

FROM THE FOUNDER



Like many of the thousands of young men and women who have attended School of Skills, I was once an adolescent without direction. My father wasn't a part of my life and, just as I began high school, my mother and I moved. Suddenly, I found myself the only ethnic minority in an otherwise white school. Between my father not being around and my feeling culturally alienated, I developed into what is now known as an "at-risk youth." I grew mean, and when I wasn't being mean, I was disengaged. I had become lost - completely and utterly adrift.

"I had found myself on that basketball court."

Then basketball found me. I say that basketball found me because it felt like this silly little game with hoops and balls and squeaky sneakers simply showed up at my door one day, and that was that. I made the school team in spite of my inexperience because I was lanky enough to represent potential, and from then on, all I wanted was to become a good player. Dribbling, shooting, passing, defending - I wanted to master it all. It was the first time in my life that I had felt the desire to really excel at something. So I applied myself, and before I knew it, I had become something I would have previously considered unthinkable: disciplined. My attitude improved, and I began to succeed academically. Basketball had changed my life forever.

At School of Skills, we help young people through basketball. We don't teach students how to win championships or how to get to the NBA, because those aren't the things that really matter in life. And that's what we're really teaching: life. Do students improve at basketball when they participate in our program? Of course they do. But we're more than a school of basketball skills - we're a school of life skills. We just happen to teach those skills through basketball.



Kory Zuniga
Founder of School of Skills

"My name is Kory Zuniga and I am the founder and executive director of School of Skills. I want to thank you for taking the time to learn about our program, and I hope to be able to include you soon within our growing family."

"It's hard to believe that it's already been four decades since I first found myself on a basketball court teaching students the game that changed my own life all those years ago."

SCHOOL of SKILLS



skills for life

323 36th Street Suite B,
Manhattan Beach, Ca 90266
www.schoolofskills.net

GOT SKILLS ?

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Because School of Skills has been in operation for more than fifteen years and has served more than 3,000 students, we have developed a comprehensive infrastructure to support our students, even after they've completed our program.



60 former students to date have gone to become assistant coaches for School of Skills, which has provided them not only with the opportunity to teach and mentor students very much like they themselves once were, but also to pick up a stable part-time job. Especially today, with upwards of 20% of young people in California out of work, having steady employment available is invaluable.

"More than a job, School of Skills gives kids and young adults somewhere to go."

We give young people somewhere to go when they're in trouble, or lonely, or even just bored. We pick students up after school, and we drive them home from practice. We serve our student athletes in a capacity far beyond basketball.



Brandon Adrian
Assistant coach for 4 years

"Our community of students and assistant coaches, along with Kory's leadership, gives our students the kind of stability that has resulted in a 100% high school graduation rate and a 0% incarceration rate."

"At-risk kids need the same thing every other kid needs: positive, constructive activities and a diverse network of peers and role models. School of Skills provides a community that fills those needs."

GOT SKILLS ?

THE GOAL IS THE MBA NOT THE NBA



Most modern youth basketball programs are of two types: at one extreme are those intent on leading their students to collegiate or professional careers, and at the other are those which are content to simply provide a non-structured playtime. We see ourselves as being right in the middle. At School of Skills, we don't necessarily consider a student successful just because he or she is recruited by a big NCAA program - we evaluate success using different criteria.

**"We teach students to succeed at basketball so
they can succeed in life."**

Graduation from School of Skills means success outside the game of basketball. It means living the three E's we focus on: Effort, Energy, and Enthusiasm, so that whatever they undertake, our students will always do their best. It means earning an MBA from Texas State like our former student Derek Brown. It means success at whatever our students choose to do in life.

Our main goal is to develop qualities that are applicable to other endeavors besides just basketball - qualities such as teamwork, attention to detail, and discipline. We believe that helping our students to develop these traits is the most important and valuable way we can benefit them.



"An organization is best understood by what it considers success to be. School of Skills considers its 100% high school graduation rate, \$130,000 in college scholarships received by its former students to be its greatest successes."

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PROTECT THE BALL

We teach the fundamentals of basketball at School of Skills. That means we focus on ball handling, passing, moving without the basketball, and defense. It also means we teach what we call the Golden Rule: failure to prepare is preparing to fail.

**"We teach basketball at School of Skills –
come watch us sometime. It's refreshing to
see the game you remember."**

We believe in protecting the purity of the game. We do this by creating an environment which is at once competitive and communal, where kids can be challenged by each other but also be compassionate. It's an environment where practice is a process of learning skills and building comradery. From a basketball standpoint, we focus on improving a student's ability to do one of two things: move the basketball or stop the basketball.



