

Marketing Skating to Schools

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Marketing skating programs to YMCAs, and Park & Recreation Departments or schools provides an opportunity to reach a large audience and introduce them to the joy of ice skating.

Forming an alliance with one school principal and/or PTA can ultimately lead to reaching classrooms of kids and family members. This is probably much more effective than traditional direct marketing methods.

Offering to provide schools with speakers can be an excellent way to create a positive working relationship with schools and may lead to sponsoring curling, hockey, speed, and figure skating clubs at local schools, and providing physical education credit for students enrolled in an accredited sports program at your facility.

You will be successful in gaining additional support if you can show how you can help schools achieve some of their direct educational goals with classroom and assemble speaker/programs.

One of the obvious reasons to prepare a school-based program is that this approach can be reused at other schools and, in subsequent years, to new classes.

It would be very desirable if the person developing the materials is a certified teacher and prepares the materials with supplemental lesson plans they can leave with the teachers.

Ideally, a web site should be developed that can post additional materials with an active Q&A section that provides answers within a 24 hour period.

It's important that the materials be professionally prepared as teachers and school administrators have a natural tendency to resist anything that appears blatantly to promote products and services.

Strained Budgets

Public and private schools have strained budgets that can make them open to using highly targeted, high quality curriculum materials.

Another way to approach schools and PTAs is to provide physical education field trips with the schools providing the transportation, and the rink picking up the admission, skate rental, and provide instructors for group class lessons.

The following are possible topics for preparing materials for your school program:

- Reading, health, and physical education are excellent topics. Materials must be educationally sound
- Materials must be age-appropriate for the audience — not too juvenile for older kids and not too difficult for young children.
- If possible attempt to involve the teacher and the audience. Don't lecture the kids; get them involved so they have fun!

Materials

- The quality of text, photos, illustrations and video materials must be professional quality, which is relatively easy given computers and PowerPoint, Desktop publishing, plus video and html editing software.
- Print materials do not have to be in full color, which is very expensive.

- Emphasize the educational message or your program will backfire!
- Don't underestimate the ability of children to figure out your motives.
- Once you reach the important credible criteria of an educational package, then you may use the following:
 - ❖ Your logo on materials
 - ❖ Discount coupons
 - ❖ Background information about your company as the provider of the materials
 - ❖ Videos, posters, contests, workbooks and games

As an extension of a school-based program, you may consider developing creative educational concepts for your skating facility, such as:

- Reading incentive goals and rewards — a series of reading projects that you reward with incentive coupons for your facility; the same could be done with math.
- Working with the PE classes by encouraging after-school physical activities with coupon incentives
- After school programs are needed for families whose parents both work. The ice rink/recreation center can provide a safe, stimulating place for studies to gather.

The web site “**Lights On After School**” provides event-planning details, program promotion tips, Public Relations, and marketing materials, plus a place to list your after-school program. <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>

Arrange to meet with your nearby school systems. Start by contacting the principals or assistant principals to determine the appropriate contacts.

Ask school administrators how you could help them with their curriculum needs and educational goals. Sometimes they tend to have a rigid agenda that originates from their school board so you need to be flexible if you want your program to be accepted and being permitted to participate future activities.

It helps to have a prototype of an actual lesson plan that you can demonstrate which addresses a specific topic such as reading motivation, physical education, good-behavior incentives, etc., which the administrators can review and offer suggestions of what you could do to modify materials to be in line with their curriculum guidelines.

The effort expended can result in long term benefits to the schools and the athletes who train at your skating facilities.