

How does Taekwon-Do provide leadership qualities for youth? What do you do in your club specifically to develop leadership and what ideas do you have to further develop leadership in your club or the organisation?

“Soldiers are as strong as the general who leads them, and, in a like manner, students can only excel under an excellent instructor. We cannot expect a bamboo to grow in a field of reeds, nor can we expect to find an outstanding pupil under an unqualified teacher”. – General Choi Hong Hi, Condensed Encyclopaedia, pg. 46.

As General Choi stated, an excellent leader is needed to develop excellent students. However, in my experience it is not uncommon for people to find themselves in leadership positions unprepared. In a professional context this is often because they view leadership as the next “step on the ladder” to progress within their organisation. In a Taekwon-Do context people often find themselves in a leadership position because the former club instructor leaves and there are no others in the club who are willing or able to step up and take on this role. In my view leadership is a particular set of skills. People moving into leadership roles often need more support to develop their leadership skills so they can excel in the role. We expect our students to develop their instructing skills as they progress up through the ranks. If we want to make sure that our senior members are prepared to step into leadership roles it would also make sense to develop our students’ leadership skills as they move up through the ranks.

But what exactly does this look like and how can we do this? There are many theories of leadership and no consensus about what the key skills of a good leader are. To view the problem through a Taekwon-Do lens, the Condensed Encyclopaedia lists eight qualities of an excellent instructor:

1. *“Strong moral and ethical standard*
2. *Clear outlook and philosophy in life*
3. *Responsible attitude as an instructor*
4. *Scientific mind in matters of technique*
5. *Knowledge of the vital spots of human anatomy*
6. *Unshakeable integrity in political and financial dealings*
7. *Dedication to spread the art of Taekwon-Do throughout the world*
8. *One who gains confidence from his seniors, is trusted by his fellow Instructors, and is respected by his juniors.”*

I have extrapolated from this list to create what I consider to be the key leadership attributes for instructors.

- A strong moral and ethical standard / high level of integrity
- Strong decision making skills
- Self confidence
- Responsibility (reliability, preparedness and planning)
- Empathy for others and considering each student as an individual
- Commitment / willingness to help others
- Two-way communication skills
- Collaboration with others
- Ability to inspire others

I have not included points 4 and 5 from General Choi’s list of qualities of an excellent instructor because those technical points are taught and assessed elsewhere in the syllabus.

Most of ITKD's students are young – more than three quarters (76%) are under the age of 18¹. Our club, Halswell Taekwon-Do, has slightly more than the national average - 81% of our club's students are under 18. Because of our demographics our organisation must make sure we are teaching our syllabus in a way that is accessible to all our members. This includes instructing and leadership skills, even though they may not be fully needed until the students are older.

The table below sets out my ideas. The top row of the table indicates how the key leadership attributes I have identified relate to General Choi's qualities of an excellent instructor. Below this are activities or actions that develop that leadership attribute. These are colour coded. Those in black are things we already implement at our club. Those in blue are things I would like to implement in the future. Those in **bold** are already part of the national syllabus.

Young people change a lot between the ages of five and 18 so I have tried to identify how these qualities could be taught to different age groups in ways that are age appropriate. In the table I have used the age divisions that we use for young people at our club with minikids (5-8), kids (9-12) and teenagers (13-18). I have not included the kubz age group as we do not teach this age group at our club.

¹ Based on membership figures from 2020 Annual Report, international Taekwon-Do Foundation of New Zealand Inc.

