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WANT TO CREATE A KINDER SCHOOL?

Our free K-12 resources:

• Guide teachers as they build classroom trust
• Help administrators create a positive school culture
• Inspire and empower students to share kindness

WHAT WE OFFER

√ K-12 lessons and projects that develop social and emotional competencies
√ Bilingual materials integrated with academics and aligned with standards
√ Implementation that requires little prep and meets diverse learning needs
√ Professional development and teaching strategies that support successful outcomes
√ Evidence-based program that increases empathy and kindness in the classroom

Download your FREE resources today!

www.randomactsofkindness.org/educators
WHO IS RAK AND WHY DO WE TEACH KINDNESS?

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, headquartered in Denver, CO, was founded in 2000 through a private endowment to encourage random acts of kindness. As an internationally recognized nonprofit, RAK’s mission is to inspire a culture of kindness in schools, homes and communities. Our goal is to provide engaging, accessible, high-quality resources to support schools, homes, individuals and communities in taking action to develop a culture of kindness. We believe that kindness is not exclusive; all people can connect through kindness, which can create a foundation for success in schools and in society.

We know that teachers have a tremendous opportunity to transform the minds and hearts of students. In 2010, we expanded our focus to intentionally teach kindness. We began an education initiative called Kindness in the Classroom, a kindness-based approach designed to improve school culture and support academic and social and emotional learning. Supporting students by teaching social and emotional skills is one of the best ways RAK can create kind, safe places of learning where students are empowered to become compassionate and responsible citizens. We are currently conducting rigorous qualitative and quantitative research, nationally and internationally, around the use of Kindness in the Classroom resources.

RAK RESOURCES

• Kindness research
• Monthly newsletter

For Schools:
• Kindness in the Classroom instructional materials
• Intro to RAK video
• Educator newsletter

For Homes:
• Home extension activities in K-8 lesson plans

For Individuals & Communities:
• Social media channels
• Kindness ideas
• RAKtivist program
• RAK Week
• Inspiring videos, quotes and stories

WHAT IS KINDNESS?

RAK defines kindness as a natural quality of the heart, expressed through an act of good will and reflecting care for self and others. This definition is the underpinning of all RAK materials, including lesson plans, videos, projects and training sessions. We also provide a simpler definition for elementary school educators to share and discuss with their students: Kindness means being friendly, generous or considerate to ourselves and others through words and actions.

SEL AND WHY IT MATTERS

RAK’s Kindness in the Classroom program is firmly grounded in social and emotional learning (SEL). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), “SEL involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make
responsible decisions.” CASEL has identified five Core Competencies that are key to developing social and emotional skills: Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills and Social Awareness.

The majority of teachers believe that teaching social and emotional skills throughout a student’s academic career is important for their overall development. A national survey by CASEL found that 93% of teachers believe that it is fairly or very important to promote social and emotional skills in school, and 95% believe that social and emotional skills can be taught. In fact, only 7% of teachers believe there is too little emphasis placed on academic instruction, while 30% of teachers believe too little emphasis is placed on teaching SEL at their schools, a four-fold difference (CASEL, 2013).

In addition to teacher beliefs about the importance of SEL, a meta-analysis of more than 2,700 positive youth development, SEL and character education studies revealed that evidence-based SEL programs had many significant positive effects:

- **Increased social and emotional skills in test situations** (e.g., self-control, decision-making, communication and problem-solving skills).
- **More positive attitudes toward self and others** (e.g., self-concept, self-esteem, pro-social attitudes toward aggression, and liking and feeling connected to school).
- **More positive social behaviors** (e.g., daily behaviors related to getting along with and cooperating with others).
- **Fewer conduct problems** (e.g., aggression, disruptiveness).
- **Lower levels of emotional distress** (i.e., anxiety, depressive symptoms).
- **Significantly better academic performance** (11 to 17 percentile points on student achievement test scores). (Durlak et al., 2011)

**SEL AND KINDNESS**

As an SEL-based program, RAK uses developmentally appropriate strategies to help students resolve conflicts peacefully, manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions and even improve their academic achievement. (Durlak, et al., 2011; Civic Enterprises, et al., 2013; Kuche and Greenberg, 2006; Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007; Zins, et al., 2013). RAK’s preliminary research has shown that developing these SEL core competencies helps a student be kinder to others in the classroom, at home and in the community.

