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LEARNING A CRAFT

STAYING SHARP



MIKE WOLANIN | THE REPUBLIC

Master Soon Ko demonstrates how to perform an axe kick on Jan. 12, during a Taekwondo session for fifth grade students in Nora Coleman's physical education class at Parkside Elementary School.



Parkside students practice taekwondo

STRENGTH, discipline and self control — these are three things that don't always come naturally to fifth-grade students. At Parkside Elementary School, however, fifth-graders were asked to take control of their minds and bodies when they received a crash course in the art of taekwondo.

As part of the school's physical education curriculum, Nora Coleman, Parkside physical education teacher, invited Master Soon Ko to teach taekwondo lessons to her students on Jan. 12. Ko, a certified master at Ko's Martial Arts Academy, said learning taekwondo or any

martial art could help students learn to have determination in the face of adversity.

"It's those values of self control and discipline and the attitude of never giving up," he said. "In this era of video games, they want instant gratification, and if something is too hard, they give up."

From standing at attention to learning various kicks to responding to Ko's requests with a respectful, "Yes sir," Parkside students learned how to channel their energy in a controlled manner.

Although taekwondo was designed as a

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defense mechanism, its true strength is shown when a person learns to reserve their martial arts training only for the most dangerous of situations, Ko said.

"It's not, 'Oh, I'm going to kick my friends today,'" Ko told the students.

Even though the lesson was designed to teach students discipline, they managed to have a little fun, too.

Fifth-graders Ella Anderson, Jayden Cross and Erin Kuehner each agreed that their favorite move to learn was the

roundhouse kick, which requires a person to spin their body around while kicking their leg.

"It's just fun to turn around," Ella said.

The high kick, however, was harder for Ella, mostly because she is a basketball player and is not used to kicking her leg that high.

But for dancer Jayden and cheerleader Erin, the high kick was just like any other move they might have to do in their sports.

The girls agreed that some of Ko's instructions were a little tough, but by the end of the day they were hooked on taekwondo and excited to try it again in the future.

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Clockwise from top: Parkside Elementary fifth-graders are in various stages of performing a jump front kick Jan. 12 during a taekwondo session in Nora Coleman's physical education class at Parkside Elementary School. ■ Parkside Elementary fifth-graders practice their front kicks. ■ Lukas Iorio practices his punching technique during Master Soon Ko's Taekwondo class. ■ Jaclyn Shaw, left, and Charlie Rawlins practice their spear hand strike technique. ■ Master Soon Ko talks to fifth-grade students before teaching them taekwondo.

