

***Life Skills for All Learners***  
**A 3-credit Graduate Course**  
**Syllabus**

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to teach educators how to identify and integrate the necessary life skills for school and work and to develop and integrate activities that help to develop essential life skills in their regular classroom curriculum.

A primary goal of this course will require teachers to use what they are learning and in turn implement these strategies into the curriculum in order to create student understanding. Participants will discover how to use old and new strategies in creating personal toolboxes, and assess useful strategies to integrate life skills throughout the curriculum. The use of technology to further extend understanding and to provide tools to capture the attention of twenty first century learners will also be a major focus.

**Course Materials**

The text for this course will serve as an outline. The required textbook for this course is Life Skills for All Learners How to Teach, Assess, and Report Education's New Essentials, by Antarina S.F. Amir and Thomas R. Guskey. Using this text, educators will learn specific teaching strategies to utilize within the classroom. Teachers will be able to modify classroom curriculum, so they include new strategies on teaching life skills. Reflection on the text and integration questions at the end of each chapter will be utilized in the course to check for understanding. Research articles and other materials, such as interactive websites, are outlined in the reference section of the course.

**Objectives**

- Evaluate research on the importance of life skills
- Explore the 21st Century life skills framework
- Analyze the essential 21st century skills that students need to master.
- Incorporate 21st Century Skills into daily classroom practices.
- Develop an understanding of the eight essential skills that need to be taught and practiced.
  - Meta-Level Reflection
  - Expert Thinking
  - Creativity & Innovation
  - Adaptability & Agility
  - Audience-Centered Communication
  - Synergistic Collaboration
  - Empathetic Social Skills
  - Ethical Leadership
- Develop a list of strategies to enhance the teaching of 21st Century Skills.
- Analyze websites used to enhance teaching of 21st Century Skills.
- Create opportunities for students to experience frequent, multiple encounters with life skills.

- Explore mindfulness practices
- Explore perseverance and grit and their role in developing successful life skills
- Create a long term plan for teaching life skills.

### Course Requirements

*Life Skill for All Learners* is a 45 hour, three credit graduate level course completed over 2 weekends or 5 consecutive days.

### Course Components and Basis of Grade Determination

Your grade will be determined by the course components listed below. (The items below are meant as a suggested guide for instructors).

Course Component	Percent of Grade	Description
Session Reflections (9) Session Talking Points (8)	40%	Reflection and Talking Point assignments should be completed by students and demonstrate mastery of Session objectives. They should incorporate information learned in the Session and exhibit graduate level work.
Final Integration Project	25%	Students will complete a final project which involves practical application of course content.
Reading	23%	Read all Session content and hyperlink materials.
Participation	12%	Actively participate in all activities.
Total	100%	

### Assessment of Student (Course)

Student achievement of the learning outcomes for this course will be assessed as follows:

Description/Directions of Assignment/Assessment	Weight (Points)	Course Learning Outcome(s) Assessed
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 1 content and must see web sites.	6	Explore professional articles on 21st Century Skills
<u>Written Assignments</u>		Identify the skill sets students need for school and future success
Reflection Talking Point		Evaluate the life skills that are appropriate for each grade level.

<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 2 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Reflection Talking Point	7	Examine the research on Meta-Level Reflection both in the book and in professional articles and websites. Assess how you are currently including ways to have students think deeply, analyze, and reflect on important issues. Develop a working understanding of the difference between metacognition and Meta-Level Reflection
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 3 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Reflection Talking Point	7	Analyze and apply the concept of expert thinking by exploring how experts approach problem-solving, decision-making, and pattern recognition in real-world situations. Explore opportunities for students to set goals, devise plans and select effective strategies for problem solving. Develop a working understanding of the importance of Expert Thinking. Identify the characteristics of expert thinkers and novice thinkers
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 4 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Reflection Talking Point	7	Explore classroom design that encourages creativity and innovation Identify the changes that can be made to make classrooms ripe for innovation and creativity. Create opportunities for student choice. Use brainstorming strategies to encourage creative and innovative ideas.
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 5 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Talking Point Reflection	7	Create opportunities for students to build optimism and grit. Explore how mistakes lead to growth. Understand the design of a Project Planning Log. Infuse expectations for Adaptability and Agility into the classroom.
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 6 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Reflection	4	Identify the various forms of communication. Identify the qualities of effective communicators. Design a template to guide students in understanding their audience. Practice listening skills. Design activities for students to become active listeners.
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 7 content and must see web sites.	7	Explain the key elements of synergistic collaboration