How important is it for schools to promote social and emotional skills as part of a student’s in-school experience? Teacher responses:

![Graph showing teacher responses]

The RAK Kindness in the Classroom Pedagogy focuses on inspiring and empowering students with kindness skills that prompt them to act kindly toward others and share kindness. This model is designed to help cause an internal shift toward seeing oneself as a kind person. A change in awareness, attitude and behavior over time is expected as a result of engaging in experiential learning through our lessons and resources.

RAK has developed four important steps in the process of building kindness skills and shifting to authentic expression of intrinsic kindness through the Kindness Paradigm. This paradigm 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.

**Step 1 (Inspire):** Each lesson is designed to 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.

**Step 2 (Empower):** Following the inspirational activities, the teacher-led instruction and discussion sections are designed to empower students to assess how they can be kind in their daily lives.

**Step 3 (Act):** Once empowered, students then set an objective to 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.

**Step 4 (Share):** After students experience kindness in action, the lesson activities conclude with students sharing and reflecting on their acts of kindness with the class, either by verbalizing their knowledge and actions (e.g., “I donated blankets to an animal shelter”), writing about their response to those actions (“I learned that animals need our help”) and/or producing 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 Paradigm multiple times, it will help them to internalize kindness and then engage in inspired action.
RAK PEDAGOGY

RAK’S APPROACH TO LEARNING

Students bring their own level of experience to any concept that is taught in the classroom. Whether math, reading, or social and emotional learning, each student will bring their own unique perspective, expertise or skill to the instruction. Lee and Picanco (2013) describe learning phases as discrete, recurrent patterns of learning toward specific goals. This is different from learning stages where skills emerge naturally as part of a child’s development, such as the pre-reading stage of early childhood (Schuell, 1990).

With this in mind, RAK has designed its lessons to consider the phases of learning that students typically progress through while acquiring new skills. Because RAK believes kindness can be taught, we draw heavily on Lee and Picanco’s learning phases to create materials:

- **Acquisition.** The learner is acquiring new skills and needs a high level of scaffolding.
- **Proficiency or fluency.** The learner is able to recall the information or perform a skill with little hesitation, but still needs some scaffolded support.
- **Maintenance.** The learner retains the knowledge/skill and most likely still needs some scaffolded support.
- **Generalization.** The learner uses the knowledge/skill in a novel situation.

Chappuis, et al. (2006) also discuss the importance of understanding a student’s phase of learning and how to align that phase with the level of instruction that best fits that student. Students who are learning new information need to have a solid understanding of the vocabulary and introductory concepts before moving to more cooperative and constructivist forms of instruction (Lee & Picanco, 2013).

The RAK lessons include explicit instruction of the SEL concepts at the beginning of the lesson and move to more complex interactions with the material through multi-step projects at the end of the lesson. There are also opportunities for teachers to re-teach material or revisit lessons through our Kindness Tool Kits and Problem-Solving Strategies.

In order to help students move through these phases, RAK incorporates many different pedagogical and theoretical elements in its lesson design:

- Universal Design for Learning.
- Thoughtful approaches to inquiry, including the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- Active and cooperative learning techniques.
- Multiple modalities.
- Visual reminders of SEL concepts that reinforce learning in the classroom.
- Effective assessment strategies such as journaling and discussion.
- Mindfulness and attention research.
RAK uses the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as the theoretical underpinning for its lessons, because it provides a flexible approach that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. These principles of curriculum design can be used as tools to develop curriculum in a comprehensive and inclusive manner so that all students have equal access to the lesson. UDL was created by the Center for Applied Special Technology, an educational research and development organization.

UDL’s pedagogy is evident in how the RAK lesson materials address the “what” of learning and make learning objectives clear and applicable to real world situations that students may have experienced. We support student learning through multiple modalities, including: role-plays, visual clips, discussions, games, cooperative learning activities, school-based social science research, art projects or clubs. The RAK materials inspire students to actively engage in learning the Kindness Concepts and promote different ways of expressing “why” this is important in each student’s life. RAK understands that not all students have the same skills when it comes to a content area, especially social and emotional learning. Just like learning math or reading, learning to be kind requires developing knowledge, skills and confidence. This is an individual journey for students as they uncover the qualities of the heart that foster kindness. Our materials support this process.

**UDL DEFINED**

“Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.”

Center for Applied Special Technology
KINDNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

RAK’s Kindness in the Classroom program helps educators create a culture of kindness in classrooms, schools and the community that compliments or supplements the current curricula. By implementing the RAK materials in a way that is most useful to students and teachers, schools can support both social and emotional and academic learning.