Instructor quality	1 and 6	2	3	7	8				
Attribute	Strong moral and ethical standard (including integrity)	Clear philosophy / decision making skills	Self confidence	Responsibility	Empathy for others, consider each student as an individual	Commitment / willingness to help others	Two-way communication skills	Collaboration with others	Able to inspire others
Minikids 6–8 years	<p>Understand the tenets. Use home assessment sheets or reports preparing for grading to make sure students are displaying these behaviours at home/school.</p> <p>Tenets should be displayed in behaviour in and out of class.</p> <p>One on one conversations with students when behaviour hasn't been as expected.</p>		<p>Perform in front of others at gradings, tournaments.</p> <p>Speak in class to answer questions and contribute to class discussions.</p>	<p>Be ready for class, e.g. dressed in uniform properly, bring the things required for class such as drink bottle and syllabus book, go to the toilet before class.</p> <p>Study and train to prepare self for gradings.</p>	<p>Show consideration of others in class, e.g. be courteous and consider others - particularly when lining up or finding a partner (kids often hurt others' feelings by being particular about who they partner with). Expectation of polite apologies if hurting or upsetting another student.</p>	<p>Students encouraged to assist younger or less able students in class where appropriate (e.g. more experienced students help others e.g. with forming up, tying belts etc). Our club encourages this via the club "chocolate fish award" given at the end of term two 1-3 kids we have noticed demonstrating the tenets throughout the term.</p> <p>Students assist with club set up / pack down.</p>	<p>Basic communication and social skills encouraged through-engaging students in hello / goodbye / basic conversation before and after class.</p> <p>Students encouraged to share with the class, e.g. engage in whole class discussion.</p>	<p>Consider and encourage others in class, e.g. encouraging team mates.</p> <p>Work together well as a group when playing team-based games or activities.</p>	<p>Put in high level of effort in all aspects of class.</p> <p>Beginning to check own progress towards goals with checklists (in minikids books).</p>
Kids 9–12 years			<p>Self defence skills – strong voices, saying no.</p>	<p>As above, and also class discussion on inclusive behaviour and considering others – we often see students being non-inclusively when working in partners or groups at this age group, e.g. not wanting to partner with the other gender, or complaining when they consider they have been partnered with someone less able than themselves.</p>	<p>As above, and also students encouraged to assist at events e.g. coaching or officiating at tournaments, fundraising etc.</p>	<p>Students allowed to share a game they have learned elsewhere as part of the warm-up. This involves teaching the class the rules of the game (with instructor support).</p>	<p>Learn about setting own goals through evaluating own performance and how to improve it – checklists for self and instructor evaluation.</p>		
Teens 13-18			<p>As above, and also begin to teach others in a small group or whole class (blue belts and above).</p>	<p>Be in class and prepared for training on time (becomes student's responsibility rather than whanau at this age group).</p> <p>Advise instructor yourself if unable to attend training.</p> <p>Assistant instructors: advise head instructor of the class if unable to attend class. Be prepared for instructing responsibilities (e.g. have a plan if teaching a segment of class).</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Engage in social situations.</p> <p>Encourage blue belts + to assist with teaching as appropriate. Our club rosters our blue belt + students to take a small portion of the class (e.g. the warm up or cool down) once per term. This encourages development of public speaking skills.</p> <p>Club / instructors encourage students to give feedback and be involved in club running where possible, e.g. events.</p>	<p>Encouraged to work with peers, e.g. get together to practise out of club for events, assist others with learning syllabus when working together in a class setting.</p>	<p>Set own aspirational but reasonable goals – we have recently covered goal setting in class e.g. each student sets a goal for power breaking and works towards it for a six week period, and assesses performance towards their goal at the end of the six weeks.</p> <p>All students expected to hold themselves to a high standard of effort, and to appropriately encourage others to do the same in a class setting.</p>	

The summary in the table shows that there are many things that are already in our training syllabus that contribute to developing leadership skills. I have not identified any specific activities to put in place in a class setting to help foster a clear philosophy and decision making skills. I would like to seek input from others in future to see how we might be able to include aspects to develop these skills.

I think there are two important things that seniors and instructors can do to help with developing leadership potential in our youngest students. The first is giving positive reinforcement when we see students using these attributes. This can be as simple as a conversation and giving positive feedback to the student, or can be a more formal awards system. Our minikids' and kids' classes use a "chocolate fish award" for our kids' classes at the end of each term. These awards go to students (usually 1 – 3 students per class) who have modelled good behaviour over the term. These began as being focussed on the tenets, but can also be used to encourage those who have displayed the leadership attributes listed above. For example, last term one of our awards was to a child who is particularly patient and helpful when partnered with a difficult student in the class (displaying empathy and helping others). This is a small way of positively encouraging good behaviour when we see it.

Another important thing that seniors and instructors must remember to do is to give others the space and opportunity to develop skills. It can be very tempting to take the lead and do all the teaching and club work oneself. However others will not develop their skills if they are not able to practise. There are a number of different ways of doing this – for example I think it is important for instructors who are learning to get feedback on their performance, and support to do better where they are not successful. This means having a black belt or other more experienced instructor available to watch when young people are beginning to instruct so they can give feedback and constructive criticism to help the young instructor to improve. I would like to have our club instructing structured in a way that facilitates this more easily.

It requires thinking creatively to find opportunities for young people to step up and help with club or other events. For example, teenagers may be able to organise (or help organise) club events and fundraisers. This may be particularly effective if the funds are for their benefit – for example teenagers could help organise a sausage sizzle fundraiser for their attendance at nationals. As an example, at the South Island camp in April this year the organisers² delegated two teenaged black stripes to organise a quiz as entertainment for the group. This was a vast success, with the teenagers demonstrating a wide variety of the leadership skills listed. The teenagers got others to assist them with preparing the questions and presenting the quiz; delegating some of the work and involving other less confident students as part of their group. They presented the quiz engagingly to the large group of people present. The teenagers involved were proud of their achievement, and stepped out of their comfort zone to present the quiz in front of others. Through giving opportunities like this we let young people step up and grow into leadership skills in a safe and supportive environment. We are also able to give our young members skills that are transferable to outside of the dojang and useful to them in day to day life, and future employment.

The organisation may also want to consider whether more targeted leadership training should be provided, both for our existing leaders and for young people who may wish to grow into these roles. This could be focussed on inspirational leadership skills, including how to cohere members into a group and how to inspire members to achieve. At a smaller level,

² Credit to Mr Jarrad Ramsay, as this was his idea.

ITKD may want to consider whether leadership skills should be included more explicitly into the syllabus. This might be particularly effective worked into the existing minikids books.

Taekwon-Do is an activity that naturally lends itself to developing leadership skills. Many of these skills are already part of our national and international syllabus. As senior instructors we need to ensure we are teaching these skills well and helping our juniors to develop these skills. As an organisation with a large percentage of young members we need to consider how we are appropriately providing these for all age groups in an age appropriate way so that our younger students are equipped with the skills when they grow up and move through the ranks. These skills are valuable to help our organisation grow. By developing them in our students we can increase the number of people who feel like they are capable of stepping up into an instructing role in future. We can also help our students develop skills that will help them to achieve their goals outside the dojang.