

The SKILLZ Zone

The Sweet Spot for Learning

We've all set goals, to some degree, throughout our lives. Some were easily achieved while others we just gave up on completing. This is because most plans are either set in the comfort zone or the danger zone. And while our initial motivation generally puts us on a path to setting lofty goals, it can lead us to failure. Finding a balance between these two zones is critical in increasing productivity and avoiding stagnation. The "SKILLZ zone" is the optimal place to do this. By teaching children this early on, we can ensure that they have the necessary tools for consistent future successes.

We are all very familiar with the comfort zone. This is where we feel secure and have skills in place to help us maintain the status quo. Many people spend a lot of time in this zone because it doesn't require much change. This is also the place that we withdraw to when we feel panicked or overwhelmed. And although feeling safe is essential, the comfort zone doesn't allow us space to grow, so we become indifferent to expanding ourselves. This essentially blocks us from learning any new skills that are beneficial to our growth.

On the opposite side of the comfort zone is the danger zone. This zone is where we feel completely overwhelmed and out of control, so only surviving takes all our attention and effort. This often happens to those who set goals so far from their current abilities that they become overwhelmed and panicked. Because we are "wired to survive," these uncomfortable feelings cause us to retreat to our comfort zone, and any possibility for new skill achievement comes to an abrupt standstill. We are then, once more, faced with apathy for anything challenging.

The key to breaking free from this cycle and beginning to set goals that are challenging, yet attainable is to form ones in the "SKILLZ zone." This is the zone where dreams are not so far off that we are too scared to try but are also not close enough to be too easily achievable. Therefore, new skills are just out of our reach, making it the sweet spot for learning. For

children to settle into the "SKILLZ zone," they must feel the environment is **safe** and **supportive**.

In the SKILLZ Child Development program, this zone is the foundation of the program's design. Since each class is **age-specific**, the starting point and goals are based on appropriate expectations in physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development for that age group. This, coupled with the **game-based** approach to learning, creates an environment that is fun yet **challenging**. Also, the **Certified Pediatric Ninja Specialists** that run each class utilize their knowledge of science and psychology as well as Teaching SKILLZ to establish an environment that makes each student feel safe. All this combined makes the achievement system of earning **stripes** and **belts** an enjoyable process and gives each **student** more confidence to set the next **goal**.

Learning new skills and abilities should be enjoyable, and getting there should come from **engaging** in activities where we feel safe enough to try something beyond our current limitations while also not going overboard. Consistent progress towards these things opens up a child's curiosity as to what else they can achieve. By doing this, we are helping them always challenge themselves, which will give them the **power** to achieve anything they want in life.