

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE BEST MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL FOR YOUR FAMILY

FULL REPORT & TOOLKIT BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



MASTER SOMNATH SIKDAR'S MESSAGE TO POTENTIAL MARTIAL ARTS STUDENTS AND CONSUMERS:

Dear Prospective Martial Arts Student and Family:

Thank you very much for your interest in martial arts. I am grateful and honored to have the opportunity to provide you with information about the martial arts and help you choose a qualified martial arts school for your family.

Our students and their families have joined our Dragon Gym community for a variety of reasons. We look forward to learning more about you and how martial arts is the right solution to help you achieve your goals for you, your family and your children. Each of our 285 youth and 135 adults who learn and practice Tae Kwon Do and Jiu-Jitsu with us, have their own reasons for choosing Dragon Gym. Our goal is to help our students get the most out of their martial arts experience which provides lessons, strategies and techniques that will serve them for a lifetime.

Are you...?

Are you wanting to help your child with focus, self-discipline, self-confidence, better grades, self-control, leadership, resilience and better behavior at home and school?

Are you wanting to help your child improve their coping skills with ADD/ADHD or social interaction skills with peers, teachers and other adults?

Are you hoping this is a safe place for your children to come together, share a common experience and cooperate and collaborate more with less squabbling and fighting?

Are you hoping this is a community that will help your child cope and overcome the stigma and trauma of being bullied?

Are you seeking a place where your children can build their character by practicing respect, humility, honesty, determination, compassion, resilience, service and collaboration, all with a growth mindset?

Are you hoping this may finally be the sport that your child truly enjoys and embraces as their own because they have struggled to find their own way with team sports?

Are you looking for your child to discover the value and importance of hard work, self-discipline, commitment to excellence and the pursuit of goals--which build their self-confidence and resilience?

Yes to one or two of these? Great, then you and our current children and families already have some things in common!

We have developed this informational guide on selecting a martial arts program so that you can make the most informed decision in selecting the martial arts school and its community

that will best serve your children and your family for many years to come. The typical child sticks with Tae Kwon Do for less than 6 months, our students average 26 months. And, many remain students for quite a bit longer.

Therefore, you deserve the opportunity to learn everything you can before investing in your child's future health and well-being.

Through my studies in teaching theory, success strategies, communication methodology and years as a coach, teacher, and mentor, I have found that certain characteristics in a program increase the likelihood of success in martial arts and in life.

Unfortunately, I have also seen the unscrupulous tactics, misleading representations and the lack of qualified instructors that, combined with the new martial arts student's lack of knowledge, have a damaging effect on the student, family and ultimately the reputation of kids' martial arts itself.

It is my goal to provide you with this toolkit so that you can make an educated investment in a martial arts education. In this way, you can maximize the benefits of a martial arts program and avoid the negative experiences. I used the term "investment" for a couple of reasons. Martial Arts training is a not mere sport that you pay "dues" for; it should be a progressive and educational program that will yield benefits long beyond the attainment of a "black belt". (The value derived from a high quality martial arts program and instructor far exceeds any cost associated with it.)

I am a speaker, author, coach, and full-time martial arts instructor as well as the co-owner of Dragon Gym Martial Arts & Fitness. Dragon Gym co-owners, Lonnie Beck and Chris Taylor, are also my training partners and lifelong friends. We started our martial arts training as children and continued with our passion for almost three decades. We are not only practitioners, but products of the martial arts system. We know firsthand the benefits that can be realized for the individual and family through martial arts. Over the years, we've also seen the ups, downs and metamorphosis of the martial arts industry.

Choosing a martial arts program and instructor isn't just about location, class times and costs. There's a lot more to consider when thinking about which school is going to be the best fit for you and your family. And, not every martial arts school / program is a good match. Some emphasize things that might be unimportant to you. Others may or may not have instructors qualified and skilled at providing for a specific need you or a family member might require.

And, it's not all about price or convenience. Sure, price and convenience matter. But it's not the only thing that's important to you. And once you've decided on the martial arts for your family to learn and practice, you'll want the very best results possible for a price that's fair.

We want you to make the most informed decision possible as you consider the Dragon Gym for your children's martial arts programs.

And, we'll tell you if our program or another one is the best match for you or your family. You see we're not for everyone. We turn away students who aren't a good match. We're interested in being sure that we can meet and exceed your needs and expectations... for yourself and/or your family. If we don't think we can, we'll tell you.

And, before joining any program, including ours, make sure that you get a chance to see if we're a perfect match. Take a Test Drive with our trial program and find out if it's right for you and your children.

It can be a complicated choice, with lots of factors to consider. So, we've compiled this comprehensive toolkit to help guide you through what can seem like an overwhelming process. Don't sign up with any martial arts studio or program until you've thought about and asked about these factors!

