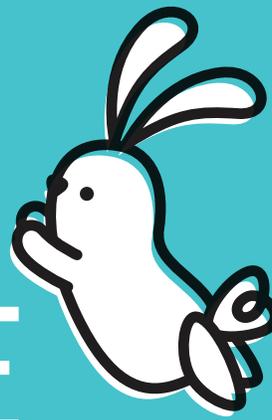


# EDUCATOR GUIDE



Grade  
Level  
6-8

## UNIT INTRODUCTION

This collection of activities and lessons is designed to help your students

- 1) understand kindness and the importance of self-care and
- 2) develop a culture of kindness in the classroom and in their lives.

## Background Information

### THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS

We have all experienced kindness. We know how important it is. Scientific studies have shown that being kind is good for our health.<sup>1</sup> Kindness improves our life satisfaction by increasing our sense of belonging and self-worth, and it improves our health by decreasing anxiety, depression, and blood pressure. And here's the best (and perhaps, most surprising) part – these benefits apply to the *giver* of kindness, the *recipient* of kindness, and *anyone who witnesses* the act! So, every act of kindness improves the lives of at least three people!

### TEACHING KINDNESS IN SCHOOL

Can we teach kindness? The short answer is "yes"! Social and emotional skills are *critical* to being a good student, productive citizen, and successful worker. Many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when social and emotional learning skills are taught. Additionally, social and emotional learning (SEL) can improve academic scores. In fact, one study shows that students who have been in directed SEL programs can increase their scores on standardized tests by up to 11%!<sup>2</sup>

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin conducted a study to find out what happens when schools deliberately teach kindness skills.<sup>3</sup> It shows that a kindness program "can improve kids' grades, cognitive abilities, and relationship skills." In addition, the researchers found that teaching kindness can enhance students' ability to better calm themselves in stressful situations and help them be more flexible in their thinking.

### THE KINDNESS LOOP

The Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) *Kindness in the Classroom Pedagogy*<sup>4</sup> focuses on **inspiring** and **empowering** students with kindness skills that prompt them to **act** kindly toward others and **share** kindness.

This loop is incorporated into the RAK lesson plan activities for Kindergarten through 12th grade; the activities are designed to inspire, empower, promote action and provide opportunities for sharing.

## KINDNESS DEFINITION

*For the Teacher:*

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation (RAK) defines kindness as a natural quality of the heart, expressed through an act of good will and reflecting care for self and others

*For the Students:*

Kindness means being friendly, generous or considerate to ourselves and others through our words and actions



## KINDNESS CONCEPT: SELF-CARE

*For the Teacher:*

Learning how to take care of yourself; using nice words when you think or talk about yourself

*For the Students:*

Taking care of yourself through kind words, actions, and thoughts

- **INSPIRE** students to explore various concepts of kindness through different learning modalities, such as video clips, role-plays, books, games and other hands-on activities.
- **EMPOWER** students to assess how they can be kind in their daily lives.
- **ACT** kindly in the future, through a research project, community service project or another activity that provides students with a chance to practice or demonstrate kindness.
- **SHARE** and reflect on acts of kindness as a class, either by having students verbalize their knowledge and actions (e.g., "I donated blankets to an animal shelter"), write about their response to those actions (e.g., "I learned that animals need our help") and/or produce a product (e.g., contributing to a "wall of kindness" in the classroom by drawing a picture of their latest kind act).

RAK believes that when students participate in all four steps of the RAK Kindness loop multiple times; it will help them to build skills, internalize kindness, and then engage in inspired action.

## Overarching Questions for this Unit

- Why is it important to be kind to yourself?
- How might self-doubt and stress affect your learning?
- How can you improve your self-esteem?
- How can you help others improve their self-esteem?

<sup>1</sup> From the Random Acts of Kindness website document:

[http://downloads.randomactsofkindness.org/RAK\\_kindness\\_health\\_facts.pdf](http://downloads.randomactsofkindness.org/RAK_kindness_health_facts.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> From the American Psychological Association's *Monitor on Psychology*:

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/04/classrooms.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> From the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin, Madison

[http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what\\_if\\_schools\\_taught\\_kindness](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_if_schools_taught_kindness)

<sup>4</sup> From Random Acts of Kindness Educator Guide: Kindness in the Classroom, page 4.