<u>Written Assignments</u> Talking Point Reflection		Assess strategies to maintain positive interaction Explore learning activities that allow students to collaborate with their classmates and other community members.
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 8 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Talking Point Reflection	7	Explore SEL activities that promote empathy. Develop strategies to help students identify and manage emotions. Design tools to encourage empathy in our students. Explore mindfulness activities and classroom practices
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 9 content and must see web sites. <u>Written Assignments</u> Talking Point Reflection	7	Identify the components of ethical leadership. Evaluate the importance of how sound decision making, nurturing expert thinking, integrity and a growth mindset are all characteristics of ethical leadership. Explore community service based projects that allow students to become leaders. Develop a list of vocabulary words to teach that describe values. Research the Growth Mindset and make a list of ways you can encourage the growth mindset in your educational setting.
<u>Reading &amp; Web Assignments</u> Read Session 10 content and must see web sites.		Explore ways to involve students in the assessment process. Compare assessment for learning with assessments of learning Develop formative assessment strategies Research how portfolios can be used as a grading tool.
Final Integration Project	18	Write a 500 word reflective essay addressing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The importance of life skills in education</li> <li>● The role of teachers in fostering these skills</li> <li>● How these skills will impact students' future success</li> </ul>

## Grading

Final grades in the course are assigned based on the following grading scheme.

A = 93-100%

B = 85-92%

C = 77-84%

### **Student Requirements**

1. Participation: Actively participate in all activities.
2. Reading assignments: Complete all reading assignments including web resources.
3. A checklist for the final project will be distributed in the first session and again in the last Session that will outline the components and elaboration necessary to achieve the corresponding grades.
4. Written reflections for each session during the course are required. Each reflection must conform to APA style. Written reflections will be due as follows:
5. Reflection questions are due at the end of each Session.
6. Final Reflections will be due at the end of the course.
7. Final project: Students are required to construct a portfolio during the course that will serve as a toolkit of specific ideas and lesson plans for their classrooms. Due by the end of Session 10.

### **Course Evaluation**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Grading Scale</b>	
Class Participation	9	72-77	<b>A</b>
Class Assignments	30	66-71	<b>B</b>
Final Project	20	60-65	<b>C</b>
Reading	18		
Total Points	77		

### **Student Academic Integrity**

Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.

### **Course Outline/Chronology**

*An established due date schedule is sent to the participants at the start of each section.*

*Generally, all reading and written assignments are due weekly beginning with the introduction at the end of week one.*

### **Session One: 21st Century Skills**

Content:

1. Explore professional articles on 21st Century Skills
2. Identify the skill sets students need for school and future success

3. Evaluate the life skills that are appropriate for each grade level.
4. Reflections on the Session readings and websites

**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and [21st Century Learning Skills](#)
- **Reflection:** Conduct an interview with a professional or mentor about the life skills they find most important for success and summarize your findings.
- **Talking Point:** Watch [Are You a 21st Century Teacher?](#) Describe the 7 Core 21st Century Teacher Competencies. Which two areas do you most need to develop? Make a plan to describe how you plan to grow in these two areas.

**Session Two: Introduction to Life Skills**

Content:

1. Examine the research on Meta-Level Reflection both in the book and in professional articles and websites.
2. Assess how you are currently including ways to have students think deeply, analyze, and reflect on important issues.
3. Develop a working understanding of the difference between metacognition and Meta-Level Reflection
4. Reflection on the Session and chapter one.

**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter One
- **Reflection:** Write a one-page reflection on what life skills mean to you and identify three areas where you want to improve.
- **Talking Point:** Design a compare and contrast poster to use with your students to help them recognize the difference between metacognition and Meta-Level Reflection.

**Session Three: Expert Thinking**

Content:

1. Analyze and apply the concept of **expert thinking** by exploring how experts approach problem-solving, decision-making, and pattern recognition in real-world situations.
2. Explore opportunities for students to set goals, devise plans and select effective strategies for problem solving.
3. Develop a working understanding of the importance of Expert Thinking.
4. Identify the characteristics of expert thinkers and novice thinkers.
5. Reflection on the Session and chapter 2.

**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Two
- **Reflection:** : Explain the key characteristics of expert thinking (pattern recognition, deep understanding, efficient problem-solving, intuition, and metacognition).
- **Talking Point:** Reflect on an area in your life where you developed, or are developing, expertise (e.g., a subject in school, a sport, a hobby, or a job). Describe a problem or challenge you have encountered. Discuss how you approached the problem

and whether your thinking aligned more with a novice or an expert. Suggest ways you can improve your thinking to become more expert-like in this area.

#### **Session Four: Creativity and Innovation**

Content:

1. Explore classroom design that encourages creativity and innovation
2. Identify the changes that can be made to make classrooms ripe for innovation and creativity.
3. Create opportunities for student choice.
4. Use brainstorming strategies to encourage creative and innovative ideas.
5. Reflection on the Session and chapter 3.

