



PLEASANTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**NORTH MAIN STREET SCHOOL
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In September 1994, I was appointed to have Tang Soo Karate Academy and Master Donald Straga as my 6th grade classroom sponsor. Master Straga offered my class the opportunity to take Karate lessons free of charge. In addition, he also provided uniforms, belts, and patches to my students. My students were very responsive and excited for this opportunity, which otherwise would have been financially out of their reach.

In November 1994, a total of 14 out of my 22 students eagerly signed up for Karate lessons. We met twice a week for one hour each night and experienced all the wonderful skills and training Karate had to offer. Many students found the Karate lessons a valuable experience and dedicated their time to faithfully attending classes. Five students, in particular, showed immediate changes in their attitude and reactions to school. These five students began to show a great deal of dedication to their homework and class assignments. I also noticed a great deal of energy and respect for others that attribute to Master Straga's strict yet caring training. Karate taught all of my students self discipline, respect, exercises for both body and mind and martial arts training. My students also learned Korean words, phrases and an understanding of another culture.

As a teacher, I noticed an improvement in self-esteem among several of the students who participated on a regular basis. Moreover, a decrease in classroom fighting was extremely evident and I noticed a new respect for human life and body.

Several students, prior to Karate training, were quiet, withdrawn, and did not participate in classroom activities. I feel because they took an active part in Karate class these students were no longer intimidated in the classroom setting. I saw students who did not have friendship bonds begin to make friends, improving their overall attitude.

In the classroom, students that continued Karate training had a positive increase in grades as well as in

the quality of their homework assignments. These students showed a greater respect for teachers, in general, as well as for myself, which was not as evident prior to their involvement in Karate. The students who chose to discontinue the Karate lessons tended to decrease in the homework gains that they had made as well as in their overall classroom attitude. These students no longer seemed to dedicate their time and energy to the importance of academics.

I reviewed various grades throughout the school year and found that students involved in Karate training had an overall increase in better grades and in the quality of their assignments. Report card grades became important to these students. I kept Master Straga informed of their improvements and efforts. Furthermore, the students kept their grades up in order to please two "teachers," Master Straga and myself. This effort made their self-esteem and self-worth skyrocket in a positive direction. My class did exceptionally well on the state standardized tests, scoring much higher than many of the other 6th grade classes in the area that were not involved in Karate training. I attribute much of this success to the confidence and success they felt for themselves during their experience with Martial Arts training.

By the end of the school year, nine students remained actively involved and benefited from Karate training. Their grades, attitude and self-esteem also continued in an upward direction. They looked forward to seeing Master Straga, their Karate classmates and myself in class each week. We discussed in our classroom their improved strength in and out of Tang Soo Karate Academy. We also discussed how proud we were of their dedication to the art and their overall improvement in grades. Most importantly, they were proud of themselves for their own accomplishments. Master Straga would discuss goals, the importance of education and to never give up during his classes. He taught self-control, respect and loyalty, all of which are important attributes in a child. My students looked up to Master Straga and the others who helped to train them in Tang Soo Karate Academy. I felt a huge amount of comfort and support with all members of the Academy.

At the close of the school year, we had a North Main Street School Sponsor Parade in which all members of my class participated. Together, we made banners, exhibited our skills and abilities and as a grand finale we broke boards of wood with our hands. This made my class the talk of the town and we were voted number 1 by the judges. The pride of my students was the most satisfying event for me as their teacher. To this day, many students throughout the school still discuss the parade and our routines. My students are now in ninth grade, and I know they will take this experience and what they learned under the instruction of Master Straga with them throughout their lives. This experience was enriching for all who participated. I will always be grateful to Tang Soo Karate Academy for giving my students such a wonderfully positive experience.

The following year, the same opportunity was offered to my 6th grade class at North Main Street School. Master Straga gave my students an opportunity that I knew from experience could only benefit them. Once again, the students eagerly signed up for lessons. The results for this class were similar to those of the previous year. As a teacher, I found these experiences to be rewarding and beneficial to the students as well as to myself.

Nina Mitchell
Nina Mitchell, Teacher