

School of Skate

Students in Colorado are riding a school skateboarding trend.



By Jeff Ives

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

Skateboarding is a fun way for Carlos and his classmates at the West Middle School after-school program in Aurora, Colorado, to exercise. In addition to making the grade in after-school programs, the sport is also getting some playtime in physical education (PE) classes.

"Skateboards have brought a whole different world of excitement and thrills to the kids," says Richard Cendali, a PE teacher at Douglass Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado. Douglass is the first public school in the country to offer skateboarding classes.

Cendali's students start out slowly. On the first day of class, they learn how to put on their safety gear and how to fall properly. Once students become **acclimated** to, or used to, the board, things really get moving. "Sometimes they're so excited, they fall. They're scream-

ing, 'I'm doing it! I'm doing it!'" said Cendali, laughing. "It's such a thrill to see those kids succeed and see their smiles."

The New PE

Skateboarding is one of several non-traditional activities that P.E. teachers around the country are introducing to inspire kids to exercise regularly. Some P.E. classes feature in-line skating, yoga, and even rock climbing. Experts have dubbed those types of activities "the new PE"

Such activities are part of a larger effort to help kids develop lifelong fitness habits and to keep them from becoming **obese**, or severely overweight. Since 1980, the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled. Currently, 9 million U.S. children and teens are overweight. Obesity can lead to health problems such as diabetes and

heart disease later in life.

As obesity has increased, the number of students who have daily PE class has decreased. Today, only 8 percent of elementary schools offer daily gym classes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many schools have eliminated gym time to reduce costs or to provide students with more time in the classroom.

"Our children and youth are becoming unhealthy and obese," says Lindsey Johnson, project coordinator for the after-school program at West Middle School. "[Skateboarding] is a great activity that keeps kids engaged in physical movement and gives them new skills and interests."

Some schools have banned skateboarding from their premises because they say it is dangerous. Cendali, however, argues that practice eliminates a great deal of the risk. "We teach students how to do it and how to do it safely," he says.



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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 P.E. 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 ▲

There are 7.5 million more skateboarders than there were in 1995.

There are 3.2 million more snowboarders than there were in 1995.

There are 2.5 million more mountain bikers than there were in 1995.

▼ Going Down

There are 4.8 million fewer volleyball players than there were in 1995.

There are 1.1 million fewer baseball players than there were in 1995.

There are 200,000 fewer basketball players than there were in 1995.



Source: National Sporting Goods Association

CRITICAL THINKING: How can lessons from sports help students succeed at their schoolwork?