

FMA

Informative

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

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Filipino Martial Arts' for Kids?

Teaching Kids with Burton Richardson's Battlefield Kali Program



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The FMA Informative in talking to Dean Franco was impressed with his commitment to teaching children the Filipino martial arts. His goals in this issue are to share his experience with teaching kids the Filipino martial arts. Dean chose this subject for a few reasons. First he has seen the success it has had on children ranging from 5 years of age to teens. Secondly Dean felt these arts need to be spread as much as possible due to the success he has seen in children who participate. Lastly if exposed at an early age children are the ones who can potentially carry the arts on.

Dean has proven success with increased enrollment and retention of students since he implemented Filipino martial arts in his school from 2002-2012.

If anyone reading this issues wishes to incorporate the Filipino martial arts with respects to their current kids classes and have questions please Email Dean Franco at: marmax40@aol.com.

About Dean Franco

Dean Franco was the first instructor in Connecticut to offer Filipino martial arts to kids back in 2002. It started as a pilot program to see if this would be successful for kid students. A range of ages were chosen from 5 years old to mid teen years. Since at the time he was training Atienza Kalis he utilized their curriculum for the kids in that year. The use of action flex sticks were the gear of choice to reduce chance of injury. The focus then was a sword interpretation for adherence to range. Long range was the principle focus and “defanging the snake” was stressed. More importantly foot work was the key component. The kids were taught angular foot-work forward and rear. Once that baseline was achieved the practice of the hour glass shape was implemented as the main framework. After the hourglass pattern was memorized by the students then the variations from the hour glass pattern.

Once the program was up and running and the students became more fluent additional concepts were introduced. As some of the beginning kids that started in the pilot got older they were exposed to knife defense. The defense trained consisted of static knife defense and against moving knife. This transition was somewhat easy due to the existing background they had. At this point a lot of sparring was implemented, again with action flex gear. The ones from the initial pilot program really excelled. One student in particular, Bethany Carpenter has continued on with Sayoc Kali where she is doing very well.

In 2015 Dean shifted gears and sought out Burton Richardson, Founder of Battlefield Kali. He currently teaches stick and the knife modules from this system. Currently there are 3 kids who are training in Battlefield Kali since Dean implemented this in 2016. In addition Dean is the only instructor teaching kids in Battlefield Kali. Guro Burton has been nothing but positive and encouraging in this regard. He also has made several positive comments about Shawn Bournique, the student highlighted in this issue.

Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

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The Goal

My goal in this article is to share my experience with teaching kids the Filipino martial arts. I chose this subject for a few reasons. First I have seen the success it has had on children ranging from 5 years of age to teens. Secondly I feel these arts need to be spread as much as possible due to the success I have seen in children who participate. Lastly if exposed at an early age children are the ones who can potentially carry the arts on. Think about traditional martial arts, kids are generally the main populous. We see the youth in boxing, wrestling, BJJ and even MMA so why not Filipino martial arts?

It's no secret that MMA/BJJ is more popular than ever with our youth. Gyms, schools and etc., are continuously adding classes for these ages mentioned. It is the new cultural trend that is seen and known everywhere. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the growth regarding Filipino martial arts for kids. There is virtually no marketing that highlights Filipino martial arts for children or adults for that matter. Example when have you seen a Filipino martial arts commercial on T.V.?

Is Filipino Martial Arts on the Decline?

To be honest the Filipino martial arts is on the decline certainly with respects to MMA and even traditional martial arts. Granted I don't have statistics other than feedback from other Filipino martial arts teachers who I have queried. The feedback is consistent low student enrollment and current class not offered as much in their schedule comparatively speaking with their other offerings. For instance with respects to myself I have 8 students and sublet out of a traditional school. In Ct. Where I live in Ct., there are about 6 people who teach the Filipino martial arts, 2 of which teach kids a system. That is I and George Chaber. Also like the majority who teach these arts the demographics are mostly adults such as my case. I do have 3 kids currently which is uncommon. In these current times I could not even imagine opening a school based on Filipino martial arts unless financial suicide was my goal.



