Life Skills for Life-Long Learners: Teaching Functional Skills to Elementary Students with Special Needs

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Life Skills for Lifelong Learners:
Teaching Functional Life Skills to Elementary Students with Special Needs

Emily de Recat
Dominican University of California
Scholarly & Creative Works Conference
April 17, 2019
“Unemployment of adults with disabilities is more than twice as high than it is for the general population. Only 44% of adults with Intellectual Disabilities that are between the ages of 21-64 are in the labor force, compared to 83% of working-age adults without disabilities who are in the labor force.”

(Drascher, Parker & Siperstein, 2013)
Review of Literature

- Life skills are defined as the skills required for daily life in the community. In order to have an independent life, one must have appropriate life skills. These skills can be grouped into five areas, including: self-care and domestic living, recreation and leisure, social interaction, employment, and community participation (Chiang, Ni & Lee, 2017).

- Life skills instruction should be conducted in both classrooms and community settings so students can learn to apply the learned skills to their daily living environments (Clark et al., 1994).

- Video modeling is an accessible modification technique that uses videotaped scenarios for students to observe rather than live ones, allowing students to focus on the consistent repetition of a task without distractions (Gardner & Wolfe, 2015).
Research Questions

1. How does the use of peer and video modeling to teach functional life skills to students with moderate to severe disabilities affect skill retention in the areas of hand-washing, making direct eye-contact, giving an appropriate greeting when approached, and exchanging money?

2. Will six-weeks of targeted, research-based interventions improve students’ skills in the areas of hygiene, social skills and money skills?
Gap in Literature

Lack of Life Skills Curriculum & Standards

- No specific set of life skills standards or a required life skills curriculum accessible for teachers
- Common Core State Standards provide little guidance to ensure students with disabilities are successful

(Leko, Brownell, Sindelar & Kiely, 2015).
Methodology

**Site**
- Secret Hill K-8 School
- 2-5 Special Day Class (7 students total)

**Data Collection**
- Data Tracking Sheets & Observations during weekly Coffee Cart
- Parent & 2 Teacher Interviews
## Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name &amp; Sex</th>
<th>Verbal or Nonverbal</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>English Language Learner (ELL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia-Female</td>
<td>Limited verbal abilities</td>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph-Male</td>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger-Male</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>8 years old</td>
<td>Caucasian/Asian</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy-Male</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>8 years old</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry-Male</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Intellectual Disability &amp; Visually Impaired</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin-Male</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam-Male</td>
<td>Limited verbal abilities</td>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Collecting Money through the Use of Peer Modeling *(5 students)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Baseline</th>
<th>End of Six Weeks</th>
<th>Mastery Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2 students data not recorded due to behaviors*
# Findings

Handwashing through Video Modeling (7 students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Baseline</th>
<th>End of Six Weeks</th>
<th>Mastery Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Findings

Appropriate Greetings through Video Modeling (7 students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Baseline</th>
<th>End of Six Weeks</th>
<th>Mastery Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Themes

- Life Skills
  - safety
  - standards
  - curriculum

- Academics
  - transition
  - adulthood

- Prepared to Lead a Functional Life
  - workforce
Major Themes

Lack of curriculum & standards, behavioral challenges with students, lack of direction from administration

Multiple Barriers

Peer and video modeling are effective teaching strategies

Teaching Practices

Positive and inclusive school community

Impact
Implications

One
- Work with Speech & Occupational Therapist

Two
- Collaborate with general education teachers once curriculum is established

Three
- Collaborate with High School Special Day Class Teacher

Four
- An inclusive school community impacts all students positively

Develop life skills curriculum

General Education Life Skills Circles

Special Day Class High School Buddies

Continue to Collaborate
Thank you for coming!

Any questions? Contact me at: ederecat@gmail.com