Sincerely,

Somnath Sikdar

Master Instructor

Dragon Gym

CONTINUE READING FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL FOR YOUR FAMILY

In it you'll find:

- 7 Questions to Help You Identify Your Child's Needs, Dreams and Goals
- The 3 Practical, Proven Ways to Avoid Overwhelm in Your Decision Process
- The 5 Most Common Misconceptions about Children's Martial Arts Programs
- The 4 Biggest Mistakes When Choosing a Martial Arts Studio
- How to Avoid Martial Arts School Rip-Offs Today
- What Makes Our Dragon Gym Program So Different? (Unique)
- A Brief Overview of How Our Program Works
- Some Worthy Goals of the Dragon Gym Student
- The Foundations of The Dragon Gym
- The Most Important Qualities in Martial Arts
- What to Expect from a Great Martial Arts School
- Some Frequently Asked Questions
- What to do next:
- A 7-Part School Evaluation Form and Checklist

Looking for a martial arts school and choosing the right program can be very overwhelming; however, you've already taken the first step and are well ahead of 97% of the population.

You've likely heard about and are interested in the many benefits that martial arts training can provide for children. Sometimes, these are called the "psycho-social" benefits of children's martial arts. For example, children's martial arts programs aim to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline, better grades, leadership and improved behavior both at home and in school.

Let's face it, sending your child to martial arts class once a week isn't going to accomplish all of these things. You need to be consistently sending your kids to class, two to three times per week, as part of a comprehensive approach in developing these characteristics.

Additionally, it seems that martial arts studios are sprouting up all over the place. While that does speak to the value of martial arts training, not all martial arts schools are equal. Furthermore, not all schools that teach kids, are actually teaching *Children's Martial Arts Programs*. In the early days of martial arts being taught to children, there was no difference between what was taught to adults and what was taught to children; more significantly there was no difference in *how* martial arts were taught to adults and children.

Over time, the instructors saw that this was inappropriate and starting modifying their martial arts curricula. In reality, they were just simplifying, in many cases, watering-down the program. A true children's martial arts program specifically addresses the stages of development in a child and the four primary components of that development. As a child moves from pre-school to elementary school to middle school and eventually to high school and beyond, they develop in four areas. They grow physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially, and the combination of these four areas is commonly referred to as a child's stage of development.

A children's martial arts program must account for the different stages of development, group the children accordingly, contain the correct curriculum and deploy that material appropriately. We don't try to educate seven year olds and twelve year olds in the same class. The same is true for martial arts lessons. We've found that having four separate age-group programs is the best way to offer a high quality martial arts experience for children from ages three to fourteen.

Unfortunately, without the right information, many prospective students end up choosing an under-qualified (or perhaps *mis*-qualified) martial arts school, have a negative experience and develop a bad taste for martial arts. It's my mission to spread the great benefits of martial arts, so it's my goal to outfit you with the right information and confidence that you will choose the right children's martial arts program for your family.

7 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU IDENTIFY YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS, DREAMS & GOALS

As a parent, it's difficult to always know and understand what our children are thinking and feeling. On top of that, we are wondering how they perceive and react to the world around them.

We want to instill both a positive mindset and resilient attitude in them, and we know that having some greater insight can help.

Plus, connecting with them on a real one-to-one level can be increasingly difficult, especially with increasing availability of technology and high-sensory media.

These seven questions can serve that end. Be sure to listen, "read" between the lines where appropriate and avoid judgment.

The nature of their answers will change as they age, and so should our expectation and interpretation.

Here are the questions:

1. In five words or less, how would you describe yourself?
2. What makes you feel the happiest? Is it something that you love to do?
3. What do you think you would be great at teaching others to do?
4. What is the best thing that ever happened? (for older kids you might ask about "the worst")
5. What did you learn from that thing?
6. What do you know about now, that you think will be the most useful when you're a grown up?
7. Imagine us sitting together three years from now. What does your (our) life look like?

THE 3 PRACTICAL, PROVEN WAYS TO AVOID OVERWHELM IN YOUR DECISION PROCESS

Prioritize:

You may have heard the refrains: “Start with Why” or “Find your purpose”. Whatever your endeavor these are valid and useful principles to fall back on. And, they can be helpful when it comes to finding the right martial arts program for your child or even a self-defense or fitness program for yourself.

Overwhelm creeps in when everything at hand seems to be equally important, but if you can take a step back, you can appreciate that isn’t necessarily the case.

Ask yourself, what is your primary reason for getting your child started in martial arts? Then, also ask yourself, is there a deeper reason.

As you can imagine, parents come to us with many goals for their children, but ultimately their motivation boils down to this: They want their children to be happy, healthy and successful in both the near and long term.

And, they recognize that a martial arts community can help with that.

Practice Mindfulness:

When the decision points of choosing a martial arts school (and other activities) start to accumulate and you start to feel overwhelmed, don’t worry. This is common and we hear similar stories from many parents.

All too frequently, this stress and anxiousness is caused by worry about what might happen in the future (again with regards to both martial arts and other activities).

This is where focusing on the current moment and being mindful of the decision at hand can be helpful.

This will help you eliminate the plethora of “what-if” scenarios and focus on the decision at hand. Choosing the best martial arts program for your child.

