

School of Skate

By Jeff Ives



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Students in Colorado are riding a school skateboarding trend.

Skateboard class is rolling into schools! For sixth grader Carlos Cervantes, learning to skateboard takes a lot of work, but it's worth it. "[On] the first day of class, I was scared, but I tried it," the 12-year-old told *WR News*. "After two days' practice, I felt more comfortable."

Carlos is learning to skateboard in an after-school program at West Middle School in Aurora, Colorado. Skateboards are now finding their way into the regular school day as well. Douglass Elementary in nearby Boulder is the first public school in the country to offer skateboarding in gym class.

Douglass's physical education (PE) teacher Richard Cendali starts his skateboarding class by teaching students how to put on their safety gear and how to fall without getting hurt. Then kids start rolling around the gym. "Sometimes they're so excited, they fall. They're screaming, 'I'm doing it! I'm doing it!'" says Cendali, laughing. "It's such a thrill to see those kids succeed, and to see their smiles."

The New PE

PE instructors around the country have started teaching classes such as skateboarding, in-line skating, yoga, and even rock climbing. Experts call these sports "the new PE." These individual sports are designed to help fight childhood **obesity** by getting kids involved in fun physical activities. Obesity is the condition of being dangerously overweight. Another goal of these nontraditional activities is to promote lifelong fitness habits.

Since 1980, the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled. The time students spend in PE class, however, is decreasing. Many schools have dropped gym classes to save money or to provide students with more classroom time. Only 8 percent of elementary schools offer gym class to students every day, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Because students have less PE time, teachers are searching for ways to keep kids moving. "[Skateboarding] is a great activity that keeps kids engaged in physical movement and gives them new skills and interests," says West Middle School's after-school program coordinator, Lindsey Johnson.

Skateboarding's Lessons

Some people say skateboarding not only offers health and fitness benefits but also teaches life lessons that could help kids with their schoolwork. Students who are learning to skateboard often spend hours practicing a new trick before they get it right. "Skateboarding teaches kids to believe that if they stick with something, they will **ultimately**¹ succeed," says education expert Richard Sagor of Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

Carlos's skateboarding teacher at West Middle School, Eric Klassen, agrees. "A baby will attempt to walk 600 to 900 times before [he or she] is successful," Klassen says. "We tell students that they shouldn't say 'I can't do it' unless they've tried 600 to 900 times."

¹ **ultimately**: finally; at last

Reading Passage

Klassen's students take his advice to heart. "It took me 600 times to learn one new trick," says Martin Carrera, 11.

Individual Sports On the Rise

Over the last decade, team sports have dropped in popularity, while individual sports, such as skateboarding, have been on the rise. This trend may affect the kinds of activities PE teachers offer in gym class. Learning individual sports gives all students an opportunity to exercise, whether they make it onto a school team or not.

Going Up	Going Down
Since 1995, there are:	Since 1995, there are:
7.5 million more skateboarders	4.8 million fewer volleyball players
3.2 million more snowboarders	1.1 million fewer baseball players
2.5 million more mountain bikers	200,000 fewer basketball players

Source: National Sporting Goods Association

Think Critically:

Imagine that your school offers a skateboarding class. Would such a class have a positive effect on you? Explain.

Question Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Skate School” Questions

- _____ 1. One detail from the passage is that in some areas
- skateboarding is now being offered after school.
 - skateboarding is now being offered in school.
 - skateboarding is being taught in gym class.
 - all of the above.
- _____ 2. The main idea of this passage is that
- PE is changing.
 - safety skills are taught in skateboarding class.
 - many schools have dropped their gym program.
 - many young people are overweight.
- _____ 3. A detail from the passage is that skateboarding
- teaches kids to give up.
 - is not good exercise.
 - encourages obesity.
 - engages kids in physical movement.
- _____ 4. Which sports are becoming more popular?
- volleyball, baseball, snowboarding
 - skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking
 - baseball, basketball, volleyball
 - skateboarding, basketball, snowboarding
- _____ 5. What does the author mean by “Skateboarding class is rolling into schools”?

Question Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Skate School” Answer Sheet

- MI 1. One detail from the passage is that in some areas
- skateboarding is now being offered after school.
 - skateboarding is now being offered in school.
 - skateboarding is being taught in gym class.
 - d. all of the above.**
- MI 2. The main idea of this passage is that
- a. PE is changing.**
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 - b. skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking**
 - baseball, basketball, volleyball
 - skateboarding, basketball, snowboarding
- FL 5. What does the author mean by “Skateboarding class is rolling into schools”?

Answers will vary but should show that the student understands _____ that “rolling” means skateboarding is being increasingly introduced in schools and also “rolling” also refers to the wheels of the skateboards.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: nontraditional, promote, decade