

An Insider's Secrets to Developing a Relationship with your Local School District to Generate a Growing Universe of Prospects, Part 2

Last month, in part one of my *Black Belt Marketing Report*, I explained the two major options (and sub-categories) of professional martial arts instruction you can provide your local schools or district and which school officials to approach to make the offer.

This month, I will cover a number of other topics related to establishing a relationship with your local schools and teaching classes there, the most important of which is how to obtain approval for your proposal.

Uniforms or Not

It is likely you would conduct after-school programs and clubs as more traditional and, therefore, more appropriate to require uniforms, depending upon the type of martial art that you teach. You probably wouldn't want to require uniforms if you are teaching a short-term class for a PE program or athletic team.

Uniforms for students of a long-term martial art program in a school would depend on the kind of martial art that is being taught, the policy of the PE department, the school atmosphere and the family budgets of the students.

Examples:

- A high school in California has a full-time martial arts program based on Kenpo and the teacher requires students to purchase their uniforms. She says that this shows their dedication.
- A high school in northern Utah offers a PE class that is based on Tae Kwon Do. The students pay an increased PE fee to the school, and the teacher orders uniforms through a school account.

- A high school in southern Utah has a physical education/martial arts class that is based on Jeet Kune Do and adheres to the PE department's uniform of shorts and shirts with school colors. These students also pay a larger PE fee, but the money is used to buy training equipment that the PE department won't cover.

Weapons or No Weapons

Most schools and school districts have on-campus weapons policies derived from the Safe Schools Act. As a result, many principals, while being supportive of a martial arts program in general, would not support weapons of any kind being part of that program. One school program, however, was showcased in a TV news report, showing students testing for a belt and performing knife disarms with a wooden training knife.

Another program uses padded training sticks for stick sparring. Rattan Escrima sticks, if presented as "training sticks," have flown under the radar as well as "training paddles" or plastic training knives.

I know of only one school that uses yellow, safe-training handguns, to learn handgun disarms at the older, more advanced high school levels. Black safe-training handguns are avoided, so as not to look like the real thing. If you can justify training weapons as necessary to your program, then it may be worthwhile to include some weapons training; but remember to keep them in your sight at all times to ensure safety.

Be prepared for administrators who are hypersensitive to this issue and may not want your training weapons to be stored at the school. School officials in rural areas may be less reluctant to allow weapons training than officials at urban schools.

BLACK BELT **MARKETING**

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

Licensure and Qualifications

I've included the following examples of martial arts programs in public school settings to help you understand the kinds of qualifications you may need to teach your program. You'll notice that it is different from state to state and within a state, so ask school administrators early in the process what teaching qualifications may be required. These examples are also possible templates of programs you could propose and teach.

Southern Utah

- Instructor: Full-time licensed teacher at the school (Special endorsement in PE and state and principal approval) / Martial arts school owner/chief instructor.
- Number of martial arts classes taught: One per semester.
- Grade(s): 12th-grade, seniors-only, special-rewards class for high achievers.
- Style Taught: JKD
- Uniform: PE uniform only required.
- Weapons: Rattan sticks, plastic knives and rubber guns.

Southern Utah

- Instructor: Full-time licensed teacher at the school/ Martial arts school owner/chief instructor.
- Number of martial arts classes taught: One per semester.
- Grade(s): 10th–12th grade (Alternative high school).
- Style Taught: Kenpo.
- Uniform: No.

Northern Utah

- Instructor: Martial arts school owner/chief instructor.
- Number of martial arts classes taught: Four per semester.
- Grade(s): 9th–12th.
- Style Taught: TKD.
- Uniform: Yes, traditional Korean.

- Weapons: Wooden knives.

Northern California

- Instructor: Licensed teacher at the school (approval of principal)/Martial arts school owner/chief instructor.
- Number of martial arts classes taught: Six per semester (full schedule).
- Grade(s): 9th–12th.
- Style Taught: Kenpo, JKD and BJJ.
- Uniform: Yes.
- Weapons: Rattan sticks.

