Apr 16th, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Developing Life Skills in Young Students

Alyssa Davis
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Leah Nillas, Faculty Advisor
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc)

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.
Developing Life Skills in Young Students
Alyssa Davis and Leah Nillas*
Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

**Research Question**
How can teachers develop life skills in young elementary students?

What one considers to be a life skill is somewhat subjective, but all life skills are intended to benefit an individual both socially and emotionally for the duration of their life.

**Literature Review**
- Learning life skills early on in childhood creates the foundation for the strengthening of students' skills during adolescence and adulthood (Prince, 2010).
- Pecaski (2007) suggests role-play as a way for students to develop self-confidence and self-expression.
- The technique of bibliotherapy can facilitate discussions on how to problem-solve (McCulliss, 2013).
- Zakin (2012) advocates that art is an effective method for teaching students to accept diversity and express emotions.

**Methodology**
- Participants included a classroom of diverse first grade students within a suburban school.
- Implemented a mini-unit of 5 lessons on life skills where students learned how to apologize, show compassion, identify emotions, manage anger, and solve situational problems.
- Applied teaching strategies of role-play, classroom discussion, and reflection to teach life skills.
- Collected data from field notes, student anecdotal notes, post teacher reflections, and lesson plans.
- Techniques used to analyze data included repetition, missing data, and similarities/differences

**Results and Data Analysis**
- Students struggled the most with identifying less familiar feelings (e.g., nervous, shy, grumpy) during role-play.
- Role-play raised student interests and enhanced students’ understanding of life skills.
- Classroom discussions of life skills encouraged participation among students. Words that were frequently used by the students during discussions included problem-solve, apologize, and respect (see Figure 1).
- Having the students make personal reflections during the lessons helped them relate the skills to everyday life.

**Conclusion**
- Teaching life skills to young students will expose them to new topics and develop their understanding of social and emotional skills.
- Role-playing develops students’ understanding of life skills and encourages participation.
- Identifying the long-term effects of learning life skills at a young age would benefit research on this topic.

**Figure 1.** These are the reoccurring topics of classroom discussions during the unit on life skills. The topics explored by the students include various emotions, life skills, and learning strategies.