The RAK lesson plans, strategies and other resources are designed to improve school culture, educator morale, and students’ social-emotional skills and attitudes, thereby supporting academic achievement. We have chosen themes and lesson objectives around CASEL’s Core Competencies and the Colorado Comprehensive Health Standards, including: empathy, how to be kind to ourselves and others, developing communication and listening skills, resolving conflict, problem solving, being responsible, and showing respect.

Our materials will help students to:

- develop an increased awareness of their own emotions, feelings and identities as caring individuals.
- use appropriate emotional vocabulary, communication, and listening skills.
- Increase awareness of others’ emotions and understanding of how kind and unkind actions impact others.
- act kindly toward themselves and peers in the classroom, school, home and community.
- improve the ability to apply problem-solving strategies in many social situations.
- increase the ability to participate in the classroom productively, contribute to discussions, ask questions and share experiences, engage in learning, listen, follow directions, take risks, and play a role in the larger group.
- improve academic performance and achievement.

RAK PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- K-12 Lesson Plans
- Focusing Strategies
- K-8 Problem-Solving Strategies
- Implementation Models
- K-8 Kindness Concept Posters
- Kindness Tool Kits for K-5
- Teacher and Student Self-Assessments

Find our free materials online at: randomactsofkindness.org

PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PARTNERS IN KINDNESS

RAK works in partnership with leaders in education, teachers, researchers, and others in the field to study and develop knowledge around practicing kindness in the classroom. This collaboration has provided us with the most current research about social and emotional learning, mental health, mindfulness, kindness, cultural responsiveness, lesson design and professional development. We value their contributions, expertise and generosity as we develop our Kindness in the Classroom program. Our intentionally designed materials have been extensively peer reviewed by our partners. We also have created an online course for teachers who want to understand the theory and practice of kindness.

We can create safer, more supportive, engaging and flourishing schools and when we do that academic achievement increases.

Dr. Jonathan Cohen
Teacher’s College
Columbia University
While we believe that kindness is an intrinsic quality of the heart, we also believe it is a skill that can be learned. In order to teach kindness, RAK has developed 12 Kindness Concepts that support the growth of a student’s social-emotional competency. These concepts were created from the CASEL Core Competencies and Colorado’s Comprehensive Health standards. They help to inspire and empower students to act kindly toward others and share kindness, which is the core of the RAK pedagogy. These concepts create a foundation, supporting students with a conceptual learning framework that can be mastered through practicing kind ideas and actions.

Each of the RAK lessons focuses on specific Kindness Concepts which are taught through the activities in each lesson. To assist in teaching the Kindness Concepts in K-8, each lesson provides the Kindness Concept definitions for the teacher to use in instruction, as well as for families to use at home in the Home Extension activities.

GOAL SETTING WITH THE CONCEPTS

According to Daniel J. Siegel (2012), clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine, students who are able to focus inwardly and reflect on their own thinking, feelings and behavior have a greater opportunity for emotional growth. Setting social and emotional goals using the RAK Kindness Concepts is a practical way to help students reflect on and evaluate their own growth and development. Here are three simple, pro-active ways that teachers and students can use the concepts to focus on becoming intentionally kind:

- Add a goal-setting statement to worksheets that students will use during a group or individual activity in any subject (i.e., “During this activity, I am going to focus on fairness.”)
- Have students reflect on how well they achieved the Kindness Concept goal that they set for a group activity or on an “exit ticket.”
- Use the Kindness Concepts as part of an individualized education plan (IEP), educational plan (EP), or other academic plan to set social-emotional goals for students.

Using the Kindness Concepts consistently and deliberately throughout daily instruction provides a comprehensive way for students to internalize the Kindness Concepts. This can help scaffold the learning process to help students build the kindness skills necessary to move from self awareness to action.

“RAK helps to bind the staff and students together with a common goal and language, rather than just saying, ‘be nice, behave’. [There is] a common sense of kindness that everyone is trying to cultivate.”

Colorado Elementary School Teacher
The 12 Kindness Concepts are woven into the RAK lessons and materials, and can be further explored by creating Kindness Tool Kits for your kindergarten through 5th grade classes. The 12 kits (each focused on one Kindness Concept) are referenced at appropriate times during K-5 lessons to support and enhance student learning; they can also be used at other times during class to support the creation of a kind classroom. For example, a student who is working on self-discipline may choose to use the stress ball that is found in the Tool Kit for self-discipline to help them focus during a RAK lesson or an academic lesson.

The kits can be used individually, in small groups, as a whole class, in peer mentoring groups or in RAK clubs. While they are designed for K-5, teachers or counselors may decide to use these kits with middle school students who are developing their social and emotional skills and would benefit from additional support in these areas.

