



Alleman Catholic High School
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www.allemanhighschool.org

Fun name of game at Game Club

Alleman Game Club advisor Jim Boudro has nothing against board games like Monopoly, Scrabble or Clue.

But he can't help compare them to the Model T. "The problem with those games is they are 60 years old, so it's kind of like talking about driving a Model T," said Boudro, a math teacher by day at Alleman Catholic High School. "The problem is the Model T was a nice car but cars have improved a little bit since the Model T," he noted. "Games have also done that."

So don't expect to play Monopoly if you join the Game Club on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school in the library. Boudro and Gene Elsner, art teacher and golf coach, hold court there for students looking to take a nice one- to two-hour break before hitting the books that evening.

The purpose of the club is simply to provide a place to play, said Boudro. "Because in high school these days, kids are overbooked," Boudro said. "More research is coming out that shows that unstructured play time really has great benefits to kids in their development.

"I think we do a disservice to high schoolers if getting them ready for college is the only thing we do."

That's important, too, Boudro believes. But they need to have some play time. "They're still developing and they need that play time because it's good for



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them,” he said. “It’s good for anyone, but especially them.”

With warmer weather sticking around longer than usual this fall, attendance has been small. But it was not that long ago when 20 students would show up.

As the snow and temps fall, those numbers could go up fast. And that would be just fine with Boudro.

Everyone is welcome, no matter what their game tastes, Boudro said. “I keep a stack of games in my room, and I usually just pull down three or four for the day.”

Early on for new members he may go with entry-level games that take little explanation. He also tries to pick games that he knows kids have loved in the past. Boudro also makes recommendations after observing students, as to what game they might like the next time.

Boudro and Elsner try to briefly and simply explain rules as one thing Boudro does not want is a student to have to refer to the rule manual much at all. “My belief is that if they have to do that, I have failed them,” he said. “I provide the games and am sort of a walking game-rule manual.” The goal is to have them started within five minutes, he added.

The Game Club is actually an outgrowth of the chess club, which was the starting point when counselor Lynn VandeHeede approached Boudro 14 years ago about running one for the Alleman students. But kids see a chess club like math, Boudro said. Game club is supposed to be a break, and so the chess club morphed into the Game Club, he said.

Game club is certainly not a team, he added, and generally responsibility free. “This is a safe place to come and get away,” he said. “Sort of a shelter from all



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their responsibilities they feel like they have to do. Put that aside and just have fun here.”

The club’s spot on the Alleman website is under Student Life. It notes games played include auctions, cooperative, political and historical recreation and economic resource management. It also notes Game Club is open to all students and is a welcome relief to anyone who wants to work with the brain while having fun.

Several testimonials can also be found, and it’s clear the real name of the game at Game Club is fun. Just ask junior Noah Kelly who has been playing since he was a freshman.

“It’s just fun,” Kelly said. “It’s just a good stress reliever on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It relaxes me before I start my homework.”

Some of the top favorite games these days are “Ticket to Ride,” where a player connects cities across the U.S, and First and Goal, a football game involving dice and plays and play calls by opposing coaches (players).

Kelly likes First and Goal. Another of his favorites is Betrayal at the House on the Hill, which involves exploring a haunted house.

Kelly welcomes new students to the club. “Definitely just come out and see if you like it,” he said. “There’s a game for pretty much anyone. Anything you’re interested in, there’s probably a board game for it.”

Boudro welcomes news students, too. He wants them to have fun and hopes they come back often. The benefit of being in Game Club shows up, he believes, as they get older, besides some immediate stress relief.



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“I am saying this as a math teacher, kids do a lot of problem solving in just one hour of playing one of my games, ”he said. “They encounter problems that aren’t tackled in a math book.

“Play translates into creativity,” he added, “which is part of our imagination, which translates into skills that can’t be taught.”

■ **Alleman Alumni Relations Coordinator Jim Meenan**