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/rak-file-uploads/RAK+Educator+Guide+2015.pdf>



# Part One: Inspire

## LESSON DURATION

60 minutes  
(or two 30-minute sessions)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why is self-care important?
- How can self-care help you be a kinder person?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explain how stress can impact their emotions and abilities
- Identify ways to reduce stress and show self-care

## MATERIALS

- [Kid President: 20 Things We Should Say More Often](#) video
- [Kane's Story](#) article
- [Coping with Stress: Stressed Out](#) game
- 20-30 balloons (enough for each student to have at least one)  
*Note:* Do not blow up the balloons before class  
Alternatively, students may use paper they can ball up
- Masking tape & markers (one for each team of five students)

*Optional:*

- Home Extension Activity (included with this guide)

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students build understanding of the concepts of kindness and self-care. They begin to discover ways to add acts of kindness for others and themselves to their daily lives. Using materials from the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation's website, students watch a video and discuss how the things we say can make us and others feel better. They read about a man who uses acts of kindness towards others to help himself feel better. Finally, students take part in an activity that demonstrates how stress builds up and begin to determine ways to relieve stress.

## VOCABULARY

*Self-Care:* Taking care of yourself through kind words, actions and thoughts

*Responsibility:* Being reliable to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment

*Self-Discipline:* Controlling one's actions and words for the benefit of self and others

*Stress:* Something that makes you feel worried or anxious

## PROCEDURE

1. Ask students to think about a place or activity that helps them feel comfortable and safe. Give them five minutes to describe this using words and/or pictures. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class. Point out to the students any similarities in the activities various students mention, such as listening to music, being with friends and family, or enjoying nature.
2. Share the definitions for kindness and self-care with your students.
  - Kindness means being friendly, generous or considerate to ourselves and others through our words and actions.
  - Self-care means taking care of yourself through kind words, actions and thoughts.
3. Show the video [Kid President: 20 Things We Should Say More Often](#). While viewing, have students write down three things from the video they think are important and related to the concept of kindness. For example: sharing a corndog, telling someone he or she is awesome, or saying "please" and "thank you."
4. After viewing, have students share their list with a partner. Then, have partners brainstorm how to change those kindness ideas into self-care ideas. For example, we can tell ourselves that we are awesome, or you can allow yourself to have a special treat, or you can do something silly to make yourself laugh. Take a few minutes to share these ideas with the class.

5. Now tell students that they are going to read [Kane's Story](#), a story about a person who has learned that being kind to others helps him to take better care of himself.
6. Ask the students to think about these quotes from the article:
  - *Living is about testing ourselves and celebrating what we then can achieve.*
  - *The act of kindness forces our minds into the 'present', the hear [sic] & now.*
  - *We make them feel valued & that by default, values us.*

Now, ask the students to think about how Kane has changed his life and how his acts of kindness have turned into acts of self-care.

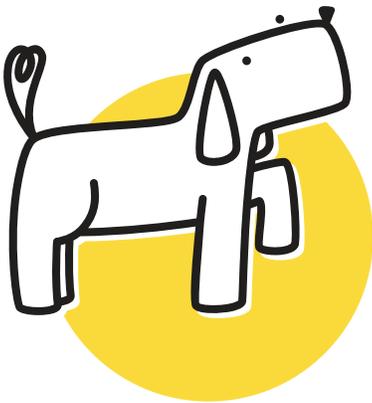
7. Follow the directions there to have your students play the [Coping with Stress: Stressed Out Stress Game](#). Follow up with the discussion questions.

## Optional Extension:

Ask the students to spend ten minutes at home practicing a stress-reducing activity. They can try meditating, coloring, physical activity, walking the dog, or some other activity that they feel helps them to reduce stress and feel at peace.

## Home Extension Activity:

Have students take home the [Part One Home Extension](#) sheet (provided in this guide) to share with their parents/guardians after completing the day's activities.



# Part Two: Empower

## LESSON DURATION

60 minutes  
(or two 30-minute sessions)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can you relieve stress?
- How does relieving stress help you practice self-care?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Determine what causes them stress
- Identify ways to relieve stress

## MATERIALS

- [Kristen Race: Helping Kids Manage Stress](#) video
- [Push the Panic Button](#) activity (from the Being Kind to Ourselves Reflecting on Self-Kindness lesson)
- [What Do the Quotes Mean to You?](#) activity (from the Coping with Stress Personal Stressors lesson)
- Art materials for creating “bumper stickers,” such as paper, colored pencils or markers, rulers, tape or glue, etc.