Northwestern New Mexico

- Instructor: Truck driver.
- Number of martial arts classes taught: One per week.
- Grade(s): Elementary.
- Style Taught: Shotokan.
- Uniform: No.
- Weapons: Bo staff.

Other Education-Related Ideas

There are schools other than public schools at which it may be easier to start a martial arts program. These include charter schools (whose teacher requirements are not quite as strict), private schools (that may want to offer courses not found in public schools), and the home-school community (that needs a legitimate physical activity).

Obtaining Approval

Since I've been teaching martial arts programs in schools for approximately 10 years, I will use my experience to explain the strategies and techniques you can use to obtain approval of your program.

I was teaching at a middle school, running the At-Risk Youth program. I approached the school's principal about martial arts training for the kids in that program. He had the power to say yes or no, but he wanted to take it to the district administrators, just to make sure. I wrote a 14-page outline of the proposed program

BLACK BELT **MARKETING**

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

for him to present. My proposal was stated in a very positive tone and focused on the many benefits for the students.

The district administrators presented my proposal to the school board, and because it was for “troubled youth,” its members declined. I later submitted a proposal to be a “traveling” martial arts instructor and teach one class every other day in each of the local schools, including five elementary schools, two intermediate schools, three middle schools and three high schools. It was a good proposal, but it didn’t fit with how the district-wide funding works, so it was also rejected.

The following year, these proposals were read by the new Director of Secondary Education for the district and he recognized the benefits of such a program, his son being a Black Belt. He met with the principal of the alternative high school, and she hired me to teach martial arts (and other subjects) at her school. Together, they went to the school board and obtained approval for this program. The principal of the alternative high school was very supportive, getting all of the supplies and equipment that we would need. The program was a boost for the school and was used as a reward for students who were doing well in their other classes. Because it was an alternative school, this was a credit course to be used as a PE credit or as an elective credit, if students had already satisfied the requirements for PE. I learned from that experience that it is worth a thoughtful approach, with a written proposal and the proper choice of mediator. Your contact person can make all of the difference.

Four years later, I transferred to a regular high school. The population of the area had grown and the principal was authorized to add more classes and hire new teachers. I submitted a proposal for a martial arts course and she agreed. This time, however, with No Child Left Behind (the government program) in effect, I had to have proper certification because the martial arts class would be a legit, for-credit course in the PE department. Though I have endorsements to teach several subjects, PE was not one of them.

In my state, if you are a licensed teacher, then you can obtain a special endorsement to teach a course entitled “Individualized Lifetime Activities/Physical Education,” if you fulfill the requirements, which are being an expert in the field and certified in First Aid

and CPR. I updated my certifications and sent copies of my cards and several martial arts rank certificates and instructor certification diplomas to the state office of education. I have heard of people who are experts in their fields qualifying for a teaching position without being licensed or certified as a teacher.

Guidelines vary from state to state and from district to district (as well as from school to school), but are worth researching. Often, you can obtain the job and then earn a license through what is called “alternative route to certification.”

Summary of Approval Process

- Create a document that outlines the benefits to the students (improved learning skills), the administrators (improved behavior of students), the school (more classes offered) and the community (social skills for the students).
- Consider what kind of program that you can introduce at the local school.

Approach the proper person to offer your program (See part one of this report).

- Start one program and make sure it is firmly established and delivering the benefits before you approach additional schools.
- Make sure any information that will be obtained from a background check is in order and check the certification requirements.
- Remember, your martial arts expertise will outweigh the other requirements.

With good planning and thoughtful decision-making, you can establish a great relationship with your local schools and districts. You’ll improve your image and visibility in the community, increase approachability, advance the quality of physical education in the schools, provide a feeder system to enroll students at your school, and give more people an opportunity to benefit from martial arts training.

Glen R. Lyman is the chief instructor at Quickdraw Martial Arts in Enoch, Utah, and can be reached at NAPMA.com.