Pursue Excellence (not perfection):

Sometimes the pursuit of perfection can be the enemy of excellence. Someone famous once said: “Imperfect action is better than perfect action.”

You already know about the potential benefits of martial arts training and how a great martial arts community can help your child and assist you to be an effective parent.

Every last detail might not be exactly right, distance, schedule, price etc...but if you look at your priorities you will choose the right martial arts school and can move forward with confidence.

THE 5 MOST COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN'S MARTIAL ARTS PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS

Misconception #1 – Martial Arts Promotes Violence.

Considering martial arts have been taught to children for the last 30 years, this misconception surprises me, but it persists. Perhaps it is due to the meteoric rise in popularity of “MMA” and the like, but the reality is a good martial arts school will not promote violence in children (or anyone) regardless of style. Martial artists, adults and children alike, tend to be some of the kindest, gentlest and well-tempered people around.

Although a martial arts program does teach kicking, punching, blocking and other martial arts moves, these techniques are just a vehicle to teach life skills like confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline, goal setting, physical fitness, avoidance of negative peer pressure, academic achievement, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, leadership skills and more. Yes, this can all come from martial arts training; however, the delivery must be from the right perspective, with the right methodology, supported by the right values and philosophy. All these aspects must align with you and your family.

Misconception # 2 – “This Style” is Better than “That Style” of Martial Arts.

The reality is, there aren't “good” martial arts styles and “bad” martial arts styles. There are only good instructors and schools, and bad instructors and schools. There isn't a best style for children, or even a best style for *your* child. Rather than focusing on style, for example karate or jiu-jitsu, it's more important to find a school with properly trained teachers and a comprehensive curriculum that appropriately targets the children's stage of development. In this way, a child's martial arts education can impact all areas of their life—school, home, family, health and sports. The right martial arts school will have a well-rounded curriculum of techniques, but that's just the starting point. That school will also teach about goal setting, character development, self-defense / bullydefense, and communication skills.

Misconception #3 – Martial Arts Teach Eastern Religion and/or Mysticism.

Decades ago, there was a certain mystique to martial arts masters. As a community, we were less diverse and less familiar with martial arts. However today, martial arts has become an integral part of American culture. There is something to be learned from all philosophies, and the right school will focus on physical techniques and strong values like honesty, integrity, self-discipline, gratitude, family values and a sense of community.

Misconception #4 – Martial Arts Will Stunt My Child's Growth / There is a High Risk of Injury with Martial Arts.

Well, that's two misconceptions, but they are related because they deal with assumption and misinformation. I've spoken with so many parents that have said to me "My friend told me that martial arts stunts a child's growth". I'm not sure how that idea started, but it's probably related to the thought that weight lifting would stunt a child's growth. Actually the opposite is true. The CDC recommends three days of activity like running, jumping, climbing and load-bearing exercise to ensure proper bone density and growth—all things found in martial arts training!

What about injury? Here again the facts speak for themselves. Intuitively, it makes sense to think that since martial arts are combat-oriented there would be a higher risk of injury. According to the CDC, combative sports actually rank 15th in terms of injury, falling far behind sports such as football, baseball, soccer and basketball.

It's important to realize that there is risk to *any* physical activity, but the right martial arts school will have relatively few injuries. Safety equipment will be required, the instructors will be properly trained, and the school environment will look, feel, and be safe. Sparring is an important part of martial arts, but it should be conducted in a controlled and safe way only when the students have the right amount of training and experience (typically this is 9 months to a year).

Misconception #5 – Martial Arts are Expensive

This may be a sensitive issue to some, but I want to be as frank as possible. Anything is too expensive if it's not worth it, no matter how low the price tag may be. If your child isn't getting the value and benefits from martial arts training, then yes, martial arts classes are too expensive.

It's hard to say what's a good price and what isn't. It depends on what the school is offering in core services, wrap around services and true benefit to your child from the program. You should get a clear price from every martial arts school you evaluate. If they are evasive about the price and complete costs, you should be wary.

Finding the right martial arts school for your child's overall growth and development is the primary goal. Remember, that is more important than a few dollars up or down in the monthly tuition price.

If a better school costs a few dollars more per month, it's well worth it. At the same, just because a school has a higher price tag doesn't necessarily mean it's better. It's important to focus on the value provided through a well-designed children's martial arts program: confidence, self-respect, respect for others, how to set and achieve goals, how to be successful. These traits are priceless, will serve your child for life and will aid in developing a strong community.

You see, I don't just see martial arts as an investment in a child's growth and development. I've been involved with the martial arts for over 30 years. I've seen what it can do for children inside and outside the training hall and at school. I've seen it improve family bonds and relationships. I've seen these kids go out and make our communities a better place. That's why I've dedicated my life to spreading the benefits of martial arts, and that's why it's so important to help others find the right martial arts education.

THE 4 BIGGEST MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN CHOOSING A MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL AND PROGRAM FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Mistake #1 - Choosing a school based on equipment and decor alone.