So why, is the Filipino martial arts at its lowest appeal and what can be done to change that? The current status is due to several reasons. Some previously explained in second paragraph. As we know they are weapon based systems, EDGED WEAPONS!! How can we possibly share this with children? How and what curriculum would we give them just stick techniques? What about ranking, competition, how do I share this addition to our program with the parents and will I loose students. In addition no marketing on an already existing small market, my only source for upcoming events, seminars and etc., has only been face book. Also perspective students have no idea whether the Filipino martial arts has value for self-defense. Unlike MMA and traditional arts where competition can be seen on TV any given weekend. At least here a student has visually seen what other arts and MMA are about.

So what can be done to improve the current status? Easier said and done, my initial experience came out of curiosity. As a result I have been avidly studying, teaching and promoting these arts including teaching kids. This is where I feel strongly if we want to spread these arts before they fall by the waste side why not our youth they are our next generation. Do I feel they are going to disappear NO, but if not promoted with our youth these arts will possibly continue to shrink far as practitioners are concerned. So which leads me to my next point how did I incorporate the Filipino martial arts in my kid classes and what were the results. Again my goal here is to spread my positive findings in hope others will do the same.



Atienza Curriculum

In 2002 two important things happened which enabled me to teach kids the Filipino martial arts. First, I began training with the Atienza's who noticed I had all kids predominantly. Second and just as important I was introduced to action flex sticks, a great training tool. So with these two ingredients I decided I was going to do a pilot program based on Atienza curriculum. I chose two students from different age groups to teach the steps that I learned in order. The students Bethany Carpenter and Devin Ruot were surpassing all my initial goals. As a result of these two students and their success a separate class was added. This class went into great detail regarding fighter types, flow drills etc. From there in 2004 footwork, basic strikes and defense were added to the overall curriculum in the general classes due to seeing the benefits exhibited by the Atienza students. All this was made possible due to action flex sticks because potential injury was very low. I WANT TO STRESS: our program was just stick but trained with a sword mentality to instill respect for the weapon. As the kids got older in the teens knife was then introduced and only



achieved in those early days besides swinging an action flex stick. We were a MMA based school with a modified curriculum for the kids. The students that participated in the Atienza class were out performing the other students by a noticeable difference when they attended the general curriculum classes. Specifically, their sense of range and engagements were superior. This benefited their take-downs because their sense of distance and closing was acute. In addition their bi-lateral movement and ease of direction change with respects to foot work was uncanny. Their reaction time when it came to empty hand sparring far as offense and defense was so efficient some of these had to be moved on older kids classes. Lastly besides the positive mental attributes that occurred their overall ambidexterity was heightened.

Aside from the in-school positive notes parents made a point to share what they noticed as well outside



Kids who participate in the Atienza program under Burton Richardson.

then. By mid-2004 the Kali aspect of our curriculum was by far the most popular. So popular we created 2 on 2 battles to full class battles. The kids would ask for this during class actually every class can we do stick battles. This in itself became a great behavior modification tool for the larger classes. Lastly, twice a year we held Kali days where students would bring their families for hours of stick wars and other Kali related matches. Those were some of the greatest days as a teacher! At this point I would like to share what benefits these kids



Here we have Chad and Kyla present day Battlefield Kali students getting ready to spar. In this round head shots for level two was being isolated. A lot of isolation sparring in Battlefield Kali which is so beneficial for the kids before they go to next level. Great system created by Burton Richardson!

of class. Some mentioned an overall confidence booster in their daily lives. I received comments of their ability and proud success of training in what was perceived then as an adult only curriculum and art. Their enhanced ability when they participated in sports. One mother expressed that her son's foot work in basketball was so effective that she attributed to his practice of angular foot work. Again there were others but just to point from a teacher's perspective and parents on what was seen.



Sumbrada Drill

A modified version if you will of 3 count Sumbrada that Dean tailored for the kids using Guro Burton's tactics from Battlefield Kali stick program.

