

# **Life Skills and Economics: Ms. Shelley's Special Education Junior High Student Experience**

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Transcript

MDS/BAS 495 Undergraduate Capstone Projects

Spring 2022

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Life Skills and Economics: Ms. Shelley's Special Education Junior High Student Experience. Applied Life Skills. How might I help our special education students become successful in real-life situations? By applying life skills programs to our junior high school. The problem starts with students having a lack of understanding and skill when stepping out on their own.

Teaching students skills, now, will help them become successful members in society. Students who learn life skills early will not only build self-confidence, but their long-term success in life. Having great resources for lesson plans gives a multitude of perspectives and ideas.

As I use these lesson plans and add the ideas to my class lessons, I find I must modify most of the pre-existing plans to fit the abilities of my special education students. For feedback, I'd give questionnaires during the third and sixth week to receive a perspective on the program from students, teachers, and parents. I'd then make changes as needed.

My current junior high does not have an understanding of basic life skills, including economic skills and personal finance. Building a program to teach the lacking skills will educate my junior high students in these areas. I used Google Classroom and other resources to support my plan. Some of the topics include life skills, social skills, and economic skills.

Students gain a better understanding of real-life situations and how to respond. We set up a simulation of real-life situations to allow students to gain experiences and make mistakes, and learn from them. During the planned simulation, students are allowed to save, spend, and earn money at their own discretion.

This gives them a safe environment to lose money and see how it will affect them in the future. My research allows me to understand why I'm teaching life skills to my students and how it will affect them in the long-term.

Students gained skills like critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills, communication skills in interpersonal relationships, coping with emotions and stress, self-awareness and empathy. I have taken five out of 17 students randomly and made a graph to show how the social skills have had an effect on the students.

I went to the other teachers in the school and the administrators to see if they had seen changes in the students' engagement throughout the school. This was over a few weeks. As you can see, the goals were met or improved. Behaviors were improved in just a short time. We will continue this project in the following year to see if we will add this program permanently.

I started with a planned economic class schedule and built activities for students' needs and goals. The pre-planned program I used was called "My Classroom Economy." I started with the junior high program, but quickly realized I needed more adaptive assignments, and moved my students back to grade 2 to 3 level. This really helped, and I could see improvements in their success.

When assignments are too difficult, I see an incline in behaviors. When this happens, I know I need to re-evaluate my plan. I build activities around this process. I also use Google Classroom for my classroom assignments. This makes it to have easy access for the students, and they clearly understand how to use it.

The students are learning social skills, money management, banking skills, and every week, I add more to their learning experience. I find many students need extra time with counting money before I moved on. My current approach is unique in the same sense that most special education programs of the junior high are not providing progressive life skills, social skills, and economic skills.

I had to think outside the box and find new ways of doing some activities. The students have gained clear understanding of each tool and now are applying these throughout their day. I have seen students reach new goals in math, and gain a better understanding of money, through just a few weeks. I use a lot of visual aids to help their learning experience run smoother for the students.

I have taken a pre-made program and modified the activities to fit a lower-learning level and different learning style. I ensure we have visual aids and hands-on activities. Each student is at a different level, and I must ensure they receive the same experience throughout the program. Empowering students through life skills works and is needed.

The students' mental health is one area we tend to forget about when focusing on education. Teaching life skills benefits students, parents, and teachers. I used this information to guide my project. It will help me understand the benefits on a mental level. Social skills have had a big impact on our students.

It has helped students understand their behaviors and gain a new perspective on other students' behaviors. They have learned to have empathy and compassion. Behavior goals are being met or are going up, percentage-wise. Some students' behavior goals were hitting 20%, and now they are reaching 60 to 70% range.

My current project engagement is going great. I have seen many of my students' goals change and evolve as they move through each step of the program. It has also helped them with core classes like math and writing. All teachers take data on student progress for their groups. The groups are math, reading, writing, and technology. Students have gained knowledge in all these areas.

Money, math, and check registries have seen a big improvement in all students. Here you can see an example of my student feedback responses for the program activity so far. I need to see if they were understanding assignments, and gauging how difficult the program assignments were. Students learned many new skills they can apply to their high school workforce program.

The feedback I received from the stakeholders has been very positive. Administration has noticed a big change in the students' social skills. She came in and watched us on Friday. We had a checkbook registry check-in with a store purchase day. The students had to make a clear choice on how much money they had in their accounts, and how much they were willing to spend.

This gave students real-life experience on fulfilling a temporary happiness, or waiting and spending their savings on a big item at the end of the program. My administration was excited to see the student progress on decision-making, banking, and math. My administration has an understanding of how the program made changes to our class as a whole. She gave me clear verbal feedback.

Many students did not buy items from the store, and are choosing to wait to buy the large item at the end of the program. When looking at goals and student progress, I found the changes made to the program made a big difference in their engagement and success. In our special education program we have kept data on all student progress.

I have looked at the math group data and have seen changes in the checkbook registry percentage and money-counting. On average, students went from 29% to 65 to 78% on knowledge without assistance. Everyone received benefits from the life skills program. The students' new skills they learned are being applied to other areas of their education.

The administrator has benefited by having wonderful students who understand new social skills and team collaboration and work ethic. Teachers are less focused on behaviors and more focused on meeting educational goals. The parents are seeing the effect of less behaviors and new money management skills at home. Some students have even started a savings account or piggy bank.

Some of the skills I have learned are team collaboration, empathy, and clear communication. I learned how to build a program, teach the program, and make changes as challenges arise. I have learned adaptive skills and how to apply my leadership skills to my students' team collaboration.

Overall, this project has given me a better understanding of my skills and how I respond to challenges. I love the confidence I have gained through the last few weeks. Here are my references I used throughout the program.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.