Click here for detailed instructions on how to create and use the kits effectively in your classroom or school.

KINDNESS CONCEPT POSTERS (K-8)

We have created posters for each of the Kindness Concepts to help all students – and particularly visual learners and those learning English – better understand these concepts. There are Kindness Concept Posters for both elementary and middle school. Throughout the lessons, we encourage teachers to use these posters to reinforce learning. Consider posting them in your classroom or around the school.

TEACHING TIP

Not sure where to start? Identify which Kindness Concepts your class needs to focus on and teach a corresponding lesson plan found in the table on p. 10-12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KINDNESS CONCEPT</th>
<th>K-5 DEFINITION</th>
<th>6-12 DEFINITION</th>
<th>LESSON PLANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertiveness</strong></td>
<td>Standing up for yourself and what you believe without upsetting others.</td>
<td>Expressing yourself effectively and standing up for your point of view, while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others.</td>
<td>2nd Grade: It Takes One 5th Grade: Healthy Communication 6th Grade: Being an Upstander 6th Grade: Resolving Conflicts Peacefully 7th Grade: Communicating Effectively 8th Grade: Choosing Kindness 8th Grade: Self-Esteem 8th Grade: Peer Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caring</strong></td>
<td>Feeling and showing concern for others.</td>
<td>Feeling and showing concern for others.</td>
<td>K: Caring for Others 1st Grade: Feelings and Actions 3rd Grade: How I Treat Myself and Others Matters 4th Grade: Friendship 4th Grade: What Would You Do? 8th Grade: Choosing Kindness High School: Emotional Care Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassion</strong></td>
<td>Caring about someone else’s feelings, and offering to help that person.</td>
<td>Feeling empathy for and/or a desire to help another.</td>
<td>2nd Grade: How Can I Be Kind? 2nd Grade: How Can We Be Kind? 3rd Grade: Communicating with Empathy 5th Grade: Healthy Communication 6th Grade: Being an Upstander 6th Grade: Responding with Kindness 7th Grade: Understanding Each Other High School: Emotional Care Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairness</strong></td>
<td>Treating people in a way that does not favor some over others.</td>
<td>Treating people in a way that does not favor some over others; acting justly with kindness.</td>
<td>K: Following the Rules 4th Grade: Respecting Beliefs and Opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gratitude</strong></td>
<td>Being thankful.</td>
<td>Being thankful when someone has shown you kindness or caring; not taking anything for granted.</td>
<td>2nd Grade: How Can I Be Kind? 4th Grade: What Would You Do? 7th Grade: Communicating Effectively 8th Grade: Self-Esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helpfulness</strong></td>
<td>Giving help to others.</td>
<td>Giving aid or support to those in need.</td>
<td>K: Caring for Others 2nd Grade: How Can We Be Kind?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Kindness in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrity</strong></td>
<td>Doing what is right even when no one is watching.</td>
<td>Acting in a truthful way, behaving properly when no one is watching.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4th Grade: Respecting Beliefs and Opinions</td>
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<td>5th Grade: Honesty and Integrity</td>
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<td>8th Grade: Peer Pressure</td>
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<td><strong>Perseverance</strong></td>
<td>Keep trying even when something is hard.</td>
<td>Keep going in spite of difficulties or obstacles; not giving up.</td>
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<td>1st Grade: Learning to Solve Problems</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2nd Grade: Keep Trying</td>
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<td>4th Grade: Stress Busters</td>
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<td>6th Grade: Being Kind to Ourselves</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6th Grade: Responding with Kindness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td>Treating others as you would like to be treated.</td>
<td>Treating yourself and others the way you want to be treated; honoring the rights of others.</td>
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<td>K: Caring for Others</td>
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<td>K: Creating a Kind Classroom</td>
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<td>1st Grade: Good Manners</td>
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<td>1st Grade: Learning to Listen</td>
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<td>2nd Grade: It Takes One</td>
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<td>3rd Grade: Complimenting Others</td>
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<td>3rd Grade: How I Treat Myself and Others Matters</td>
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<td>4th Grade: Respecting Beliefs and Opinions</td>
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<td>4th Grade: Friendship</td>
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<td>5th Grade: Taking Care of Ourselves</td>
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<td>5th Grade: What Influences Us?</td>
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<td>6th Grade: Being an Upstander</td>
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<td>7th Grade: Communicating Effectively</td>
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<td>7th Grade: Understanding Each Other</td>
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<td>7th Grade: Active Listening</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8th Grade: I Am From</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Doing what you need to do.</td>
<td>Recognizing the right thing to do and then doing it. Being trustworthy and dependable.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1st Grade: Good Manners</td>
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<td>1st Grade: Learning to Listen</td>
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<td>2nd Grade: Keep Trying</td>
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<td>3rd Grade: Feelings and Emotions</td>
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<td>4th Grade: What Would You Do?</td>
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<td>5th Grade: Honesty and Integrity</td>
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<td>5th Grade: What Influences Us?</td>
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<td>7th Grade: Coping with Stress</td>
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<td>8th Grade: Choosing Kindness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Self-Care** | Learning how to take care of yourself. Using nice words when you think or talk about yourself. | Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words and actions. | K: Feelings and Behavior  
1st Grade: Feelings and Actions  
3rd Grade: Complimenting Others  
3rd Grade: How I Treat Myself and Others Matters  
4th Grade: Stress Busters  
5th Grade: Taking Care of Ourselves  
6th Grade: Being Kind to Ourselves  
6th Grade: Responding with Kindness  
7th Grade: Coping with Stress  
8th Grade: I Am From  
8th Grade: Self-Esteem  
High School: Emotional Care Unit |
| **Self-Discipline** | Controlling what you do or say so you don't hurt yourself or others. | Controlling one's actions for the benefit of self and others. | K: Creating a Kind Classroom  
K: Feelings and Behavior  
3rd Grade: Feelings and Emotions  
5th Grade: Honesty and Integrity  
7th Grade: Coping with Stress  
7th Grade: Active Listening  
7th Grade: Communicating Effectively  
8th Grade: Peer Pressure |
Students don’t necessarily come to school with social and emotional skills or knowing how to be kind to themselves and others. Gaining these skills comes through knowledge, practice and attention. RAK’s lessons are designed deliberately and thoughtfully to help students move through each phase of learning as they learn what it means to be kind and apply their knowledge to situations inside and outside the classroom. These lessons are standards-based and use a pedagogical approach to instruction that strives to actively engage every learner at their own developmental level so they begin to internalize kindness.

