

# The Role of Education and Athletic Career

For the skater who is considering a career in coaching figure skating, earning a goal test medal is like achieving a high school diploma with honors. Passing two gold medals equates to earning an Associate of Arts degree. Achieving three gold medals is like graduating with a four-year college degree.

Competing at the national level is comparable to a master degree. Competing at the international level is like a PhD.

The fees a coach can charge depend on their amateur and professional credits plus a proven track record of coaching elite skaters.

The natural talents of individuals vary and each individual's results are ultimately affected by the quality of the resources available (teachers, supporting staff, quality of the facilities equipment/supplies, etc.) and the support system (parents, tutors, siblings, mentors, etc.).

While everyone starts out equally without skills, a major difference is that in public schools the starting age is established by law and beginning skaters may start at ages as young as 3 or 4 extends into retirement for active adults.

The physical nature of figure skating poses an increasing challenge to acquire the technical skills as an individual advances in age, especially as it relates to acquiring advanced jumping skills.

A skater's age has a positive influence as it takes most skaters years to develop the necessary presentation skills that allow them to internalize and express the feelings a choreographer attempts to achieve as an interpretation of different musical scores.

There are physical development stages that suggest that there are negative impacts on developing bodies that occur if multi-revolution jumps are attempted when skaters are too young (before growth plates have matured).

Advanced jumping may also be accompanied by poor technique that actually requires years to correct compared with initially acquiring good basic technique as part of jumping skill development.

One basic theme used in K through 6 grades is the daily (Monday – Friday) repetitive exposure to essential core skills - such as math, vocabulary, spelling, reading, writing and grammar.

Most states provide an approved series of text and workbooks that also include lesson outlines, tests, and a schedule to present materials throughout the school year.

The "Leave No Child Behind" federal program has resulted in an expansion of the standardized testing program. This emphasis has resulted in more teachers "teaching to prepare students to take tests and not develop critical thinking skills."

Over the summer vacation, it is normal for elementary students to not retain information and skills covered in the prior the end of school. The result is a minimum of four weeks is spent in reviewing class work at the start of the fall semester prior to teaching new material.

Starting in middle school/junior high (7 to 9<sup>th</sup> grades) the students have scheduled class periods with different instructors. Students are expected to be up to speed after the summer vacation.

Individuals are required to have passed the class or have taken material in summer school and received a passing grade.

Parents who stress preparing for a college education demand their children strive for straight A report cards so they can gain entrance to upper tier colleges and universities.

Some parents may lobby the principal to have their child “skip” a grade or get them assigned to advanced or gifted classes, but this type of parental involvement is more of an exception rather than the rule.

Many parents are very involved in assisting their children in doing their best effort and checking to see that they do their assigned homework.

It is understandable why there is parental involvement in encouraging their children to get good grades since the cost of college has increased so much.

Participation in extra curricular activities at school – sports, marching band, drill team/color guard, chorus, orchestra, drama department, etc. requires a minimum 2.0 GPA.

Each school site has a PTA that supports a wide range of student activities. In addition, parents of individual organizations have their own supporting group to help raise funds for uniforms, equipment, etc.

With the current budget crisis at Federal, state, and local levels, becoming a volunteer and assisting in raising funds is necessary to support classroom and extra-curricular activities.

Given the extensive physical training that is part of just passing USFS tests. Some parents of skaters are able to receive permission of their local school to release

their child from study periods and receive gym credit for their daily skating schedule.

Parents are inclined to provide their child with an advantage over other classmates by purchasing a desktop or laptop computer plus printer and cable or DSL Internet connection.

Besides scoring well on their SAT tests, high grades, and a varied list of school activities, today’s students must also demonstrate involvement in community projects to gain admission to the higher tier of public and private universities.

It is true that there are available scholarships, Pell Grants, student loans, etc., but many students need to seek part time employment to meet expenses. This frequently results in an extra year to complete the necessary courses.

One possible solution to financing a college education is to consider the financial return if the child passes the MITF, Free Skating, and or Dance gold medals.

A part time figure skating coach working part time (10 – 20 hours a week) can start at \$20 to \$40 an hour, depending on the test level. The potential earnings of a skater are greater if they have a national competitive background.

In the world of figure skating there is a tendency for parents to be very competitive and demand that the child pass tests quickly and place in competitions. They rarely state that they will change coaches, but the threat is implied.

**It is interesting that parents, who place a major priority of their children striving for straight A report cards, will accept the minimum passing marks when their child takes a figure skating test.**