

Figure Skating & Going To School

by Claude Sweet

An important issue for parents is the quality of education their child will receive. This is especially true of parents those whose children are also involved in an sport like figure skating that requires a very intense training program.

The demand for ice time has forced figure skaters to train earlier in the morning in an attempt to schedule increased practice time necessary to acquire the advanced jumps, spins, and performance skills necessary to advance from regional to sectionals, and eventually the National Championships.

Figure skating is not a team or individual sport supported by the schools. Thus skaters find it very difficult to attend school as a regular student and arrange a class schedule that allows them to achieve their skating goals too.

More skaters are deciding to participate in home schooling, distance education, or an Internet based virtual education programs to achieve both their educational and skating goals.

There are both advantages and disadvantages for a figure skater that decides to not attend a regular public/private school. A series of articles are posted on our web site to provide the experiences of skaters and parents who have participated in various forms of home schooling.

School districts in some areas have made adaptations for figure skaters and their training schedules, beginning with allowing a skater's practice schedule to substitute for physical education classes.

The development of high speed Internet connections have increased the educational opportunities available from schools offering distance learning. More families are considering home-schooling today; education providers have moved to supply the demand.

Some local school districts are even providing a hybrid version of home schooling that involves the student attending a weekly session to meet with an instructor to take tests, turn in homework, and pickup their assignments for the following week.

Balancing Social and Intellectual Development with skating is not a simple task, especially for a parent!

Keeping the proper balance in a skater's life is necessary; however, what this means varies according to the age of the skater and the skating goals.

Parents of serious figure skaters must consider realistically the cost involved in real dollars and that their decision will affect the family dynamics, especially when the skater has siblings.

Parents must ask themselves honestly if their child is self-directed or needs constant supervision to learn. Many children do not thrive in an environment that is self-directed. A student who needs a structured learning environment requires someone who has the knowledge and experience to perform that function.

The emotional involvement of a parent can cause conflict, even if the parent has been trained as an educator

Parents of a skater, who spends most of their daily life in contact with other skaters, needs to have assurance that this is going to have positive examples of individuals who have established goals and are making choices that will help them succeed. The lack of positive role models should be red flag to parents.

The Ideal Training Facility

When a figure skater trades a basic traditional education for a life emerged in figure skating, what steps must be taken by parents to insure their child becomes a well-rounded individual and be unable to function in life outside of skating?

- **Social and non-skating activities** need to be planned for skaters who home school. Does your skating club have a junior board that plans and sponsors social activities and is involved in activities such as working with Special Olympiads?
- **A study room for skaters to use when breaks occur between on ice practices?** Does your training facility have Internet access with a high-speed connection, Ethernet connection, printer, scanner, etc available for skaters? Ideally someone should be available to supervision this area and blocking software installed to prevent access to “X” rated sites.
- **Is off-ice training at the training facility to supplement the on ice-training program?** If not, is there a community college near by that the skater can enroll in to take the off-ice classes to provide a back ground in weight lifting stretching, dance – modern, ballet, ballroom, etc. plus extra special educational units?

Skaters and parents must consider possible careers after active competitive skating ceases.