**LESSON DESIGN OVERVIEW**

RAK’s engaging and interactive lessons are clearly laid out and easy to follow. Lesson features are listed below:

- **Aligned with national standards**, including Common Core, 21st Century Skills, CASEL’s social and emotional learning Core Competencies.
- **Clear and concise lesson objectives/goals**, developed from CASEL’s Core Competencies and Colorado Comprehensive Health Standards.
- **Utilize multiple modalities** (linguistic, kinesthetic, visual, logical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical), which includes all students in the learning process.
- **Support students through the phases of learning** and help them internalize and generalize learning outside the classroom.
- **Meet the needs of diverse learners**, including students learning English, those with special education or mental health needs, talented and gifted students, and others.
- **Four lessons per grade (K-8) focus on different themes and integrate with core curricula.** Some themes include how to empathize with others, understanding feelings, how to be kind to ourselves and others, developing communication and listening skills, resolving conflict, problem solving, coping with stress, responding to peer pressure, being responsible, and showing respect.
- **Structured around four to seven activities** (K-8) that guide students through acquisition of the Kindness Concepts to mastering and generalizing the concepts to many situations. Activities range from 15 minutes to multi-day.
- **Step-by-step instructions** for how to teach the role-plays, games, music and video clips, worksheets, and other activities within the lessons.
- **Developmentally appropriate questions to help scaffold learning** and support students as they develop a more comprehensive understanding of the learning objective or goal related to kindness.
- **Available in English and Spanish.**
- **Easy to implement.** Most teachers say they spend about 15 minutes preparing RAK lessons and activities; most materials are provided or take minimal time to create.
- **Unique high school design.** The high school RAK curriculum has a different design than the K-8 lessons. Currently, there is one unit with 11 lessons that focuses on helping students care for themselves by becoming aware of and managing their emotions. The unit can be used in an advisory period, freshman seminar, health class or a club.
K-8 LESSON DESIGN

ANOTATED LESSON PLAN

INTEGRATION WITH CORE SUBJECTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND KINDNESS CONCEPTS OUTLINED

VISUAL

SCIENCE CONNECTION

JUST CLICK AND YOU'RE READY TO GO!

MINIMAL PREP!

USES DIFFERENT LEARNING MODALITIES

REINFORCE CLASSROOM LEARNING AT HOME

KINESTHETIC

REINFORCE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR ALL YEAR LONG

Grade 8 • Ages 14–16

Peer Pressure

Students will learn how to identify negative peer pressure and use kindness to safely avoid it.

