions:

- **Cannot join world**: verify Microsoft 365 tenant, host availability, and network access.
- **Lag or performance issues**: reduce player count, close background apps, move closer to Wi-Fi.
- **Join code not appearing**: restart Minecraft Education or check connectivity.
- **Audio/presentation issues**: test equipment before the event and use wired connections when possible.

For more: aka.ms/GetSupported

SECTION 8
Sustaining Your Esports Program

Sustaining a Minecraft Education esports program means moving beyond one-off events and building a long-term ecosystem of creativity, collaboration, and community engagement. Sustainability emerges when esports becomes a normal, valued part of school life rather than a special event.

BUILDING LONG-TERM MOMENTUM

A sustainable esports program grows gradually, guided by the Four Pillars. The goal is not to expand rapidly, but to deepen participation, strengthen routines, and broaden learning opportunities. Key elements of sustainability include:

- Consistent meeting times for clubs
- Predictable annual or seasonal build challenges
- Clear communication with families and leadership
- Opportunities for students to take on leadership roles
- Integration with curriculum and school initiatives
- Celebrations that reinforce belonging and pride

Establishing Minecraft Education Clubs

Clubs remain the foundation of long-term esports engagement and allow for role development, teamwork routines, build challenge practice, leadership opportunities, and peer mentoring. Clubs can evolve into multi-level ecosystems where experienced students help onboard new members, design challenges, or even assist in running events.

Annual or Seasonal Build Challenges

Build challenges can become recurring events that anchor the esports calendar. Schools often adopt:

- **Fall Build Challenge**: community design, sustainability, or school improvement
- **Winter Challenge Series**: themed mini challenges
- **Spring Tournament**: head-to-head finals or district-wide events

These recurring cycles create anticipation and give students multiple opportunities to participate throughout the year.

Expanding Participation Across the School

Sustained programs intentionally widen the circle of participation. Minecraft Education's accessibility makes it possible for entire grade bands, or even entire schools, to participate meaningfully. Strategies for broadening engagement:

- Invite multiple grade levels
- Partner with subject area teachers
- Integrate challenges into curriculum units
- Encourage multilingual learners through visual prompts
- Offer leadership roles for older students
- Create exhibition events for non-competitive participation

Developing Student Leadership

Student leadership is a powerful driver of sustainability. These roles reinforce belonging and ownership while reducing educator workload.

As students gain experience, they can take on roles such as:

- Club captains
- Event hosts or shoutcasters
- Tech support leads
- Build challenge designers
- Peer mentors
- Judges for younger students

Integrating esports into curriculum

Minecraft Education supports cross-curricular integration, which strengthens sustainability by embedding esports into everyday learning. For example:

- **STEM:** engineering challenges, coding competitions, Redstone logic
- **Humanities:** historical reconstructions, cultural storytelling
- **Environmental science:** sustainability and climate design challenges
- **Civics:** community planning and public policy simulations
- **Art and design:** architectural competitions, pixel art challenges

When esports support curriculum goals, it becomes easier to justify time, resources, and long-term investment.

Strengthening community and family engagement

Sustained programs thrive when families and communities are involved. These activities build pride and visibility, reinforcing the value of esports in the school community. Examples include:

- Public showcases of student builds
- School assemblies celebrating finalists
- Community-judged categories (e.g., “People’s Choice Award”)
- Partnerships with local organizations
- Media coverage or school newsletters
- Invitations to watch live finals

Scaling Beyond the School

Once a school has a stable program, it may choose to expand to inter-school competitions, district-wide build challenges, regional tournaments, and even national or global events. The NYC and Ireland case studies demonstrate how scalable the model can be. Scaling should always follow readiness, not pressure. Programs grow best when students and educators feel confident and supported.

Using Data and Reflection to Improve

Reflection is essential for continuous improvement and strengthens learning and informs future planning.

Reflection Questions for Educators

- Which activities engaged the most students?
- Where did students struggle, and why?
- How effective were the roles and routines?
- Did the rubric support fair evaluation?
- What technical issues need addressing?
- How can next year's program be more inclusive?

Reflection Questions for Students

- What did you learn about teamwork?
- What skills did you develop?
- What would you change next time?
- How did your team handle challenges?
- What part of the process made you most proud?

A Sustainable Esports Culture

A sustainable esports program is one where students feel a sense of belonging, where teams collaborate effectively and where creativity is celebrated. Success is seen when events run smoothly, when educators feel supported, and when the wider community recognizes the value of the program. When these elements come together, esports becomes a powerful, enduring part of school culture; one that supports learning, wellbeing, and student agency.

SECTION 9
Tools and Resources for Educators

Minecraft Education provides a comprehensive ecosystem of resources to support esports programs from initial setups to advanced competition. These resources ensure educators do not need to start from scratch.

Esports Subject Kit

These ready-made resources provide environments for both club activities and formal competitions. The in-game library includes Make & Model maps for head-to-head events, Practice arenas, Build challenge templates, and Tutorials and educator guides. Find these Minecraft Education worlds in the in-game library (Launch Minecraft Education and sign in; Click the Play button; Select View Library; Scroll down to select the Esports option).

Build Challenge Toolkit

Download this toolkit at aka.ms/Buildkit for support:

- Designing prompts
- Creating rubrics
- Structuring timelines
- Communicating expectations
- Managing submissions

RESOURCE LIBRARY

- **Get Minecraft Education app**: aka.ms/download
- **Technical Requirements:** aka.ms/edusystemrequirements
- **Licensing Guide**: aka.ms/mcedulicensingguide
- **Tournament Toolkit**: aka.ms/TournamentKit
- **Make & Model Overview Video**: aka.ms/makeandmodel
- **IT Admin Guide**: aka.ms/admingetstarted

These tools ensure educators have everything needed to plan, run, and sustain esports programs. Good luck and game on!