

Skills-Based Training vs. Technique-Based Training

Most martial arts forms are rooted in tradition and have been taught the same way for years. And while tradition is vital to keeping the art preserved, the way it is taught in today's modern world isn't as effective. As times change and as we become more educated, we must adjust to meet the needs of the people we serve. This is especially true when teaching children.

Traditional martial arts is taught as a set of techniques that progressively get harder as each new level is attained. These techniques are the same for a 3-year-old as they are for a 13-year-old, yet the abilities of these two ages are completely different. Because of this, most children often become frustrated and quit because they can't meet the expectations of the curriculum. In addition, the instructors become frustrated because they don't understand why the children are performing the techniques incorrectly or in a sloppy manner.

This technique-based approach of martial arts isn't easy when you have a child that has low muscle tone, poor core strength, and has only had a few years of language development. It makes it very difficult for children at different ages to grasp the techniques and so the "confidence" that is trying to be built is unsuccessful. A better approach is what the SKILLZ program refers to as skills-based training.

With a skills-based approach to martial arts training, the students are in classes that were created for their specific stage of development. For example, an instructor is teaching a middle punch and the 3-year-old student can't perform it the way the instructor would like. The child can't hold the punch up for any length of time and the instructor doesn't understand why this is. In the SKILLZ program, the instructor has been trained on the stages of development and understands that a child at this age doesn't have the muscle tone yet to be able to hold the punch out. Therefore, specific skills-based drills are used to develop this.

Since each age group is given a different set of skills to work on, designed especially for their stage of development, the child's overall growth is more effective in class. And this doesn't

just include physical advancements but also intellectual, social, and emotional progress. But the biggest benefit of this type of training is that these skills can help children in school, at home, and in other sports as well.

When we understand each child's stage of development, we can then begin to teach them and reach them where they are. Utilizing a skills-based approach to training children in martial arts is key. And by doing this, we are setting them up for success in all areas of their life.