

Dear Parents of Aikido students,

As we begin the New Year, I wanted to say "thank you" for allowing us the opportunity to teach Aikido to your children. It is our great joy to play a positive role in their lives.

I am often asked to comment upon the benefits of Aikido training for children. In addition to the obvious self-defense aspects of learning a martial art, Aikido practice helps students become more disciplined, determined, coordinated and compassionate individuals who learn to cooperate with others. I have attached an essay on this subject entitled "**Aikido Training for Children.**"

I also wanted to notify you about several positive changes to our children's Aikido program. In order to better serve our students, we have restructured our Aikido techniques into "blocks." There are twenty two (22) separate blocks of techniques. Each block will be taught for approximately seven (7) consecutive weeks. It is my hope that instruction in this fashion will give us an opportunity to study techniques in greater depth. We will offer kyu rank testing at the conclusion of each block for those students who are capable of succeeding and have met the minimum attendance requirement of at least two (2) classes per week. The new "**Children's Aikido Curriculum**" is attached.

Under the new block system, children who are testing for rank advancement will all be performing the same set of techniques. A student testing for 15th kyu will demonstrate the same set of techniques as a student testing for 5th kyu. Each student will be expected to perform the required block of techniques at a rank appropriate level. Hence, I would expect the 5th kyu candidate to perform at a much higher level than the 15th kyu candidate.

Please note that we still require that test candidates present signed "Good Student" and "Good Citizen" forms to be eligible to test. Students testing for 7th kyu and above must also fulfill the Essay requirement for their rank. Students testing for 2nd kyu and above will have additional technique requirements to fulfill. Those students must meet with me to discuss their requirements.

We have also created a separate "**Children's Aikido Weapons Curriculum**" (see attached). The class will focus on the use of the bokken (wooden sword) and jo (wooden staff). We will study proper form, including individual and paired kata. We will practice the Weapons Curriculum on Saturday morning from 9:00-9:50am. For reasons of safety, I am limiting participation in Weapons class to students ages nine (9) and above who the teaching staff believe have the maturity and sincerity to benefit from this practice. The Weapons Curriculum is divided into twelve (12) blocks with each block lasting approximately eight (8) weeks long. At the end of each block we will offer a testing opportunity to capable students who have attended at least six (6) Weapons classes during the block. Students who are successful will receive a special stripe for their obi (belt).

We are exploring other ideas to enhance our Children's Aikido program. Stay tuned!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Mike

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Dojo Cho