

EDUCATION

Fort Collins school resource officer teaching students through boxing

One Fort Collins middle school has a new boxing club that has kids so excited to join, they're coming from other schools.



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FORT COLLINS, Colo. — One Fort Collins middle school has a new boxing club that has kids so excited to join, they're coming from other schools. But their trainers hope the lessons students are learning here will last far beyond the ring.

At the end of the school day, most kids have their eye on the exit.

But while so many students are winding down, a small group of kids at Boltz Middle School come alive.

Deep into their schoolwork on a Wednesday afternoon, this band of middle schoolers make up the school's new boxing club.

The program is led by Fort Collins police officer and school resource officer Dexter Rowe.

"So far it's been really good," Rowe said.

Rowe has helped coordinate boxing fundraisers between police and firefighters before — he knows it takes time, commitment and focus.

He believed that same training and focus could help his kids.

"Because I see a lot of my middle school kids and they're not really involved in a whole lot in school," Rowe said. "Good kids, just looking for something to connect with, to connect them to the school, connect them to other kids, things like that."

But to train, Rowe said you have to keep your grades up.

"So they set that expectation from the beginning for themselves. I know, I was shocked, too," Rowe said, laughing.

Once the school work wraps up, the students head over to Title Boxing nearby, ready to get in the ring.

Boltz Middle School student Jose Sebastena Herrera carefully wraps up his hands, ready to get to work.

"I like to be part of the boxing club," Herrera said.



Every session, he learns something new.

"Yeah," Herrera said, laughing. "Outer defense and how to be more respectful with other persons."

The work here challenges Herrera and his classmates.

Officer Rowe offers guidance to the students as trainers like Danny O'Connor show kids the ropes.

"Right, I'm just going to show you the two basic easy punches. The one is just from the front, it's just in and out. That's it," O'Connor said, guiding the students.

O'Connor helps teach kids not just how to throw a punch, but how to manage their emotions. And the lessons are helping kids both in the ring and out in the world.

"If somebody gets into trouble because of a behavior or something they said, we talk about why that happened. And our motto is 'think before you speak and breathe before you act,'" Rowe said. "But they're middle schoolers, right? Some grownups can't even do that — I can't even do that a lot of times. It's a learning process. So they're going to make mistakes. But the mistakes they're seeing aren't as big as they were before, we're not seeing the bullying coming from these kids, right?"

And the lessons learned here are landing. The kids are improving every week in training, Rowe said, while the club helps keep them out of trouble.

"I think it's huge," Rowe said.

Rowe said he's proud of these kids and the work they're putting in week after week.

"We don't look for a certain grade, we look for improvement," Rowe said. "The same message we give here in the club, right? We're not expecting you to do every single rep, but we expect you to give effort and to improve."

He hopes this training will teach them what they'll need to succeed in life, including the fight to navigate whatever lies ahead.

The boxing club program is run out of Boltz Middle School, but Officer Rowe said they welcome in students from other schools within the Poudre School District. A number of kids from many other schools around the district have been coming in on nights and weekends to train with the Boltz boxing club, with new students coming every week.