

Middle School

Life Skills for Wellness classes are required, but non-graded, and presented to each student throughout Middle School. In sixth grade, the emphasis is on learning how to learn. The curriculum is as follows:

- ❖ Introduction Activities
- ❖ Test-Taking Skills
- ❖ Memory Techniques
- ❖ Margin Writing
- ❖ VAKT Learning Modalities
- ❖ Active Reading Techniques
- ❖ Learning About Bodies and Boundaries
- ❖ The Role of Good Nutrition

In Grade VII, *Life Skills* classes deal with the social, emotional, and physical aspects of a student's life. Through roles-plays, stories, experiential exercises and presentations these classes help students understand adolescence as a life-stage. After each class some time is left for journaling, with the intention that at the end of the trimester, a student has some valuable life lessons on the following topics:

- ❖ Adolescence as a Life Stage
- ❖ Peer Pressure - Good and Bad
- ❖ Responsible Decision-Making
- ❖ Media Literacy and Internet Safety
- ❖ Stress-Management
- ❖ Self-Care
- ❖ The Endocrine System
- ❖ Anatomy
- ❖ Emotional Health and Wellness

Life Skills in Grade VIII take on a slightly different tone in that the students choose topics according to their own interests. In small groups, they research, prepare, and present to the rest of the class. These topics are guided and approved by the teacher, and usually include the following topics:

- ❖ Decision Making
- ❖ Self-Advocacy
- ❖ Stress Management
- ❖ Nutrition
- ❖ Consequences of High Risk Behavior
- ❖ Creating and Maintaining a Healthy Life Style

Upper School

In Upper School, there are *Life Skills for Wellness* classes in Grade X, and in Grade XII they are presented as Senior Workshops. These classes take into account the increasing independence of the students, and are geared toward coaching them in that direction through the following topics:

- ❖ Social Development
- ❖ Self-Care
- ❖ Knowing Yourself
- ❖ Nutrition
- ❖ Self-Protection
- ❖ Assertiveness
- ❖ Boundaries
- ❖ Personal Finances
- ❖ Managing Your Time
- ❖ Balancing Social Life and Academic Life
- ❖ Avoiding High Risk Behavior

The Baldwin Community

Students today are arriving at our schools with fewer personal resources and more challenges than ever before. We know that learning can be inhibited by social and emotional distractions. To that end, we use a team approach to 'teach' the skills of emotional intelligence, resilience, and executive functioning. That is our Pre-K through Grade XII *Life Skills for Wellness* Program. It offers a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the students.

In addition to supporting the students directly through the *Life Skills for Wellness Program* and through our respective disciplines - the SIS Team members also take into account the health of the adults in the community. We hope to touch positively the lives of the faculty, administrators, staff, and parents. Besides the *Life Skills* classes, we also present parenting workshops, provide consultations, offer classroom observations, attend parent/teacher conferences, and make referrals.

Please feel free to contact any of us if you have questions and/or comments.

Thank you!
Sherie Saner, *Psychologist*

Baldwin

thinkinggirls



Life Skills for Wellness Program[©]

Baldwin was the first private school in the area to establish a comprehensive social skills program for its students. Over the past two decades, the curriculum has "grown" to stay current and to meet the ever-changing needs of young women. It is more widely recognized than ever that only with physical, cognitive, emotional, and social health is it possible for students to learn optimally, to establish balance in their lives, to develop to their full potentials. To that end, we have developed the *Life Skills for Wellness Program*.

The Program

Life Skills for Wellness is a respected program that has been presented at NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) several times to standing-room-only crowds. Many other private schools, locally and nationally, have used *Life Skills* as a model to begin their own programs. Its proactive curriculum can be considered a model for prevention addressing the demands on today's students.

The SIS Team

Life Skills classes are taught by Baldwin's team of specialists, or "SIS Team" (Specialists in School). This consists of our school counselor, our nurses, our learning facilitator, our athletic trainer, and our psychologist. They are each highly qualified to present their respective areas of expertise. An added benefit to this model is that the students get to know the specialists, and the specialists get to know the students. Since the SIS team members all work across all three divisions (and therefore "travel" with the students) this increased familiarity provides an opportunity for more comfort, should a student want to or need to meet with one of the specialists.

To contact members of the SIS Team call:
610-525-2700 plus the extension listed below.

- Shelley Lapinski, Athletic Trainer**.....390
- Ros Price, Nurse**288
- Sherie Saner, Psychologist**.....265
- Cecily Selling, Learning Facilitator**.....252
- Liz Strauss, Counselor**278
- Doreen Jones, Nurse**280

Divisional Representatives:

- Lisa Ameisen, MS Dean**225
- Pooh Gephart, US Dean**296
- Holly Stoviak, Asst. Director of LS**308

Pre-K to XII Classes

Many of the *Life Skills for Wellness* lessons in Lower School are based on teaching the skills of emotional intelligence. These skills include knowing feelings, using them to make good life decisions, self-regulation, positive self-esteem, and civility. In Middle School, the program builds upon much of the Lower School curriculum. These lessons are geared toward supporting students to learn more about themselves — as learners, as social beings, as family members, and as individuals with increasing responsibility for their own health and well-being. Upper School classes go a step further in shepherding students to practice active self-care and to prepare them for increasing independence.

Lower School

Life Skills classes begin with a discussion of feelings, appropriate to each age group or grade level. What are feelings, where do they come from, what information do they give us? We then discuss and role play examples of feelings and how to manage them when they get "too big". We brain-storm many good, concrete examples of how to read feelings in ourselves and others, and how to manage them. Once this foundation is in place, many topics can follow:

- ❖ creating empathy
- ❖ good listening skills
- ❖ Integrity and honesty
- ❖ tracking one's impact
- ❖ managing feelings
- ❖ centering and calming
- ❖ assertiveness as a model for mutual respect
- ❖ positive thinking and positive self-worth
- ❖ leadership and 'right' use of power
- ❖ body changes and body awareness
- ❖ safety and good hygiene
- ❖ conflict resolution
- ❖ inclusion/exclusion
- ❖ tolerance-building
- ❖ moral reasoning
- ❖ good decision-making
- ❖ healthy friendship

All Lower School lessons are presented through books, stories, role-plays, experiential exercises, discussions, or some combination of these. The students demonstrate their learning of these "life lessons" when they report back about times they've used some of the techniques presented in class.

While *Life Skills* classes in Grades Pre-K through IV can be anywhere from two to five sessions, the program in Grade V has a different structure. The program begins later in the year and begins to prepare the girls for some aspects of Middle School. A letter is sent home to the parents before we begin - both to inform parents of the topics and to invite discussion at home. We acknowledge that although we address certain topics at school, parents are the primary teachers of values and beliefs.

The Grade V Life Skills for Wellness curriculum is as follows:

- ❖ Self-esteem and Assertiveness as a Model for Mutual Respect
- ❖ Teaching Tolerance
- ❖ Healthy Choices for Living, Part I; Nutrition
- ❖ Healthy Choices, Part II: Living in Balance
- ❖ Healthy Choices, Part III: Puberty
- ❖ Countering the Media Culture and Internet Safety
- ❖ Transitions to the Middle School



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