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students examine ways they can add more kindness and self-care to their lives. Students learn about relieving stress through deep breathing. They discover what causes them the most stress and brainstorm ways to combat that stress. Students examine powerful quotes and discuss ways to think positively and remind themselves that they are worthy and to show self-respect and self-care.

## VOCABULARY

*Respect:* Treating others as you would like to be treated

*Responsibility:* Being reliable to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment

*Self-Care:* Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts

*Self-Discipline:* Controlling one’s actions and words for the benefit of self and others.

*Stress:* Something that makes you feel worried or anxious

## PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that today they are going to continue to learn about the importance of self-care and stress relief.
2. Show the students the [Kristen Race: Helping Kids Manage Stress](#) video.
3. Have students practice the breathing technique shown in the video. Remind students that this is a great way to put out any “fires” in their brain and helps to relieve stress. (Think about adding a moment for deep breathing in your classes before students take a test or quiz.)
4. Implement the [Push the Panic Button](#) activity from the Being Kind to Ourselves Reflecting on Self-Kindness lesson. Then, conduct the [What Do the Quotes Mean to You?](#) activity from the Coping with Stress Personal Stressors lesson.
5. Ask students to choose one quote or make up a positive, self-care message of their own and create a “bumper sticker” to put in their locker, in the front of their notebook, or on their bathroom mirror at home. Allow students time to create their “bumper stickers” and share them with each other before posting them.

## Home Extension Activity

Have students take home the [What Do the Quotes Mean to You?](#) activity and share what they learned with their parents or guardians. Ask students to add to their answers to the questions at the bottom of the page after sharing and discussing the activity at home.

# Part Three: Act

## LESSON DURATION

60 minutes  
(or two 30-minute sessions)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- Why is it important to be nice to yourself?
- How can being nice to yourself improve other aspects of your life?

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Analyze the ways they think about and treat themselves
- Practice better self-care

## MATERIALS

- [Self-Image and Self-Esteem](#) lesson
- [Dove Evolution](#) clip
- [Positive Self-Talk](#) lesson

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students discuss self-esteem, self-image, and self-talk and how each relates to self-care. They examine themselves and consider new ways to think about and talk to themselves to create more positive feelings about themselves. Students watch a video that shows how a “super model” is actually just a regular person with lots of help and use that to discuss issues surrounding self-image and self-esteem. They track their thoughts and feelings about themselves to look for ways to improve their self-talk. Students use this information to learn how to take better care of themselves.

## VOCABULARY

*Self-Care:* Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts.

*Respect:* Treating people, places, and things with kindness.

*Self-Talk:* The words and thoughts we use to send ourselves messages about what we believe.

*Reframing:* Looking at what’s happening from a different perspective or point of view.

*Self-Esteem:* Overall sense of self-worth or self-value.

*Self-Compassion:* Offering compassion, understanding and kindness to yourself.

*Self-Image:* What you think you look like to yourself and others.

## PROCEDURE

1. Ask students to explain what they think the differences are between self-esteem and self-image.
2. Engage students in the [Self-Image and Self-Esteem](#) lesson. Discuss the lesson with your students, starting where it says, “We all have a mental picture of who we are,” (in the Inspire section).
3. Continue with the Empower section of the lesson.  
(NOTE: You may choose to complete the optional art activity at the end of the day.)
4. Have students complete the *How Do You See Yourself?* handout.
5. Ask students to answer the following questions and to record their answers on the back of the handout:
  - Identify a personal strength.
  - Why do you think this is a strength?
  - Identify one area in which you would like to do better.
  - What can you do to improve in this area?

6. Show students the [Dove Evolution](#) clip and ask the following questions:
  - What do you think is the message of this clip?
  - How did you react when you saw this?
  - Most images in ads have been altered or enhanced like in this clip. It takes hours of preparation, professional makeup application, lighting, and computer manipulation. Why do you think they do this? (To sell products to people who want to look like the ad.)
  - Do you think billboards and ads like the one you see at the end of the clip impact how you feel about yourself? Why or why not?
  - How do you feel about advertisers telling us what we should look like? Do you think that is ethical?
7. Use the Inspire and Empower sections (including the Reframing Our Thoughts handout) of the [Positive Self-Talk](#) lesson.

