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## Skateboard school: Reading, writing, ripping

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*Geoff Eaton owns and operates the Kids That Rip skateboard school in Mesa. The school is a year-round skateboard school with an on-site teacher for regular classes.*

*Tribune*

Reading, writing and ripping: These three subjects are part of the everyday curriculum for five East Valley children as they learn in a unique Mesa private school where skateboarding training is given as much time as typical school subjects. (Ripping is a term for someone who is skating really well.)

Geoff Eaton started the skateboarding program at his family-owned Desert Devils Gymnastics facility in Mesa for his two sons and skateboarding aficionados, Jett, 11, and Jagger, 9. Both boys have been featured on the Disney Channel and have three skateboarding company sponsors.

Summer school registration under way in Mesa [<http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/152084>]  
Mesa charter school plans postponed [<http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/152021>]

Wooden vertical ramps, bowls and various other street-style skating obstacles were built among the trampolines, parallel bars and mats at the 51,000-square-foot facility. One room of the center is basically an indoor skateboard park with pyramids, rails, ledges, stairs, ramps and flat ground for skaters of all ages to learn how to skate.

Eaton wanted to start an after-school skating program as a safe, positive, drug-free place for kids to skate without the cursing and fighting found at most public, outdoor skateboard parks. The idea turned into an actual daylong skateboard school called Kids That Rip, with math and science taught alongside ollies, McTwists and kickflips.

Within a month of putting in ramps initially for Jett and Jagger at the gymnastics center, parents began asking if this was a new program their kids could enroll in.

The idea grew in popularity as the center added an eight-foot tall wooden bowl in one corner of the facility, and a 13 1/2 foot vertical ramp in another corner.

Both are built by the same company that builds ramps for the X Games, Eaton said.

Eaton hired a certified teacher and local skateboarders who were good with kids, to start teaching, and the school took off on the concrete wave.

Jett and Jagger were moved from Fountain Hills Charter School to start as the first two students in Kids That Rip two years ago.

This school year, the two Eaton boys are joined by Augie Lerma, 10, Aaron Goure, 14, and the lone skater girl, Alana Smith, 9.

The children are in school from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. upstairs at the Mesa center, and then from 2:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. the skaters learn the proper progressions and repetitions to be the best skateboarder they can be.

"There's nothing like it in the whole world," said Eaton, of Fountain Hills, a former gymnast who also skates, snowboards and wakeboards.

"We decided to develop top-notch training programs to be one of the best."

Next year, Eaton expects to hire another teacher and will expand to 15 kids in third to ninth grade. Skaters have to apply and be chosen for the selective program, which costs \$1,000 a month, Eaton said.

"It's fun, and it makes me happy," said Jagger, whose goal is to be a professional skateboarder. "Before, I only got in two hours of skating (a day). Now, I skate (an average) of six hours a day."

Jeff Jewett of Mesa, who's been skating since he was 13, coaches the young skaters in the various forms of skating, including vert, bowl, mega ramp and mini ramp.

"It's awesome," said Jewett, 39, the school's skateboarding director. "Skateboarding has changed a lot. When I was a kid, it wasn't looked at as a real sport."

As skateboarding becomes more mainstream, with the popularity of the X Games, video games and Tony Hawk, more parents are seeing skateboarding as a potential career for their children.

Skaters can get lucrative sponsors, travel the world competing, and could even try to become an Olympic medalist, as skateboarding is rumored to become an Olympic sport like snowboarding.

For skaters like Alana, it's a dream come true. She saw skateboarding on TV and begged her parents for a board two years ago. Like most kids, she started skating on the street, until she heard about the Mesa skateboard facility. She begged her parents to enroll her.

"I love getting to skate with my friends," said Alana, who also enjoys snowboarding and wakeboarding.

"It's really fun, and I get to skate more."





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