Yes, a kids martial arts studio should be a top notch facility that is more than adequately equipped with mats, mirrors, changing rooms. A nice training space and reception area shows that the school really cares about its clientele. However, first-rate facility is not enough, it is just the beginning. Make sure to get a chance to evaluate the curriculum, the instruction and the atmosphere of the school. Is it a place that aligns with your values and that you will be comfortable bringing your family to for years and years?

Mistake #2 – Choosing a school based on the “sticker” price.

Low cost without the combination of good instruction and a well-kept facility is a recipe for disaster. Even if the price is low, your child might not benefit from martial arts the way you expected, leaving everyone frustrated and disappointed. Most of the time, you get what you pay for, and quality isn't the cheapest option. That said, just because a school is expensive doesn't mean that it is great either. I created this toolkit so that you will be an educated consumer. What are all of the associated costs of membership? Will there be costs in addition to the monthly dues? Most importantly, what is the value of training? What is a sport-like extra curricular activity worth? Which is a program that will help your child be in the 90th percentile physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually, and enable them to achieve in the ways that are important to us as parents?

Mistake #3 – Choosing a school that doesn't use the most up-to-date teaching methods.

When martial arts training was first introduced in the United States during the 60s and 70s, it was not commonly taught to children. The martial arts were often brought back to the USA by veterans who had served overseas. Often times instructors were sponsored to emigrate to the USA as well. The martial arts being taught at that time were designed and suited for military-aged men. Over time, people saw that the benefits of martial arts went way beyond self-defense and fighting, and instructors started teaching children. At first, children and adults were mixed together, then adults and children were separated and eventually, even the children were separated into different age groups. The instructors even saw that the “traditional” material and methodology was not suited to the children. Unfortunately, in most cases this only led to the truncating and “watering down” of the martial arts curriculum. Keep in mind that a martial arts studio that teaches kids is not

necessarily teaching a *children's martial arts program*! An up-to-date children's martial arts program will be developed from the ground up, considering the needs and stage of development of the children first.

Mistake #4 – Choosing a school based upon location and/or class times.

At first, it may seem like an easy to decision to pick a martial arts school based on convenience. The school is closer to your home and the class times already work for your schedule. Keep in mind, martial arts is an activity that you should consider for your child in the long term. Class schedules change, both yours and the school's, and sometimes schools even change locations. Martial Arts is the activity that helps your child become better at everything they do, including sports and academics. A martial arts program that you're aligned with will help your child become the best version of themselves. Saving a few minutes here or there for convenience isn't a sacrifice you want to make when it comes to choosing a high quality martial arts program that is going to be the best fit for your family.

HOW TO AVOID MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL RIP-OFFS TODAY

Rip-off #1 – Super low prices.

We are all attracted by a low price since we have to operate within a budget and are constantly seeking a great value. However, some schools use low prices and other membership gimmicks to lure customers in because of their lack of credentials and teaching experience. A good and professional martial arts school will be willing and able to explain all of the associated costs up front. They won't shy away from this because they believe in the value they provide and that you will be confident in your investment.

Rip-off #2 – Unsupported claims and guaranteed advancement.

If a school claims "super-secret techniques," rank advancement within a set/finite period of time, or the ability to overcome an opponent with minimal training, it should raise a red flag. A school that guarantees a black belt in a short period of time or an accelerated period of time if you pay more should arouse questions. Every student's abilities, dedication, and goals are different, and that will reflect upon the outcome their training. You and your child will get awesome results from Martial Arts Training, but it takes time, hard work, and dedication.

Rip-off #3 – Outdated beliefs.

We have a saying: "Traditional is an attitude, not a technique". We take teaching kids martial arts very seriously, and we have a very traditional attitude towards martial arts training. However, it is not dogmatic. A school should not adhere to techniques and methods just because they are "traditional". Rather a martial arts school and its instructors should be constantly researching, learning and evolving in order to be using the best methods and techniques for both martial arts training and athletic development. For example, martial arts used to be taught to kids of all ages simultaneously, but we discovered a better way. We now start kids in 4 different age groups: 3-5, 5-7, 7-10 and 10-14.

Most importantly, everybody should be having fun!

Rip-off #4 – Inadequate facilities.

When you are evaluating martial arts schools, take a good account of the facility. Remember, you are not just paying for lessons, you are paying for the facility in which the lessons are located. Is it clean? Do they have a pro-shop and information area? Do they have what your child will need to get the most out of his/her training? Do they have high quality mats, mirrors, training equipment and accessories and changing rooms? Do they have a seating area and viewing area?

WHAT MAKES OUR DRAGON GYM PROGRAM SO DIFFERENT?