At this level, a successful possession is not necessarily one that results in points being scored, but rather one where the ball is touched by everyone, where smart passing and skillful dribbling creates space, and where someone takes the open shot that leaves half the team in a proper defensive position and the other half ready to compete for an offensive rebound.



While the NBA and AAU games have moved more towards a new brand of basketball, where a good shot is either a long three or a dunk, former NBA players and fans alike have been to School of Skills practices, and they all say the same thing: It's great to see real basketball again.

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GOT SKILLS ?

THE MELTING COURT

California is the most racially and economically diverse state in the country, and one of the most diverse populations in the world, yet basketball teams are often defined by skin color or net worth. Not only is this a tragedy in and of itself, it represents a missed opportunity. Here's how we do better at School of Skills. At School of Skills, we've found a way to do better.

By combining a homebase in the middle of a more affluent neighborhood, Manhattan Beach, with a robust scholarship program (we have spent about \$300,000 over the past 5 years on scholarships for about 200 students,) we are able to build the kind of diversity that truly reflects our values. Our racial, economic, and gender breakdown is indicative of our commitment to improving the world through basketball:

20% of our students are from Asian American or Pacific Islander families.

25% of our students are African American.

10% of our students are Latino.

20% of our athletes are female.

Diversity matters, especially for children, since it teaches them how to relate to people from different backgrounds. In a team setting like the one basketball provides, everyone becomes part of a shared goal.

This creates the kind of comradery that never feels forced or inauthentic. Our students bond with one another because they become invested in playing good basketball together. The joy inherent in their communal experience transcends individual concerns; we have seen this process in action every day for the past fifteen years.



The US Federal Government found that only 59% of eligible African American students, and only 69% of Latino students, graduated from High School in 2010-11. These numbers plummet further when complications like single parent homes or poverty are factored in.

School of Skills is doing something about this. \$300,000 in scholarship awarded by our programs have resulted in a 100% high school graduation rate and a 0% incarceration rate.

GOT SKILLS ?

WHERE WE ARE HEADED



The past fifteen years have been richly rewarding – School of Skills has grown from an idea, to a small meeting a few times a week, to a full school, with thousands of students at different levels being taught by coaches who were once students just like them.

***“The time has come for us to purchase
our own building.”***

As we embark on a new period of growth, we are excited to present an inspiring plan for our future. As we have grown over the years, so too have our facility needs. We began at school gyms then expanded to athletic clubs and are now moving towards purchasing our own facility.

Our primary goal for the next five years is to secure a private location, which we will transform into an all-day facility to provide not only basketball activities, but formal academic support like tutoring, as well as a learning center, nutritional support in the form of a healthy cafeteria, and coaching for additional sports. We’re not just a basketball camp, we’re a school of life skills, and while we currently use basketball as a means of teaching those skills, our vision for the future is bigger than any single sport.

Our dream is to offer these services to the growing number of students who desperately need them. The current recession has devastated many families, and even entire neighborhoods, and school districts whose budgets were already tight have been rendered virtually devoid of after-school activities.

By enhancing the programs that we provide – ones which have already resulted in statistically significant reductions in anti-social behavior, as well as statistically significant improvements in educational achievement – we see ourselves becoming an indispensable partner with Southern California schools.



It's up to all of us to help the LA County and South Bay region remain the thriving, vibrant, and diverse community we love. We at School of Skills will do our part: we have the programs in place, and we have a proven system. All we need now is you.

With your support, we can continue our mission to serve and educate Southern California communities.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: DEREK BROWN

Derek Brown's success story is a truly inspirational one. Like many students who find their way to School of Skills: he was in trouble at school, had a difficult home life, and idolized Michael Jordan.



Today, Derek Brown is completing his Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies, with emphases in Psychological Mass Communications and Legal Studies from Texas State, all while playing D1 basketball on a full scholarship. Incidentally, Derek Brown is barely six feet tall and can't dunk, but still managed to earn and maintain a starting role since his freshman year, accumulating 900 points and over 300 rebounds and assists throughout his career.

He also received \$5,000 in scholarships to attend School of Skills. We believed in Derek, like we believe in all of our students, and like we believe in so many other young people we know would benefit from our program. We are incredibly gratified by his achievements, and he's but one of about 3,000 who have come to exemplify what School of Skills is really about: teaching students the skills that will help them successfully achieve whatever goal they choose to set for themselves.



"At the time I didn't understand how important what I was learning at SoS was going to be to my future. I learned how to work with others, be a leader, and set an example through my actions without ever having to say a word."

"Taking joy in helping others, and having the humility to let them help me, has aided me in many different facets of life. The lifelong lessons started to stick when I was in middle school, and from that point on I have continued to use the valuable skills I was given by Kory and SoS."

GOT SKILLS ?