First is a number one feed with receiver evading on a rear 45 degree movement. Then receiver feeds a leg shot with me using the Lutang (floating leg) from level 3 of Battlefield Kali. Then I return an overhead shot which Shawn angles out with a roof top block from level 2 curriculum. Then roles are switched. Again Dean uses this drill just for the kids so they get to utilize and practice a series of defenses and offenses which are also based in the curriculum to avoid disconnect.



Asked & Answered by Student Shawn Bournique

Shawn became a student of Dean Franco at 4 and a half when Dean owned the Family Martial Arts School. Shawn was exemplary student then as well as now. Dean Franco sold the school a few years back and reconnected with Shawn when he recruited him for Battlefield Kali. With Shawn's previous experience he has done amazing in Battlefield Kali.

When Dean began Burton's program he knew this could work for kids so Shawn was the first. Shawn, due to his success and Burton's incredible organized stick program has paved the way for other kid students.

Shawn is the only high ranking student in Battlefield Kali as a youth. He continues to excel in Battlefield Kali in stick and knife modules. He has thoroughly proven that the youth can perform in these arts and reap the benefits. Lastly if you are considering incorporating Filipino martial arts for your kids program Dean highly recommends Burton Richardson's Battlefield Kali. It is incredibly structured and organized which is essential for kids. In addition safety is stressed so no one gets hurt which of course is key. Shawn Bournique just achieved assistant instructor in stick for levels 1-4 which is long and medium range material. It is amazing on how dedicated Shawn is and his work ethic. In addition Shawn is intermediate level with Abenir Kalis.

Here are his answers to questions regarding his training in the Filipino martial arts as a youth:



FMA Informative: *What got you interested in the Filipino martial arts?*

Shawn: Dean Franco who has been my instructor for many years asked me to try the Filipino martial arts to see if I would like it.

FMA Informative: *What do you like about the Filipino martial arts?*

Shawn: I like all the variety of moves weapons. I also think the weapons are unique especially the rock and sock for specialty weapons.

FMA Informative: *What is your favorite aspect of the Filipino martial arts? Is it blunt weapon, edged weapon, specialty weapons or empty hand?*

Shawn: My favorite is the specialty weapons because they are so unique. The rope you can use for a choke hold.

FMA Informative: *How has training in the Filipino martial arts improved your physical and mental attributes in martial arts as a whole?*

Shawn: For physical it has improved my mobility and coordination. For mental it helps me stay focused in all my martial arts classes as well as helping me academically in school.

FMA Informative: *Would you recommend the Filipino martial arts to other adolescents and why?*

Shawn: Yes because there are many different techniques and weapon training to keep you intrigued. The techniques can protect you if you're put in a position that you need to defend yourself out on the streets.

FMA Informative: *You mostly train with adults, has that benefited your overall experience?*

Shawn: Yes and no, yes because I can work with adults and it has made me better all around. No, at times because I am the only kid in adult class because I am more advanced than the other two so it is hard to pull off tactics at times.

FMA Informative: *What are your future goals with respects to the Filipino martial arts?*

Shawn: Right now I'm an assistant instructor. I hope to continue to build my skills to become an instructor by the age sixteen.

Conclusion

To conclude, as mentioned previously throughout the issue we have an uphill battle far as popularity. Our current student demographics are mostly male adults in 30's and up. It is my opinion based on current status quo we need to promote these arts with our younger generation. This and a hopeful growing market can increase the demographics.

School Submission

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - **Click Here**



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Article Submission

Finished manuscripts should be accompanied by color or black and white photographs. Though we take care of materials, we can not be responsible for manuscripts/photographs and accept no liability for same. Every photograph or graphic must be accompanied by a caption Carefully key photos to caption information with a letter or number.

We reserve the right to use any photo(s) as cover material or additional compensation. We also reserve the right to edit material and to crop photographs.

We reserve the right to use articles or parts of articles that are given and approved from time to time as needed to promote the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines.

Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff - to submit material for either the FMA Informative Newspaper or an Issue **Click Here**

We welcome your article, ideas and suggestions, and look forward to working with you in the future.