1. **Go Beyond the Grades™ Student Success Workbook** – A follow along resource for our 3-week back to school readiness program. This work book helps set the kids up to have great school days and an amazing school year by guiding them through setting scholastic, relationship, attitudinal and personal well-being goals.
2. **Four Separate Age-based Programs, for children from ages three to fourteen** – As kids age, they go through different physical, emotional, social and intellectual stages of develop. So, it doesn't make sense to lump all ages of students into one martial arts class. Rather, we've developed 4 age-specific children's programs to help ensure they develop the focus, discipline and confidence that you are looking for.
3. **Individual Attention and Access to Instructors**—(we know your child's name) – It's all too common for kids (and adults) to feel "lost in the crowd". You and your child will be introduced to the instructors (and a few students just like you) the first time you visit. As a member, your child will be sure to get attention on the training floor and access to the DG team.
4. **Junior Instructors**—patience, integrity, encouragement, consistency and leadership – The junior instructor program is the pride and joy of Dragon Gym. These students not only learn the skills of leadership, but they get a chance to demonstrate leadership with their peer group. There's nothing more exhilarating then watching a 10-year old junior black belt at the head of an entire class of 7-9 year olds!
5. **Extraordinary Number of Students at the Level of Black Belt** – When you visit Dragon Gym you'll notice something special: our HUGE Junior Black Belt Classes. There's a saying amongst martial arts instructors: "everyone quits". Well these kids sure haven't! Many have been with us for 5 years and longer. It's been a tremendous reward to see them grow and eventually transition into our adult programs. These students often return to Dragon Gym after completing their college degrees.
6. **Service & Community Projects** – At the Dragon Gym our mission isn't just to teach the highest quality of martial arts and develop healthy, happy and successful young adults. It's also to serve the community by developing future leaders. The students and staff are continuously running food drives, fundraisers and other awareness projects. Our instructors regular speak for and work with the local public schools. If we can help your organization in any way, please let us know!

7. **Growth Mindset and Child Development Best Practices** – One of the foundational principles of martial arts training is “purposeful practice”, being on the path to mastery. Being on this path instills in the children a growth mindset—that abilities, especially intelligence, are not fixed: they can be developed over time. And, we’ve consulted with top child development experts to make sure our teaching methods are in alignment with their best practices.
8. **School, Family, Friends, Community, and Physical Health and Well Being** – At Dragon Gym we say that we have “a student in common”. You’re entrusting us with part of your child’s education. They are our student in the martial arts, their school-teacher’s student in academics and as you child, you’re student in life. We take the interplay of these relationships to heart and they are an integral component of our program.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HOW OUR PROGRAM WORKS

1. There are 10 Qualities each Student must develop continuously as they advance in rank.
2. The 10 Qualities are taught individually so a Student training 2 times per week will work on all 10 qualities over a course of 5 weeks.
3. The testing cycle should be a total of 12 weeks: 10 weeks to cover each skill twice, with a week of review to ensure proper development before testing.
4. The Student's goal is to develop the necessary challenges per quality, as outlined in the testing charts.
5. As the Student accomplishes each quality requirement, the Student will earn the respective quality stripe.
6. The Student's goal is to collect all 10 quality stripes within the 12 week testing cycle to test for the next rank.
7. As each Student earns their new belt, they will proceed to earn all 10 quality stripes based on the next belt's requirements as per the testing chart.
8. Once the Student reaches the rank of "Black Belt" in their age-specific program, they will then test to graduate into Green Belt of the next age group. Upon graduating from the Extreme program, Students will test for their 1st Degree Junior Black Belt.

SOME WORTHY GOALS OF THE DRAGON GYM STUDENT

1. Develop Your Character and Self-Respect
2. Show Respect to Other Individuals
3. Learn and Live the Philosophies and Traditions Taught By The Dragon Gym
4. Develop More Inner Strength
5. Earn Your Black Belt!

Working on which of these would help your child the most right now?

In which areas of development could your child grow the most this year? (e.g., academics, physical well-being, relationships, attitude, emotional health, self-esteem, self-confidence)

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DRAGON GYM

DRAGON GYM SPIRIT

1. Be Loyal to Your Nation
2. Be Obedient to Your Parents
3. Be Honorable to Your Friends
4. Be Loving to Your Family
5. Be Just in Your Means

TENETS OF TAEKWONDO

1. Courtesy
2. Integrity
3. Perseverance
4. Self Control
5. Indomitable Spirit

MEANING OF MOOSA

1. To build your knowledge so that you may judge right from wrong and fight for what is right
2. Keep a warm heart, be loving, compassionate, and understanding of others
3. Be courageous in your fight for what is right
4. Be a person all everyone can trust for your word is your bond

THE FIVE CRITERION

To use or enjoy life to the fullest sense of the term one must have the following:

1. A physique to withstand all odds and be free from ailments as far as practicable
2. An object of love
3. A sufficient income to keep yourself free from anxiety
4. A hobby, a pursuit for pleasure other than the main occupation
5. A job which is not uninteresting

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES IN MARTIAL ARTS

CONCENTRATION

One of the most important elements in Martial Arts, concentration is the ability to focus one's mind, body, and spirit toward the accomplishment of a desired goal.

DISCIPLINE

As important as concentration, together they comprise the very nature of the Martial Arts. Disciplined training is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially in moral and mindset development.

