

Texas Kobukan Newsletter
February 27, 2007



Sorry for the long period of time since the last newsletter. If you did not receive this newsletter via email, please send an email to info@texaskobukan.com with the student's name, and I will add you to the email distribution list.

Status of the Dojo:

We have been experiencing steady growth since we opened at this location in August 2004. Our first class held here on 8/24/04 consisted of four kids and three adults. Four of the original seven are still with us. Our largest class to date was this month (February) when we had 27 kids and 9 adult students in attendance.

The rapid growth and ability to work with the large kid's class sizes would not be possible without the help of several of the kyu ranks from the adult class. Their assistance helps both the students in the class they are working with as well as furthers their own training. Nothing forces you to examine the details of how you do

something as much as having to explain and demonstrate it to someone else. My thanks to those that regularly help Mr. Jacob and me with these classes.

Mr. Ettish Visit:

Mr. Fred Ettish, 8th degree black belt and our Regional Director will be visiting our dojo 3/23 through 3/25 to conduct a seminar for brown belt and above students. Those students will be receiving a separate email invitation detailing training times. He has also tentatively agreed to teach our general classes on Saturday, 3/24. All students should make an extra effort to attend their respective classes Saturday 3/24 to take advantage of this opportunity.

Monthly Tuition Reminder:

Note that monthly tuition is due prior to the end of the previous month. If you have not already paid for March please do so as soon as possible.

Annual Registration:

Note that when you initially joined our dojo, you paid an annual registration fee. The annual registration fee (\$40 for the first family member, \$25 for additional members) is collected annually on the anniversary of your first payment. If it is been over a year since your last annual registration payments please provide your payment as soon as possible. I am behind in sending out notices, but will be providing reminders on an individual case basis.

Patches:

We are currently out of Association patches for new students. I expect to receive some in the next few weeks.

Sparring Equipment

This is just a reminder that once students are promoted from 10 kyu (white belt) to 9th kyu (yellow belt) they will start sparring. While we have some loaner feet and hand protection for students to use until they purchase their own, students are expected to purchase and bring a mouthpiece to each class. Male students are also expected to wear an athletic cup protector to each class. Several 9th kyu and above students are not bringing all required equipment, and that forces us to limit their sparring.

On Time & Ready to Practice:

In our list of Dojo Rules, our first rule is “Student should arrive for class on time and

ready to focus on Matsumura Kenpo practice”. There will always be valid reasons for students to sometimes arrive later; however, we have a number of students regularly entering class after we have started. This is not desirable for the student, since they miss the initial bow-in and the start of warm-up exercises. Our goal is to bow in the class at the scheduled start time. We would appreciate the students and their parents making all practical effort to be sure the student is there and ready to start at the designated time.

In addition to being on time, the second part of the rule is to be ready to focus on their practice. This includes taking care of anything that might interrupt their training, such as needing a bathroom break, before class starts. We have several students who regularly have to leave class – often shortly after we get started – to use the bathroom. Students are always allowed to leave the class to take care of this, but it is somewhat disruptive for the entire class when we have students leaving and re-entering, plus the student is missing part of their training.

Some Frequently Asked Questions:

Sometimes you test students for advancement, and other times you just award them their next rank at the end of class. Why the difference?

While we generally test all students at major kyu rank changes (yellow belt to green, green to brown, and obviously brown to black), we often award the intermediate ranks within a belt color based on class attendance, performance, attitude, and technical skill versus a specific point in time test. We try to stress to students that every class is really a test and they are consistently being evaluated, and should approach each class with that attitude. The tests we do

administer provide a formal checkpoint to be sure they are able to perform as required under a stressful situation, but also provides a check for the instructors on how well we are doing in preparing the students for advancement. The downside of testing is that students who do not try hard in class or have behavior issues can work hard during a test and meet the minimum requirements, then revert back to their old habits until the next test. We do not schedule a student for a test until we believe they deserve the next rank based on all the factors described above. Beware of schools that have turned student advancement into a cash flow opportunity, and test students every two months, etc. Or a school that advances student only on the basis of how long they have been their current rank. We only advance students when we feel it is appropriate.

There seems to be a wide variety in skill level, even with students at the same rank. How can that be?

Advancement in our school is not based solely on physical skills. See the answer on advancement, above. A student who attends regularly, shows improvement, pays attention, tries to the best of their ability to do what we ask and learns the katas assigned to them will advance. Alternately, a physically gifted student who does not pay attention, who does not try hard in class, who gives less than a full effort will either not be allowed to advance or will advance over a much longer time frame as we attempt to correct those issues. We have time frame guidelines for advancement. Motivated students often can advance in a much shorter timeframe than the guidelines, while unmotivated students – even though capable of performing very well when specifically being observed – will usually be held at their current rank well after the

guideline timeframe. A general dynamic is that all students who attend regularly are advancing, just at different rates - so that motivated students will eventually pass the unmotivated student who has been there longer. That is how it is meant to be in our dojo, and should provide students a glimpse at what to expect in later life.

You seem to hold the upper ranks (yellow belts, green belts, etc.) to a much higher standard of performance than the white belts. Why is that?

If you notice, the performance we hold the upper ranks to is generally in the areas of attitude, effort during class, class procedures, respect for others, etc.. Every student should be capable of paying attention and making an effort. Beginning students are brought along fairly gently as they learn what is expected. However, as they advance and we become convinced they know what is expected, our expectations of them rise. You will never hear us giving a student a rough time over physical performance in class if we believe we are getting their best effort. That does not mean they do not get corrected, but we will be correcting issues with techniques, not trying to work on attitude and motivational problems. We have little sympathy for those who just want to advance to higher ranks but do not accept the expectations of how that advance rank should perform in class.

Having said that, please keep in mind the only reason we correct students is that we have an expectation they can and will improve. We want to advance students, and we want them to perform in a way that allows us to do so. Usually at least once a week Mr. Jacob and I go over the list of students, look at where they are regarding time at their current rank, and plan the next

steps for that student. We also depend on input from the kyu ranks helping with the kid's class. If you hear us giving a student a tough time for lack of performance, it is because we believe that student is still worthy of our time and effort. If we stop pushing a student to perform to the standard of the next rank, it means we have given up

on that student – and it would be considered a major insult to that student to do so.

Please send any comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter to: rafinley@texaskobukan.com. Also please send any topics you would like to see addressed in the FAQ section.

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