

## Age-Specific Curriculum

### What It Really Means

The term "age-specific" is used very often in education and healthcare. It has a very definite meaning and is used to describe things that are prepared specifically for the age of the child it is targeting. However, this term is often used more loosely, especially in the martial arts world, when referring to "age-specific classes."

Many martial arts schools define their "age-specific" classes as children being divided up into classes by their age. And while this is very important, the actual curriculum being taught and the way it is taught, is the same across the board. That is like teaching math the same way to a 5-year-old as you do to a 10-year-old. Doing this creates frustration for the student and the teacher. Anything we teach should be done according to the child's age and their stage of development.

To alleviate the dissatisfaction in children's martial arts classes, the SKILLZ program was developed after years of research in the areas of child development, neuroscience, and psychology. The result, a child development course that uses martial arts as a vehicle for teaching. It is designed specifically for certain age groups based on the scientific facts that children at different ages have different motor skills and levels of intelligence. Therefore, providing them with a curriculum that applies this information is ground-breaking.

The first step that SKILLZ took in the implementation of this was to separate classes by age group. Once research was complete, it was found that the children needed to be divided up in the following way: 3-4 year old's, 5-6 year old's, 7-9 year old's, and 10-14 year old's. These SKILLZ levels are broken down this way so that each age group can receive the best training based on their current abilities as well as areas they need to improve on.

The second step that was taken was to create a curriculum that teaches martial arts at a level that is challenging yet attainable for each age group. This was possible because a specific program was created for each level. In each of these levels, a set of 8 skills were formed that would challenge that particular age group while also building on the foundation that they already had. Teaching martial arts within this helps children learn martial arts but at a level that makes goals attainable for them.

The last piece that was important in the development of the SKILLZ program was for the instructors to be trained to understand the stages of development so that they know what to expect and what not to expect from each age level. In addition to this, the instructors are trained on the 8 Teaching SKILLZ and the 10 Laws of Instruction so that each student is receiving individual attention according to their specific needs as well as completing goals that were set for each age group.

A children's martial arts program should be fun and engaging for both the student and the instructor. Creating classes that are truly age-specific is key in making this happen. When this takes place, the martial arts class becomes more of a child development course, which will provide more benefits to the child and will help them learn and retain the actual martial arts material better. When classes are developed this way, they become more powerful, fun, and easier than ever.