

School Speech by Mr Sam Collins (Nice work Sam!)

Do you think that you could break this piece of wood with your foot?

I used to think that it was impossible unless you had an axe but now that I've been going to Tae Kwon Do, I've actually done it myself – and with no axe in sight!

Today I am going to tell you some interesting things about Tae Kwon Do, who started it and what we do at our classes.

Tae Kwon Do started in Korea and today it is the national sport of South Korea. It has spread out all around the world and it is now one of the most popular martial arts in the world.

Taekwondo is practiced in 123 countries with over 30 million people doing it and 3 million people have black belts throughout the world.

So what does Tae Kwon Do mean?

In Korean Tae means foot, kwon means fist and do means 'way' – so Tae Kwon Do means 'the way of the fist and foot'.

A lot of the patterns that we learn at Tae Kwon Do involve our hands – but that's because we are only still learning. As you move up the ranks, you start to learn more complex moves and you start to use your feet a lot more.

The father of Tae Kwon Do is General Choi Hong Hi. Choi was always interested in martial arts, but it was while in prison during World War Two that he developed Tae Kwon Do as a full martial art. It was officially recognised in 1955, which means that it's been going for just over fifty years.

A taekwondo student typically wears a uniform called a dobok, it's often white but sometimes black or other colors. It is tied with a belt around the waist and the belt indicates the student's rank. The school or place where instruction is given is called the dojang.

My sister and I go to classes on Tuesday and Thursday nights at Te Puna and our instructor is a man called Mr Brown. Mr Brown has been doing Tae Kwon Do for sixteen years and he has been to Korea to learn more about the sport.

At our classes, we start by warming up and then we do line work – which is practising one move at a time up and down the hall.

Then we practice our kicking on the pads and then we might do sparring, which is when you fight someone else – but you only just touch them, not fighting them so hard to actually hurt them.

Finally we'll do some breaking of the boards which is good for our mental strength. It's also good for us as we have to focus on one small line on the board – if you don't hit this, then the board won't break.

I'm really glad that my Mum suggested that I do Tae Kwon Do, otherwise I wouldn't have thought of it myself. It's a really great sport and when I got my first grading, I felt proud of myself and what I'd achieved. It has also given me heaps of confidence – which I am using right now to say my speech.

If you want to go to Tae Kwon Do, there are lots of clubs in the Tauranga region and I would really recommend that you have a go. Then you can break a piece of wood with your fist, just like me.