



# Does Taekwon-Do teach leadership in our youth

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## Does Taekwon-Do teach leadership in our youth?

Do we as instructors, our seniors or even our organisation as a whole teach or develop leadership skills in our youth or our older students? Well in any martial art the answer should be yes! With our teaching structure we are giving our students micro skills that will hopefully develop over time and turn our students not only into better, well-rounded people in our society, but also give them the tools to become leaders in whatever field they wish to pursue in or out of Taekwon-Do. Whether knowingly or subconsciously we are teaching these skills. Should we be expecting our students to take more of a leadership role, or take it when they feel more comfortable with their skills as they come through the ranks? If at all?

## How does Taekwon-Do provide leadership qualities for youth?

ITKD/ITFNZ has been extremely lucky to have had pioneers and leaders that have developed an extremely sound and well put together syllabus and culture in New Zealand.

The skills that we have learned over time through being an instructor or senior – whether in Taekwon-Do, at work, or in life – are at the front of the leadership qualities that we pass on to our students. Our actions in class – including showing a lesson plan, having a controlled learning environment, being able to call upon seniors and students to demonstrate techniques and help in class – teach our students skills, time management, teamwork, discipline, and fun. These skills are learnt by visual stimulus and are slowly and subconsciously developed by the student.

From the start as a 10th to 6th gup, students are learning our tenets, rules, and the standards of etiquette that are required by every individual. **Respect** (your instructor and seniors and also your fellow students and environment), **Never Misuse** (Taekwon-Do but also never misuse or abuse your authority), **Champion** (of freedom and justice in your life, and as a leader give freedom to others to follow and learn), and **Build** (a more peaceful world, not by yourself but by developing a team to help build it together). By instilling these values and standards, our students are hopefully learning micro skills of behaviour which, if you think about it, not only give a good grounding for our martial art but also cross over into other parts of their life-skill development within their home life, school, social life, and later in their chosen profession.

As the students continue through 5th to 1st gup, they develop further relationship skills, as well as setting up goals and expectations of requirements, timeframes and standards to achieve one's next goal, whether that be in the form of a grading, tournament, umpires course, seminar or instructor induction course. This is not to say some of these are not being encouraged at the earlier ranks.

## What do you do in your club to specifically to develop leadership?

While maintaining a high standard and expecting our students to strive to achieve to their highest ability, we are hopefully guiding and instilling in them the traits of focus and determination, giving them time frames to build towards their next grading, and using time management so they can work on each skill required to achieve this. We also encourage our students to display step sparring, self-defence, breaking or other techniques to the other students in class, giving them

some time to develop the self-confidence to step up and perform in front of others. Sometimes, we use students during class, if their ability is good enough, to help take a small group or even one-on-one training. We highly encourage our students to participate in our regional and national events so that they can develop their personal growth whether that be in self-confidence, social skills, or Taekwon-Do skills.

We are extremely fortunate to have a great leadership team in our club with head instructors Mr and Mrs Walton and assistant instructor Mr Vogt. With Mr and Mrs Walton putting a great deal of time into the club and organisation over the years in different leadership positions and myself in club and regional roles, we are showing by example that there are different pathways other than just coming to train if this a goal for the students.

We are also fortunate to currently have a strong senior presence in class. Our seniors stand in front of the class and help as and when required to take part or teach students, showing by example that as a leader you can and have to rely on a good strong team around you to get the best results for everyone.

By encouraging some of our youth to achieve at a high level, we have been lucky enough with some hard work and good leadership to have some of our teenagers (Kyla Walton, Georgia Vogt, Logan Braakhuis and Jakob Braakhuis) represent our club and organisation at multiple World Championships and World Cups becoming Medallists and World Champions. It may not seem it to them, but they have inadvertently become leaders and role models for the youth that are coming behind them in our club and region.

I would not say we specifically work with our youth on becoming leaders within our club, but we do give them the micro skills, encouragement, environment to succeed. But It is always up to the individual to make the small steps towards leadership.

### **What ideas do you have to further develop leadership in your club or the organisation?**

Well, this year I am trying to encourage a couple of our younger Black Belts to lead the Wellington Regional team towards Nationals competition through our club. With younger leaders taking the trainings it will hopefully encourage more youth to the trainings, as well as developing and growing the experience of the younger Black Belts in our region through mentoring and being in the background if they require assistants.

We have done this in the past, guiding our younger Black Belts through organising or running events and mentoring them through the process.

As always, as Instructors at the club, we will encourage all our students to take opportunities that arise in the region and in the organisation nationally to help at all levels and gain valuable experience by doing so.

As far as what the organisation can do to help progress leadership: I feel we have lost some opportunity during gradings when the examiners have taken back control of the proceedings, only leaving the front Black Belts to lead the oath and bow in and towards the examiners – if any, as some examiners now do this themselves. I know this makes it easier for the examiners, but the focus should be on the art of teaching and giving skill sets back to the Black Belts, even if

sometimes it would be somewhat cringeworthy to watch as not everyone is keen or has the confidence to do this. But by taking it away, you take away the opportunity to develop our Black Belts, and that takes away the growth of our leadership skills. The last regional grading I remember black belts taking the warmup and doing the basics of each grade for the examiner was a long time ago. At this grading, I remember the older Black Belts (which included a few instructors) stood behind quietly to guide and keep an eye on the young Black Belts that had never marshalled before. This worked extremely well, but now that opportunity seems to have passed. I know as a Black Belt we should give back by marshalling, but I would like to think that if we could encourage more younger Black Belts to come and marshal by offering 0.5 credit points we could develop their skills more. And are our examiners willing to develop our Black Belts by giving not just their guidance, but also some time and opportunity for the Black Belts during gradings to learn and develop.

The organisation already offers instructor induction and umpires courses that I believe develop leadership skill sets. But I believe it is up to each of the individual club's instructors to develop their own students by giving them opportunities in class, in the region and nationally, as these are the people the students look to first and take guidance from as leaders. A good leader will develop leadership in their student.

## **Conclusion**

Do we as an organisation and individual instructors develop our youth to become leaders? I believe that mostly we do.

As in any organisation, you will find that the same few do everything most of the time. It is our responsibility to bring through the younger and not so young with us, to be willing to let go of the reins to some extent and help encourage, mentor new leaders, and then hopefully step aside to let a new generation develop behind us.

I have heard that we have an aging instructor base, so why is there no transition?

Is it that the youth coming through do not see or want to take that next step of leadership, or is it because some hold on so tightly to what they love doing that it closes that door of opportunity for others? If someone is doing a job already, what chance do we give someone else?

The question is really, why do people do Taekwon-Do?

I am sure when you start to answer it is: to become a Black Belt, fitness, self-defence, or just because my friend did it. Not to become a leader. That comes with time, if at all.

Why did I start? well it was because my sister was doing it and I liked martial arts. Why am I taking a leadership role at club and in my region? It is because I love doing Taekwon-Do, not because I believe I am good at it, but because I love having the ability to give back and watch the growth of the students coming through our organisation.

So, if our members love doing Taekwon-Do, and our Instructors and leadership groups give opportunities by mentoring the members, then hopefully they will take those roles if they want to.