## Home Extension Activity

Give students the [Tracking My Well-Being](#) handout and/or the [How Can I Treat Myself Kindly?](#) Journaling Activity to keep track of what influences their well-being and/or what types of self-talk they use. They can share this information with their families and discuss other options.



# Part Four: Share

## LESSON DURATION

60 minutes (or two 30-minute sessions) plus ongoing time for the social media campaign

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What can you do to help raise the self-esteem of someone else or yourself?
- How can I encourage others to show kindness to themselves and to others?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify and practice things they can say and do to be kind to themselves and to others
- Analyze how culture, media, and others influence personal feelings and emotions
- Demonstrate how speaking and acting kindly shows respect toward others
- Identify ways that they can respond to those in need

## MATERIALS

- [Teen Creates Viral Campaign to Stop Cyberbullies](#) video
- [Empower](#) activity (from Respect Mobiles lesson)
- Construction paper or index cards
- Pens, pencils, and/or crayons, etc.
- String ribbon, or yarn
- Metal hangers
- [Free Compliments](#) handout (from the Positive Self Talk lesson)
- *Optional:* Home Extension Activity (included with this guide)

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students share the results of the first three days of this unit with the school community. After watching a video about a high school student who started a kindness Twitter campaign, students promote kindness and positive self-esteem for themselves and the school community by creating mobiles of respect, compliment flyers, and a kindness-focused social media campaign.

## VOCABULARY

*Assertiveness:* Standing up for yourself and what you believe in while being respectful of the rights and beliefs of others

*Gratitude:* Being thankful for and appreciating what you have and those around you

*Self-Care:* Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts

*Respect:* Treating people, places, and things with kindness

*Self-Esteem:* Overall sense of self-worth or self-value

*Self-Compassion:* Offering compassion, understanding and kindness to yourself

*Self-Image:* What you think you look like to yourself and others

*Compassion:* Being aware when others are sick, sad, or hurt and wanting to help

*Caring:* Feeling and showing concern for others

*Self-Talk:* The words and thoughts we use to send ourselves messages about what we believe

## PROCEDURE

1. Have your students view the [Teen Creates Viral Campaign to Stop Cyberbullies](#) video clip, then engage students in a discussion around the following questions:
  - What do you think about his Twitter campaign?
  - Do you think this kind of attitude could help people develop a stronger self-esteem?
  - Do you think it could make a difference in your school culture?
2. Conduct the [Empower](#) activity (from Respect Mobiles lesson). Hang the mobiles around the school to share what the students have learned about the importance of self-care and kindness with the rest of the school.
3. Working in groups, have students complete the [Free Compliments](#) handout. When completed, hang them around the school to help build self-esteem in the student body.

4. Have students work together to figure out ways they might help others develop a healthier self-image and build each other up using social media such as Twitter, Tumblr or Facebook. Students could also create a classroom blog and select quotes or statements to post on the blog to encourage others to celebrate and appreciate their strengths. Responses could become the focus of class discussion. (Note: If using social media is not possible at your school, consider creating a “virtual” Twitter feed on a bulletin board in the hallway. Teachers and students will need to monitor the comments. For all activities in which students make public posts, consider installing a “governing board” to oversee the comments for approval before posting.

## Home Extension Activity

Students should take home the [Part Four Home Extension](#) sheet (included in this guide) to share with their parents/guardians after completing the day’s activities.

## Additional Resources

A list of other, related organizations that promote kindness is located here: [Helpful Links for Educators](#).



# Part One Home Extension

## BACKGROUND

As part of the Random Acts of Kindness program, we have been talking in class about ways to show care and kindness to ourselves and reduce stress. Review the vocabulary words below as necessary.

## VOCABULARY

*Self-Care:* Taking care of yourself through kind words, actions and thoughts

*Responsibility:* Being reliable to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment

*Self-Discipline:* Controlling one's actions and words for the benefit of self and others

*Stress:* Something that makes you feel worried or anxious

Discuss the following topics with your child. Record responses below or on the back and return to school by the date above.