SELF CONTROL

Patience is the continuous struggle to control our impulses. Students are taught to avoid dangerous situations and when they do arise, to first use other recourses available before using their special training.

COURAGE

Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the ability to act correctly in the presence of fear. Students learn to recognize fear and then take the right course of action while controlling their mind and body.

INTERNAL STRENGTH

In many ways this is the idea of "Mind Over Matter." Most importantly is the student's ability to transcend one's limitations and persevere through adversity.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A GREAT MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

The martial arts are an activity that your kids do to get better at everything that they do. It's something they do to become the best version of themselves, so you should have high expectations of your child's martial arts school.

We know that kids need an organizing principle, something to help them draw all their many gifts and abilities so that they can operate optimally and successfully no matter where they are and what they are doing. You can expect your child to have improved physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially through training in a well-structured martial arts program.

Here are some more considerations to look for and expect from a good martial arts school:

1. Age-Specific Classes.

As they grow, kids go through different stages of development so it often doesn't make sense to lump many different ages of kids into the same class. Although some martial arts schools may do this for convenience, it's really not optimal for learning. Age-specific classes *and* curriculum will ensure that the students are learning in an environment that is right for them. They won't be held back because other kids in the class are too young and they won't feel overwhelmed by kids that are much older either. You can expect your child to be motivated, challenged and having fun in a good martial arts school.

2. A Test Drive.

A good martial arts school is built around a long-term commitment to their students. They expect their students to be part of the school for years and years. Martial arts are an activity that your family will invest a lot of time and money in. A good school will have a system for you to try *several* classes to make sure it is a good fit for you and your family.

3. Structured Class Plans and a Long Term Progressive Curriculum.

Unfortunately, even in this modern age of martial arts education, some instructors are just "winging it" and teaching what they're in the mood for. This is not an effective way of teaching, and the students don't know what to expect. Teaching effectively and keeping students motivated comes down to having a structured plan and progressive curriculum in place. This ensures that students are continuously improving and increasing their depth of knowledge in a consistent way. If you ask, you can expect a good martial arts school to show you their class progression.

4. A Character Development Program.

As parents, we are enrolling our kids into martial arts for so much more than physical fitness and self-defense. A good martial arts program will have both implicit and explicit character development benefits.

Inherent to the martial arts culture is a framework to teach work ethic, patience, resilience and goal setting. In addition, a good martial arts school will have a formal character development piece built into each and every kids' martial arts class. You can expect a good martial arts school to do this in the form of a "mat chat" and have external requirements around belt testing like questions or essays and feedback from a student's parents and teachers.

5. COMMUNITY:

The last thing, and possibly the most important thing, that you should expect from a great martial arts school is a strong sense of community.

Here, at the Dragon Gym, entire families train with us. Kids train with kids. Adults train with adults. Lots of our members live within walking distance of each other, and many are friends outside of our classes. The result: a close, family-like sense of community here. And the moment you join our classes, you'll feel right at home with this community.

Students who have been training for a while help out the beginners. Exercises often require partners, and students take advantage of this to encourage and cheer each other on. This is something you can and should expect from your martial arts school.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: “What is the class environment like? I don’t know anyone—what should I do?”

Our students are one big, crazy family. We are always more than excited to add new people to our crew! We all—instructors, junior instructors and fellow students—welcome new students, and are eager to get to know one another. Humility, compassion and encouragement are commonplace. Junior instructors and Black Belt Students will frequently check-in with you. Our Students tell us we are really good at matchmaking when it comes to helping you find a training buddy too.

Q: “What if sports have never come easily for our child...will she feel safe and included in the beginning?”

Dragon Gym is a place where everyone knows your name! When you join any of our programs, you become part of an incredibly supportive and encouraging community. Our families tell us that Dragon Gym is an especially positive and nurturing place for their children to learn martial arts. We hear most often that the combination of our enthusiastic and compassionate instructors and junior instructors, and our culture of patience, integrity, respect, encouragement and living community, allows our students, young and old, to feel safe to take risks and fail forward. Your child will never be expected to do more than what he is currently capable of, and will never be made to feel embarrassed or left behind.

*“After spending over 50 years of my life in the Martial Arts, I want all of my students to understand that **I am still a student** of the Martial Arts as well.”*

--Grand Master Goh

Q: “Can I bring a friend?”

Sure can! Beginners who start with a friend or “accountabili-buddy” find it easier to stay consistent and tend to reach their goals even faster. Just have your friend give us a call to set up their free one-on-one orientation— (610)-363-7575.

Q: “Do you have family memberships?”

Yes, in fact, almost half of all our memberships are family memberships. We even have a few families in which, every member has obtained a black belt! Whether you start with us, as Dad and daughter, and then add the rest of the family later, or everyone joins right now, we have quite reasonably priced family discount memberships.

Q: “I see you have some awesome events coming up, including Black Belt Testing. Can my child and I tag along?”

Of course you can! The majority of our events are open to our current and prospective students and families. It’s important to us that you get to know us—all of us! If you would like to join us for a specific event, please let us know. We will gladly welcome you and your family!

