

Basic Skills Graduation Day

Developing a Graduation celebration for your skaters who have achieved certain milestones within your programming is a great way to promote retention, recognition of their accomplishments and showing customer appreciation for those that are loyal to your programs. You can graduate skaters from any number of steps within your programming- from Basic 8, Free Skate 6 or when they join the local figure skating club as a full member.

Here's how it works in Sugar Land Ice and Sport Center's Basic Skills Program

Every person, young or old, who works hard to achieve a goal, looks forward to celebrating the accomplishment. Basic Skills is filled with opportunities of doing just that. The skaters in the Sugar Land Ice and Sport Center's Basic Skills Program who successfully complete all of the Basic 1-8 classes are provided with a very special moment to share their accomplishments with their peers, instructors, parents and friends.

The final day of the semester is "evaluation day" for all classes in Sugar Land's program and those who have completed Basic 8 receive special recognition. This special recognition has been previously explained to all skaters and parents enrolled in the program during the Parent Orientation on the first day of classes. All parents are told about the significance of evaluation day and what to expect - that each student will be presented with a report card with a final grade of pass or needs improvement based upon their mastery of the skills in the level at the conclusion of each session. This documentation is also used as an official part of the registration process, determining the correct new level for the next semester. This is also an excellent example for parents to witness that participating in skating teaches things beyond skating skills like perseverance, dedication, accomplishment.

The "Honorary Skaters of the Day" are those who pass the Basic 8 test. Once the test has been successfully completed, the graduates are kept on the ice after classes have been dismissed.

Their names are announced and a picture of the skaters accompanied by their class instructor is taken to post on the skating school's bulletin board in the lobby. The Basic 8 badge and a Certificate of Graduation are presented along with an invitation from the Texas Gulf Coast Figure Skating Club to attend an introductory session.



celebrates birthdays and participates in club game nights with them throughout the year.

The main goal is to encourage the Basic Skills level skaters to feel less intimidated about coming to club sessions, and more feel confident when joining the club, and starting into the U. S. Figure Skating testing and competition structure. Using a buddy system has established a bond between the young skaters and club members, allowing for an inviting and comfortable bridge into the club, as well as higher level classes.

Before Graduation Day was established, there was a noticeable drop off of skaters in classes and the skating school was anxious to find a way to keep the skaters interested in completing the entire course through all of the Basic 8 levels. As a result, skaters began looking forward to graduating with all the perks that went along with it. More and more skaters worked toward the goal of passing Basic 8 and continuing on to Free Skate and specialty classes within the skating school and figure skating club. The parents began to observe the change in interest level, and enjoyed seeing the technical improvement, as well as watching persistence be rewarded.

For minimal cost to the program, developing a Graduate Day can become one of your best retention tools—skaters will stay in the program to achieve this milestone, they will develop instant friendships with other graduates, and parents love the additional attention!

Benefits of developing a Graduation Ceremony:

- Keeps skaters motivated to come to class
- Allows skaters a sense of accomplishment
- Parents enjoy seeing their children receive recognition for completing a goal
- Higher retention rates! - Sugar Land's last semester's retention rate = 88%

Benefits to Senior Buddies:

- Being a part of a Junior Board overseeing the Boot and Blade Buddy Program
- Develops leadership skills
- Opportunity to be a mentor to younger skaters
- Earn community service hours for school requirements
- Good to include on resumes and college applications

TRY IT - IT REALLY WORKS!



The skating club then assigns the new graduate a "buddy," from its "Boots and Blades Buddies" mentoring program. The graduates are then invited to join their buddies at a special Friday night club session. The buddy will be the host of the graduate for that session, introducing him/her to the club skaters and parents. The buddy continues to encourage the graduate by coming to competitions, test sessions,

