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Developing Life Skills in Young Students

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Developing Life Skills in Young Students

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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.

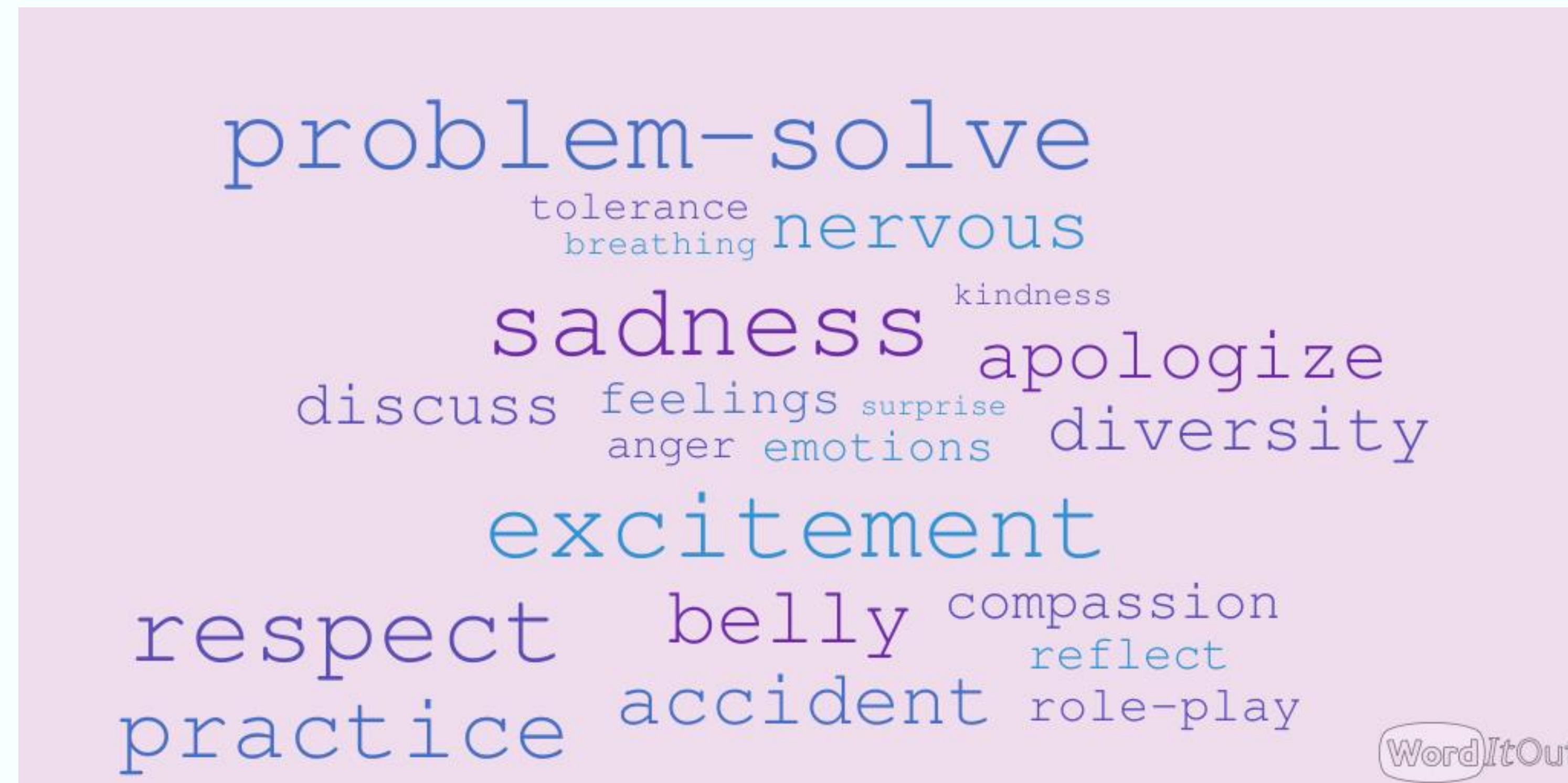


Figure 1. These are the reoccurring topics of classroom discussions during the unit on life skills. The topics explored by the students include various emotions, life skills, and learning strategies.

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.