Q: “How do the trial classes work?”

All of our students start the same way, with our quick start program. This is a two-week trial program that includes two weeks of classes, the martial arts uniform and a combination of both group and private instruction. We developed this program so that it gives us a chance to evaluate your child’s progress and abilities while giving you the chance to observe the classes, meet the instructors and experience what the Dragon Gym program has to offer.

Q: “What should I do if I can’t make it to one of my trial classes?”

We have some specific activities and skills for your child to learn during the first several classes here. So, it’s important to attend the classes during the Quick Start Program that we’ve laid out for you. However, if you need to reschedule one of your classes, we can do that for you. Just give us a call and we’ll set your child up for the next best possible class time.

Q: “How often will my child be testing for his/her next belt?”

We run belt tests and promotions on regular intervals at the Dragon Gym. We’ve developed a structured system so that student’s and parents know what’s expected of them in order to advance to the next belt. Every belt level has 8 skills that the student must complete, and students will have a chance to learn, review, and make up these skills as needed. With regular and consistent attendance you should expect your child to test every 10-12 weeks for the next belt.

Q: “Do you have summer camps as well? Can siblings or friends participate in summer camps with a Member?”

Yes and Yes! Every summer we offer several weeks of summer camp. These camps are available for current Dragon Gym members as well as their friends and/or sibling via referral. You see, our summer camps are not just fun camps, they are “accelerated training camps” where the children will be learning martial arts and self-defense techniques while developing and maintaining their fitness. You can enroll in summer camps by the week, so you can choose to have your child participate in one or as many weeks of summer camp that makes sense for your family.

Q: “What other forms of Martial Arts do you offer besides Taekwondo?”

Our children’s martial arts program is rooted in Taekwondo. Taekwondo has a long track record of successfully teaching kids focus, discipline and confidence, helping them become the best version of themselves. Additionally, we’ve spent decades studying some of the worlds best and most popular martial arts and we’ve incorporated the best aspects of these arts into our system to develop a well-rounded martial artist. In the regular classes, in addition to Taekwondo, the students will be learning techniques from Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Boxing and wrestling. As they students progress they can also start to specialize in Sport (Olympic) Taekwondo, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu or Muay Thai.

Q: “How big are my child’s classes and how will she get the support she needs from the Instructors?”

This is a very common question from parents looking for a quality martial arts program for their children. After decades of working with kids and their parents we've come to see for most the real concern is to know that their child will get the individual attention and support he or she needs from the instructors.

At the Dragon Gym, there are several ways that we assure this for you and your child, but before I get into those details, let me tell you that a large martial arts class is nothing to worry about as long as it is run in a well thought out and structured manner. Plus, what determines a "large" class for 3 and 4 year olds, 5 and 6 year olds, 7 to 9 year olds, and 10 to 13 year olds is very different.

Here's how we do it:

1 -- All of our classes are age-specific, meaning 3 and 4 year olds are only with 3 and 4 year olds, 5 and 6 year olds are only with 5 and 6 year olds, 7 to 9 year olds are only with 7 to 9 year olds and 10 to 13 year olds are only with 10 to 13 year olds.

2 -- Because the classes are age-specific the students are with other kids that are in the same physical, social, intellectual and emotional stages of the development and have similar needs and goals. This is really works because our martial arts curriculum was designed from the research of developmental psychologists to target these aspects of a child's development. This is not true from programs that lump a more spread out age group of kids into the same class.

#3 -- Near Peer Mentoring. One of the best ways for kids to learn is through what is called modeling. Modeling takes place when a child emulates a slightly older or more advanced child that they look up to. At the Dragon Gym we have an enrichment and mentorship track called the Junior Instructor Program. This is a program where the older students receive additional instruction and the opportunity to develop and demonstrate leadership skills

#4 -- Monthly Check-ins. Our instructional staff will check-in with you and your child individually at least once a month to make sure his or her progress is on track and address any questions you have, or any obstacle he or she may be facing...in the dojang, at school or

even at home.

#5 -- Student / Instructor Ratio. We employ several full time and professional martial arts instructors as well as many more part time instructors in all of our children's classes as well as limit class size. The class size limit and student-teacher ratio is determined by the age group and you can be assured that your child will be getting the right amount of attention each and every class.

THE NEXT STEP...

Option 1: If you'd like to do some more research.

Use the information from this report and empower yourself as an educated consumer. Visit the websites and call a few martial arts schools and see what they have to offer. On the following pages you'll find a toolkit and a check list of sorts to help you evaluate every school that you visit.

Option 2: If you've found a school that has met your considerations,

Here at the Dragon Gym, if you're ready to get started, visit our website (www.dragongym.com) and get more information about the programs we offer and how they can serve families like yours. You can also get access to online specials and our email newsletters.

You can also give us a call at (610)-363-7575 and speak with one of our instructors who will be happy to answer your questions, and set you up with a free, no obligation orientation session and lesson.