#### **Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Three
- **Reflection:** Identify and explain the key elements of creativity and innovation and how you can encourage them in your educational setting.
- **Talking Point:** Discuss how creativity and innovation in your classroom can enhance learning experiences.

#### **Session Five: Adaptability and Agility**

Content:

1. Create opportunities for students to build optimism and grit.
2. Explore how mistakes lead to growth.
3. Understand the design of a Project Planning Log.
4. Infuse expectations for Adaptability and Agility into the classroom.
5. Reflection on the Session and chapter 4.

#### **Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Four
- **Reflection:** Watch Tammy Duckworth's [Ted Talk](#) on Perseverance and Grit. How does grit differ from intelligence and talent as a predictor of success?
- **Talking Point:** We have all seen the posters like this one: (poster)

Students today are often afraid of making a mistake or being wrong. Find a prompt (video, quote, story, interview or any other resource) that you could use as a jumping off point for a lesson on how mistakes, taking risks, perseverance and determination lead to success or discovery or growth that would be appropriate for your age group.

#### **Session Six: Audience-Centered Communication**

Content:

1. Identify the various forms of communication.
2. Identify the qualities of effective communicators.
3. Design a template to guide students in understanding their audience.
4. Practice listening skills.

5. Design activities for students to become active listeners.
6. Reflection on the Session and chapter 5.

**Assignment:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Five
- **Reflection:** Choose a topic you are familiar with or passionate about. It could be academic, personal, or professional.
  - Identify Three Different Audiences. Consider the diverse types of people who might need to hear about your topic (for example: a group of high school students, a group of colleagues in a professional setting, a community group of mixed ages and backgrounds, friends, children)

**Tailor Your Message for Each Audience** Write a short speech or presentation (200 words each) on your chosen topic, but adjust it for each audience. You should address the same core message but adapt the tone, language, and examples based on what you know about each audience's interests and level of understanding.

**Session Seven: Synergistic Collaboration**

Content:

1. Explain the key elements of synergistic collaboration
2. Assess strategies to maintain positive interaction
3. Explore learning activities that allow students to collaborate with their classmates and other community members.
4. Reflection on the Session and chapter 6

**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Six
- **Reflection:** In classrooms across the country teachers have been designing lessons and projects to promote collaboration among students. Cooperative Learning and Project Based Learning are among some of those designs. Write an essay that describes how Synergistic Collaboration is different. What elements must be present in this design?
- **Talking Point:** Think of a time when you worked in a group (academic, professional, or personal). Describe the **goal** of the group and how members interacted. Evaluate whether the group displayed synergistic collaboration or faced challenges in achieving it.

**Session Eight: Empathetic Social Skills**

Content:

1. Explore SEL activities that promote empathy.
2. Develop strategies to help students identify and manage emotions.
3. Design tools to encourage empathy in our students.
4. Explore mindfulness activities and classroom practices
5. Reflection on the Session and chapter 7.



**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Seven
- **Reflection:** The previous Sessions have been setting the stage for building empathetic social skills. We have discussed active listening, perspective taking and open ended questions. All essential skills to develop empathetic social skills. Create a checklist for first year teachers to help them focus on and build empathy.
- **Talking Point:** Research Mindfulness activities and choose three you will share with your students. Write a brief description of each activity and why you chose it.

**Session Nine: Ethical Leadership****Content:**

1. Identify the components of ethical leadership.
2. Evaluate the importance of how sound decision making, nurturing expert thinking, integrity and a growth mindset are all characteristics of ethical leadership.
3. Explore community service based projects that allow students to become leaders.
4. Develop a list of vocabulary words to teach that describe values.
5. Research the Growth Mindset and make a list of ways you can encourage the growth mindset in your educational setting.
6. Reflection on the Session and chapter 8.

**Assignments:**

- **Readings:** Session Readings and Chapter Eight
- **Reflection:** Develop a vocabulary list of words that support the importance of sound decision making, nurturing expert thinking, integrity and growth mindset that would be appropriate for your grade level. Explain why you chose those words.
- **Talking Point:** Community service is crucial in education because it provides students with real-world experiences that foster important life skills like leadership, critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility, while also allowing them to apply classroom knowledge to practical situations, enhancing their understanding of societal issues and their role within the community; essentially, it helps students develop not just academically, but also as active and engaged citizens. Create an opportunity for your students to participate in a community service project. Describe the program and why you chose it.

**Session Ten: Grading and Reporting Systems and Tying It All Together****Content:**

1. Explore ways to involve students in the assessment process.
2. Compare assessment for learning with assessments of learning
3. Develop formative assessment strategies
4. Research how portfolios can be used as a grading tool

- **Readings:** Session Readings

**Final Integration Project:**

Write a 500 word reflective essay addressing:

- The importance of life skills in education

- The role of teachers in fostering these skills
- How these skills will impact students' future success