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## Letter: Lee students make case for Life Skills classes

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To the editor:

The Life Skills Program developed by Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin and offered through the Berkshire District Attorney's office has been taught for three years at Lee Elementary School. The program is an evidence-based substance abuse and violence program. The program teaches students important life lessons that kids will use throughout their lives. However, Life Skills might be coming to an end after this year.

Some of the skills taught are making wise choices not to smoke, do drugs, how to build up self-esteem and being kind to others. Many teachers and students think the program is beneficial and don't want it to end. "We think that Life Skills is a terrific program that teaches the children valuable life lessons," stated Lee Elementary School physical education and health teachers Julia Warner and Jen Carlino. According to a fifth-grader, "Life Skills teaches us not to make bad decisions and be more aware of the decisions we do make!" A fourth-grader explained, "Life Skills helps us to make good decisions, like not doing drugs or smoking and learning strategies to help make wise choices." Finally, a sixth-grader explained, "Life Skills teaches us to make choices that are healthy, and if Life Skills program continues it will make the world a better place." Every student we spoke to said they want Life Skills to continue because they learned skills and strategies to help their self-esteem and how to interact with peers. They also enjoy the way the DA Life Skills' teachers presented the program and treated everyone with respect.

Principal Kate Retzel said, "The DA Life Skills program teaches kids a deeper knowledge than what parents teach. This program also helps build relationships between the kids and an outside teacher." Life Skills has been taught for three years at Lee Elementary School, starting with only sixth-graders, followed by adding fifth-graders in the second year, and fourth-graders in the third year. The program is currently being taught to all students in grades four through six.

grades 3 through 6 the following year.

Life Skills program seems to work very well. The DA Life Skills teachers are experts at modeling and explaining strategies to help students make good decisions throughout their lives. Therefore, students at Lee Elementary School really need this program to continue at our school.

*Reeva Patel and Elyse Thomson,*

*Lee*

*The writers are grade 5 members of the Wildcat Tales Newspaper staff at Lee Elementary.*

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