I'm excited to meet you in person and help you and your family reach your goals with martial arts. Whether you're looking for fitness, self-defense, or personal development, we'll help you get there.

Sincerely,

Somnath Sikdar

President, Dragon Gym

A COMPREHENSIVE TOOLKIT TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL AND INSTRUCTOR FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Here are some important factors to consider and some questions to ask the school and instructors before you select a martial arts program.

PART 1 – General Information

School Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name of Instructor(s): _____

Number of years the school / organization has existed: _____

Travel time to school: _____

PART 2: Exterior Evaluation

1. Adequate parking (lot or street)?
2. Adequate lighting in parking area?
3. Adequate lighting at entrance to building?
4. Condition of parking lot?
5. Safety of neighborhood after dark?

Notes:

PART 3: INSTRUCTORS AND CURRICULUM

1. Rank (Degree of Black Belt) of Head Instructors:
2. Years of martial arts experience:
3. Have they studied multiple styles / disciplines:
4. Years of teaching experience:
5. Do they teach children?
6. Education, Affiliations and Certifications:
7. Have they received education and instructor as teachers and not just achieved belt rank?
8. Number of full time instructors:
9. Number of part time / assistant instructors:
10. Basic Philosophy of the school:
11. Main focus of the curriculum is:
12. Does the school offer a structured and progressive belt system? (This has been proven to help children reach their specific goals,)
13. Does the school offer well-developed and age-specific programs for all of the different stages of development in children?
 - a. If so, how many age groups do they teach?
 - b. What are the break downs of those age groups?
14. Will the students have the opportunity to become instructors and demonstrate leadership?
 - a. If so, what is the leadership development program?
 - b. Will the school, in addition to training them as leaders, provide recognition of dedication and leadership when your child needs a letter of recommendation for school, certification or program?
15. What life skills do they teach in addition to martial arts and self-defense?
16. Are curriculum resources, teaching aids and at home training kits available to the parents?

Notes:

PART 4: CLASSES AND SCHEDULE

1. Number of classes offered per week:
2. Days and times of classes:
3. How much flexibility will you have to attend during the week?
4. Are classes separated by age group, or are the mixed?
5. There are ____ instructors and assistants for a class of ____ children
6. Does the school use written class planners?
7. Will you know in advance what lessons will be covered in a given class?
8. Is the curriculum planned for days, weeks or years in advance?
9. How many classes are required between each belt rank?
10. Does the school have a systematic and objective way of determining readiness for progression?
11. How often are belt promotions?
12. Does the school have a system for incremental goal setting? (Short, medium and long term goals are a proven way to ensure motivation, self-confidence and long term success in children.)

Notes:

PART 5: WHAT WILL YOUR INVESTMENT BE?

1. Tuition
 - a. What is the total cost?
 - b. Are monthly payments available?
 - c. What is the length of the program?
2. What does tuition include?
 - a. How many classes per week?
 - b. Attendance flexibility throughout the week?
 - c. Belt testing and promotion (or are there additional fees for this?)
 - d. Special Prep classes?
 - e. At home training kits?
 - f. Online member site, training videos, curriculum resources, etc.
 - g. Parent information group / forum?
 - h. Belt / Rank Recognition?
3. Are there other fees?
 - a. Test Fees?
 - b. Special Classes Fees?
 - c. Registration Fees?
 - d. Association Fees?
4. Will a uniform be provided with the trial program or enrollment?
5. Will additional equipment be required? —This is very common. As the student progresses, he or she will need safety equipment for sparring.
6. Can membership be frozen and re-started later?

Notes:

PART 6: FACILITY

1. Is the training floor of adequate size?
2. Is the training floor matted? (an un-matted space is not only a safety risk, but will also inhibit a well-rounded martial arts education)
 - a. If so, what brand of mats? (are they a high-quality brand like Swain, Zebra or Dollamur?)
 - b. Are they continuous mats (preferred) or puzzle mats?
3. Is the reception area of adequate size?
4. Are the changing rooms appropriate?
5. Is the facility clean and safely furnished?
6. Is the equipment well maintained
7. Are the bathrooms clean?
8. Is water available?

PART 7: EVALUATING THE ORIENTATION AND TRIAL CLASSES

1. Does the school offer a one-on-one orientation or pre-evaluation lesson?
 - a. If so, did they offer a tour of the facility?
 - b. Did they introduce you to some instructors AND students?
 - c. Did they offer a systematic and objective way of placing your child in the best program / age group?
2. Does the school offer trial classes in the regular classes that your child will actually be enrolled in?
 - a. Were the classes age-specific or mixed with all ages?
 - b. Does the class begin and end on time?
 - c. Number of students in class:
 - d. Number of instructors and assistants in class:
 - e. Does the class appear to be well planned and structured?
 - f. Is there an atmosphere of mutual respect?
 - g. Is class orderly and disciplined?
 - h. Is the teaching philosophy evident in class?
 - i. Are resource materials available for parents and students?
 - j. Are students, teachers and parents having fun?

Notes: