



REGION

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Eighth-graders craft skateboards for class projects

Company partners with students

BY GINA GOODMAN
Special to the Record-Eagle

TRAVERSE CITY — Early in the morning the high-pitched sounds of sawing, drilling and sanding echo through the halls at Traverse City East Junior High.

Inside the Tech Ed room, safety-goggled eighth-graders diligently work on their semester projects.

But don't expect wooden cars or birdhouses from

this class — they'll instead be able to ride their projects down a half-pipe and onto a handrail.

"It's just fun to make skateboards," said 14-year-old Robert Shaw. "This project is better, because we can actually use it."

Teacher and longtime skateboarder Scott Diment wanted to do something a little more creative for his Tech Ed classes, and decided to find a way to get cheap materials so his students could make their own skateboards.

"So many of them are skaters and they don't

understand how skateboards are actually made," Diment said. "There's a lot of technology that goes into them. So I wanted to find something that would be fun and also useful."

Diment contacted Paul Schmitt, an ex-pro skater and owner of PS Stix, a skateboard manufacturing company in southern California. From there the two decided to try out a pilot program they called Create-A-Skate, where students would be provided boards, called decks, to create their own skate-



Record-Eagle/Lara Neel

Scott Diment's Tech Ed class at East Junior High is building skateboard decks. Jay Ferris, 14, cuts his deck out.

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SKATE

Students get involved in making boards

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boards. "I called him up, and he had been thinking about doing something with schools for a long time," Diment said. "Ironically, he couldn't find any schools in southern California who would be willing to do a program like this. So he's using us as a pilot for this program." Schmitt said he tried to

get the program going in California, but few schools there still offer Tech Ed classes.

"California doesn't have manufacturing mentality—it's all distribution, marketing, sales," Schmitt said. "So I decided to create a program. It's all about empowering kids to be creative, determined, and they don't have to be so resourceful because we're supplying them the hard part."

Schmitt sends his veneers — thin slabs of wood glued together — to Diment's classes. The students measure and cut their boards to fit the shape they want, and finally paint and decorate them.

"It's fun, but it's hard,

because you have to do the measuring and everything," said Corey Clark, 14. "I'm having fun just making measurements."

Other students said they enjoy learning about something new, even if they've never skated before.

"I've never really skateboarded, but now don't have to buy a skateboard," said Kristin Schnerer, 14. "It's awesome, I like it. I'm going to take it home and ride it. I just want to make it unique."

The program is being tested in Traverse City, but Schmitt hopes it will become a national trend.

"Ultimately I see this thing being where in the real world kids will pay a \$15 material fee or some-

thing like that," he said. "Which isn't uncommon for a class project anyway, and in relation to spending \$30 to \$50 at the retail store it's a deal for them."

The students are only provided the skateboard deck and must buy their own wheels and hardware if they want to ride it. But Schmitt said having a quality board is worth the cost. Diment said safety is a key to the boards.

"The guys who will be riding these things, we want to make sure they're safe," he said. "Make sure the edges are sanded down and not too sharp, and it's balanced correctly."

Both Diment and Schmitt are excited to use skateboards as a way to get

teens interested in working with their hands.

"When we do projects like this when they're actually making noise and making messes, they're beating down the door in the morning trying to get in," Diment said. "It's fun for me to have them be that enthusiastic about something."

Schmitt agreed. "You've got to fall on your butt a hundred times to

learn how to fly the handrail," Schmitt said.

"Whether they ride the skateboard, or they hang it on their wall, or mom puts it in the closet and pulls it out in 20 years, I don't care, because that kid's going to have that satisfaction, 'I did this!'"

Photos of students' skateboards will eventually be available to upload online at <http://www.createaskate.org>.

How your lawmakers voted

Y Voted yes
N Voted no
O Did not vote

Bar Shagok, D-1
Pater Hoelscher, R-2
Duke Combs, R-4
Call Lamm, D
Dobson Stabenow, D



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For last