

# Esports and gaming skills give students new tools – and perspectives

## Case Study

The Acer team have been in Brixton working on a project with South Bank Engineering University Technical College to explore how gaming skills can transfer to the real world and work place. Vice Principal Rob Harding called it ‘an amazing partnership to allow our children to experience the employability skills that are needed in a context which they are used to’. That context is gaming.

South Bank Engineering UTC is a specialist, state-funded school in Brixton, London, set up in 2016 to bridge specific skills gaps in the local economy. Its sponsors include King’s College Hospital and Skanska, a multinational construction and development company based in Sweden. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and

Mathematics) curriculum is designed to give students ‘experience of authentic challenges faced in engineering’ and projects are ‘co-designed and co-delivered with university and employer partners’. Mark Martin, Computer Science Lead at South Bank UTC, says the College was founded to address a massive skills gap in the engineering and health sectors and dedicated to fulfil those particular industry needs.

Acer provided the students at UTC with gaming devices including the Nitro 5 laptop, Nitro N50-600 desktop, Predator Helios 300 laptop, Predator Orion 3000 desktop, Nitro EI431CRP gaming monitor with curved screen.



Mark Martin explains: 'There's a massive perception at the moment that young people are spending too much time on PCs and on gaming consoles, but actually some of the skills that they're using on these platforms can be transferred. We've got young people creating lots of interactive stuff online...building and construction and so forth and that's what the industry needs.'

The project's objective, says Martin, is to showcase the skills that young gamers are learning at home, bring those skills back into school and connect them to their classroom activities. The new set-up with Acer devices



also helps students consider careers in the gaming industry, one of the biggest and fastest-growing sectors across the UK, and understand how Esports and gamification can be used and transferred into education. Martin wants the

students to see that the technology they're using outside school 'can actually be used in school for their empowerment'.



Anna Watson, Product Design and Engineering Teacher at UTC, says 'Projects like this with Acer are really good for the students because they help demonstrate skills like communication and teamwork...and it just lets them see how adaptable the skills they are using can be across the board'. Watson thinks that gaming is an especially good space for creativity: 'In a virtual world, getting over the barrier of failure, which is ongoing with creativity, is a lot easier.' She agrees that levelling up, the general progression in games, could be compared to progress in education: 'It's a very similar concept. In gaming, you need to start right at the bottom, level one, moving through those different stages until you can become master of it.'

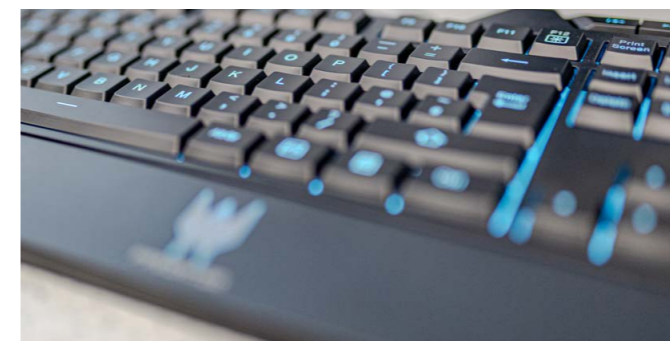
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*said Anna Watson, Product Design and Engineering Teacher at UTC*

The reaction from students was very positive. Aspiring civil engineer Kalechi, 17, whose favourite subject is physics, said the Predator headphones supplied had improved his communications with the team, and he liked the ACER Nitro mouse, which he found really comfortable and easy to use. He also likes the fact that the school is taking part in the project and says his teachers are putting him 'on the right track with this'.



Ricarneye, 18, already owns an Acer 935. He enjoys chemistry, plans to study electronic engineering and likes Esports, which he says have had a great impact on his view of school and allowed him to get to know his peers better. He has also developed better team-work and



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*said Nile, 15*



listening skills, which he can now apply to his studies. Ricarneye was taken by the Nitro 5, by the quality of its graphics and quick response.

Nile, 15, also a chemistry enthusiast, uses a Playstation 4, Xbox laptop and a phone at home. Nile likes the speed and feel of the Acer products and also the peripherals. 'My favourite product was the monitor', which is so wide that 'you can have the game in the middle and, for example, your streamed chat on one side and your streamed playback on the other.' Asked why he had relished the experience so much, Nile replied 'I've enjoyed using the products at school because I was using them doing what I love to do at home'.

Jake, 14, is a self-confessed 'tech nerd'. He prefers Computer Science to other subjects and is aiming for a career in gaming and Esports, perhaps as a tech reviewer or in another branch of technology.



He likes the high-end specs and RTX card of the Predator Orion 3000 desktop. Esports have changed his perception of school: 'Originally, computers in school for gaming were considered a hobby but now Esports is becoming a thing, I see it more as a potential future path – and fun, as well.' Jake also believes that gaming improves communication, teamwork and leadership.



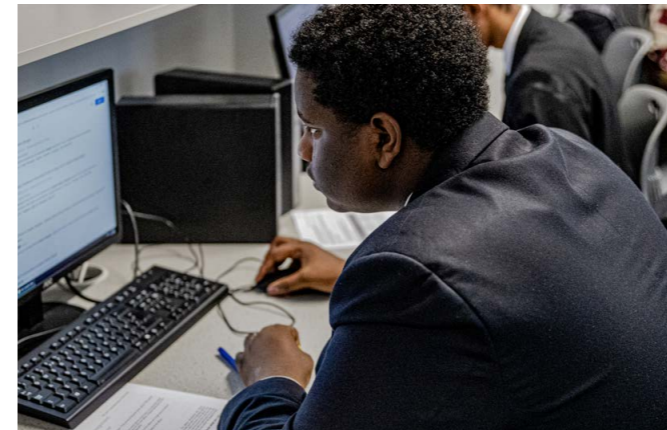
Indeed, many students voiced their firm approval for the UTC/Acer initiative. The reaction of parents was mixed but mostly in favour of exploiting the students' gaming talents to further their education. 'We always have to reinforce to parents the skills that are needed in these competitions. It's not just the playing of the games, it's actually the practising of those skills within those game settings,' explains Vice Principal Harding. The students enjoyed the experience, which had given the UTC another opportunity 'to test these skills that we talk about in the classroom'.



Harding believes that South Bank UTC has to be forward-thinking. 'We have to ensure not just that our school and our equipment are future-proof but that our children are future-proof as well. It's really important that the children get a chance to experience the high-tech, high-end machinery presented by Acer, ensuring that they can use it

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and practise it and it becomes the norm. What they are using now is what they will be doing in the workplace and at university.'

Mark Martin agrees. The project focuses on teamwork, creativity, aiming high, problem-solving and critical thinking, the principles that the UTC fosters in its students. 'These skills are going to be the ones that are going to be most needed in the future.' He says that during the last few weeks, young people have been able to see themselves as leaders and play active roles in different parts of online gaming and Esports. 'It's actually being more strategic and setting up a team that is able to compete on a global stage.' Martin believes that 'Gamification in education is key...Young people are solving big problems online...If we're able to bring more of these similarities together, it will definitely help create a better ecosystem for gamification in education.'



Martin is now working with government, with higher institutions and tech companies to develop the concept. He says the UTC/Acer project offered 'A great opportunity to bring Esports into a classroom to show what can happen through bringing this innovation in and then what we can do as a wider system to really embed this into the curriculum and to really champion the initiative.'



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