



Digital fun and physical activity at

ACTIVE GAMERS

AUSTRALIA

School holiday program provider Active Gamers Australia was a finalist for the Innovation in Pedagogy and Practice Award at the ECA ACT Gala last year.

Josh Leach, winner of the Educational Leader Award at the Gala, explains how the program encourages teamwork, resilience, physical health—and above all, fun!



Active Gamers Australia is an award-winning school holiday provider that has been operating for less than five years. In that time, it has grown to become what we like to think of as Canberra's most exciting and innovative school holiday program. The Active Gamers program promotes healthy eating, STEM, physical activity and, of course, video gaming. Active Gamers is committed to excellence in education. Our philosophy is to ensure that the children in our care feel valued as individuals and to provide them with extensive opportunities for play-based learning in the areas of social, emotional, physical, intellectual and creative development. We believe that every child deserves equal opportunity to access and enjoy the benefits of gaming. As a provider we continually seek to improve and expand our services to better meet the needs of our diverse community. Through fostering a culture of inclusivity and openness, Active Gamers aims to create a positive and enriching experience for all children who participate in its programs.

The school holiday program seeks to introduce children to a wide range of learning opportunities and experiences they may not get at home or school. The end goal of all experiences provided by the program is for children to have fun. Our educators aim to establish safe and respectful environments where children can confidently explore and engage with each other through play-based learning. Within this safe and welcoming environment, children are encouraged to develop their independence, resilience and self-confidence.

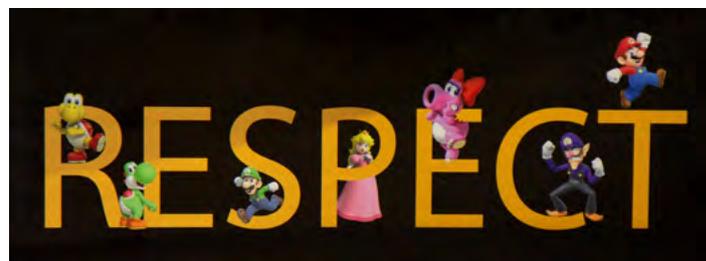


'ACTIVE GAMERS IS SETTING A NEW STANDARD FOR HOW VIDEO GAMES CAN BE USED TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE.'



At Active Gamers, team-building is not just a buzzword, but a fundamental component of our program. Each day children engage in hands-on, small group sessions designed to foster collaboration and problem-solving skills. To achieve this, the Active Gamers leadership team have selected video games that offer rich opportunities for collaborative learning. For instance, children might work together to construct an intricate castle in *Minecraft*, navigate the high seas in search of treasure in *Sea of Thieves*, or colonise a distant planet in *Astroneer*. These games, among many others, have been identified by the leadership team as promoting the development of critical collaborative skills.

To ensure consistency and effectiveness, each game has been integrated into team-building lessons. The lesson plans are shared with staff across all Active Gamers services as a scaffold to run the team-building sessions, but they are also flexible enough to provide staff and participants with the autonomy to improvise changes to promote greater engagement for all stakeholders. Through this approach, Active Gamers is setting a new standard for how video games can be used to promote social and emotional growth among young people.



Upon arrival each day, gamers are sorted into groups with their age peers by Active Gamers educators. Then participants and staff come together in a large, open circle for a whole-group 'Gamer Chat', during which the educators outline the day's timetable, which features a balance of physical activities, team-building sessions, tournaments and challenges. We discuss the Active Gamers 'RESPECT' guidelines, and engage children in meaningful conversations on topics that are crucial to their wellbeing. These topics are carefully selected by staff based on feedback gathered throughout the week, ensuring our chats remain relevant and impactful. We cover a wide range of issues, from cyber-safety and cyberbullying to internet scams and healthy eating habits.

By providing a safe and supportive space for children to share their thoughts and experiences, we empower them with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the online world with confidence. Our morning Gamer Chats are much more than just a daily check-in—they are a critical component of our mission to help young people grow and thrive in the digital age.





We also recognise the critical importance of physical activity in promoting holistic health and wellbeing, and offer a wide range of engaging physical activities throughout the day that are designed to keep children active and energised. Our program partners with coaches from AFL and Cricket ACT to run daily skills-based sport sessions, providing children with a unique opportunity to develop their athleticism and teamwork abilities. In addition, staff lead a daily fitness session, encouraging the children to explore a variety of physical activities that promote coordination, balance and strength.

At Active Gamers, we believe that a healthy body is a key ingredient for a healthy mind, and we are committed to providing young gamers with the tools and support they need to succeed both on and off the screen.

By focusing on the interests of all children who attend the program, we strive to create an environment that fosters engagement and encourages children to be active participants in their own learning. Our program provides opportunities for children to engage in activities that are fun, interactive and promote physical activity. We understand that each child has their own unique interests, and we aim to cater to those interests while also providing a supportive and inclusive environment. Using the *National Quality Framework* as our guide ensures that our program meets the highest standards of quality and provides the best possible learning experiences for all participants.

'BY INCORPORATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO OUR PROGRAM, WE AIM TO INSTIL LIFELONG HEALTHY HABITS, WHILE ALSO PROMOTING SOCIAL CONNECTION AND OVERALL WELLNESS.'