When you are having a bad day and feel like you are not able to do something right, what do you do or say to yourself that helps you get into a more peaceful and positive state of mind?

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What are some different types of stress-relieving activities you practice regularly at home?

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# Part Four Home Extension

## BACKGROUND

As part of the Random Acts of Kindness program, we have been talking in class about the importance of having a positive self-image. We discussed ways to develop self-esteem and to help others develop theirs. Review the vocabulary words below as necessary.

## VOCABULARY

*Self-Care:* Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts

*Self-Talk:* The words and thoughts we use to send ourselves messages about what we believe

*Self-Esteem:* Overall sense of self-worth or self-value

*Self-Compassion:* Offering compassion, understanding and kindness to yourself

*Self-Image:* What you think you look like to yourself and others

*Respect:* Treating people, places, and things with kindness

Ask your student what he or she has been learning and then discuss the following questions. Write or have your student write responses on the back of the sheet and return by the above date.



1 What are some techniques that you think would be helpful for developing self-esteem?

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2 How can we work to build each other's self-esteem?

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# Standards

## Common Core State Standards<sup>5</sup>

NOTE: Grade 7 standards were used for the purposes of this document. Similar grade level standards can be found for grades 6 and 8 in the CCSS document <http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards>.

### English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 7

*Key Ideas and Details:*

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.3](#)

Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

### English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 7

*Text Types and Purposes:*

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

### English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening » Grade 7

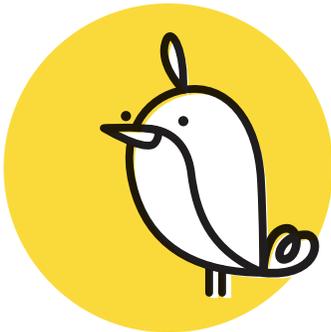
*Comprehension and Collaboration:*

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1](#)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2](#)

Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.



## 21st Century Skills<sup>6</sup>

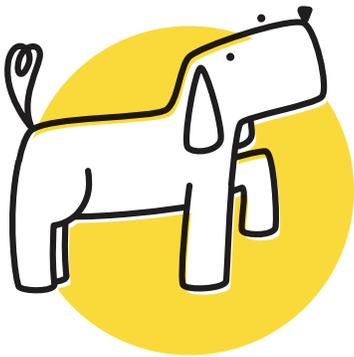
### LEARNING AND INNOVATION SKILLS CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

*Think Creatively*

- Create new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts)
- Elaborate, refine, analyze and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts

*Work Creatively with Others*

- Develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work



## **CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

### *Reason Effectively*

- Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation

## **COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION**

### *Communicate Clearly*

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade)
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priori as well as assess their impact

### *Collaborate with Others*

- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member

## **MEDIA LITERACY**

### *Create Media Products*

- Understand and effectively utilize the most appropriate expressions and interpretations in diverse, multi-cultural environments

## **ICT (INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY) LITERACY**

### *Apply Technology Effectively*

- Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information
- Use digital technologies (computers, PDAs, media players, GPS, etc.), communication/networking tools and social networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information to successfully function in a knowledge economy
- Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information technologies

## **LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY**

### *Be Responsible to Others*

- Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind

# **Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards<sup>7</sup>**

## **GOAL 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.**

### **A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.**

- 1A.3b. Apply strategies to manage stress and to motivate successful performance.

### **B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.**

- 1B.3a. Analyze how personal qualities influence choices and successes.

**GOAL 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.**

A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.  
• 2A.3b. Analyze how one's behavior may affect others.

B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.  
• 2B.3b. Analyze the effects of taking action to oppose bullying based on individual and group differences.

**GOAL 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.**

A: Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.  
• 3A.2a. Demonstrate the ability to respect the rights of self and others.

C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.  
• 3C.3a. Evaluate one's participation in efforts to address an identified school need.

<sup>5</sup> Common Core State Standards  
<http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards>

<sup>6</sup> Partnership for 21st Century Learning  
<http://www.p21.org/index.php>

<sup>7</sup> Illinois was the first state to incorporate stand alone SEL standards.  
[http://www.isbe.net/ils/social\\_emotional/standards.htm](http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm)

