

Martial aid for students

BY JENNA DAROCZY

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TAKING a preventive and active approach to negative news stories was the driving force behind self-defence classes at Cabramatta High School.

But these classes haven't been organised by teachers.

They are an initiative of two senior students who are taking part in the Max Potential leadership program.

Ning (Nancy) Zhang and Peter Nguyen developed the idea of running introductory self-defence sessions at the school after a couple of months of meeting with "coaches" — in this instance, older community members who guide them in setting goals, facing challenges and taking on leadership roles.

"Martial arts is something we've both been passionate about and we wanted to do something positive to counter all the negative stories in the news about people being in danger on our streets," Nancy said.

Both Nancy and Peter are thinking foremost of youth safety, and both plan to join the police when they finish high school.

"We also hoped to just get the students thinking more about their safety, and maybe take up some form of martial arts after school, even just for fitness reasons which is important too," Peter said.

"The program has really developed our ability to organise events like this, having the regular sessions with different students co-ordinating everybody to set it up."

Nancy said she and Peter were not only picking up new skills, but were also becoming more confident.

"When you feel good about succeeding, you're keen to try more new things," she said. "It gives you a real feeling of achievement and accomplishment."

The staff and students thanked St Johns Park Bowling Club, which sponsors the Max Potential leadership program.



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Potential punch: Martial arts instructor Benjamin Silaphet takes Cabramatta High School students through self-defence moves as part of the Max Potential leadership program. Picture: Wesley Lonergan

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