Unit Objective

Students will be able to analyze how avoiding negative peer pressure shows kindness towards themselves and others and can positively influence their mental health.

Introducing This Unit To Your Students

For the next few lessons, we are going to talk about how peer pressure can impact us. Find out how and discuss what peer pressure means to you and what kind of negative peer pressure in 8th grade.

Allowing for students to discover together. You can use this time to introduce the Kindness Concepts. identifiers, integrity, self-discipline, and create community definitions for these concepts or use the definitions listed below. Consider using the Kindness Concept posters for assistance. Integrity, self-discipline, or a way to reinforce learning.

Kindness Concepts

Consider assigning key terms on their own before class to introduce vocabulary and increase understanding.

Responsibility

Being able to do the things that are expected required in your life, home, community, and environment.

Respect

Treating people, places, and things with kindness.

Absence

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

Link to Kindness Concept Posters and Strategies to Expand Impact

Reinforce Positive Behavior All Year Long

Uses Different Learning Modalities

Reinforce Classroom Learning at Home

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**Egg And Bottle**

Students will discuss the affects of pressure on their thinking and their lives.

Lesson Background for Teachers

In adolescence children begin to integrate their peer’s guidance into the guidance they receive at home. Knowing when and how to draw the boundaries and distinguishing between good and negative pressures is a skill we learn throughout our lives.

KindrHealth - Teacher’s Guide to Peer Pressure - [https://classroom.kindrhealth.org/classroom/tool/personal/growing/peer_pressure.pdf](https://classroom.kindrhealth.org/classroom/tool/personal/growing/peer_pressure.pdf)

Key Terms for Students

- Consider writing key terms on the board before class to introduce vocabulary and increase understanding.
- **Respect**: being able to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment.
- **Responsibility**: imprint responsibilities on the students.
- **Responsibility**: being able to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment.
- **Acting up your responsibility and what you believe in for the benefit of self and others.”

**Resources**

- Instructions of egg experiment: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zy-jVnFvWA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zy-jVnFvWA)
- Share (15 mins)

**Egg Experiment**

- Place the egg in the middle of the table. Make sure the egg is not touching the table. Place the egg on the middle of the table. Make sure the egg is not touching the table.
- Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg.
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**Evaluation Questions Help Internalize Content**

1. **Tips for Diverse Learners**
   - Students benefit from:
     - Real-life experiences and unique learning styles.
     - Opportunities to apply and extend their understanding. Provide a variety of activities for students to choose from.
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2. **Resources**
   - Instructions of egg experiment: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zy-jVnFvWA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zy-jVnFvWA)
   - Share (15 mins)

**Egg Experiment**

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**Conclusion**

- Place the egg in the middle of the table. Make sure the egg is not touching the table. Place the egg on the middle of the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg.

**Teacher’s Corner**

- Place the egg in the middle of the table. Make sure the egg is not touching the table. Place the egg on the middle of the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg. Place the egg in a bowl of water and carefully place the bowl on the table. Make sure the water does not touch the egg.

**Conclusion**

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Unit Summary
This unit contains eleven lessons that help students care for themselves by becoming aware of and managing
their emotions. These lessons specifically build self-awareness and self-management skills and also focus on
social awareness, responsible decision making and relationship skills, which the Collaborative for Academic,
Social and Emotional Learning has identified as the five components of social and emotional learning. The
lessons incorporate a variety of teaching methods to develop the knowledge and skills needed to regulate
emotions by coping with stress, reframing thoughts, building support systems and recognizing strengths, which
are ways to show compassion and caring toward self and others. The unit ends with a project that helps
develop a more supportive school community.

Kindness Definition
A natural quality of the heart, expressed through an act of good will and reflecting care for self and others.

Kindness Concepts
• Caring: Feeling and sharing concern for others.
• Compassion: Feeling empathy for and/or a desire to help someone.
• Self-Care: Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words and actions.

Questions about teaching these lessons or the RAK program? See the Program Overview.

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<th>Lesson Title</th>
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<td>Lesson 1: SEL and Kindness, pp. 5-10</td>
<td>Students will be able to identify the key elements of social and emotional learning and discover how to work toward being more socially and emotionally competent, as well as trained and empowered to act kindly toward themselves and others.</td>
<td>What Are You Really Thinking? sheet, one for each student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 2: Introduction to Kindness and the Unit, pp. 11-14</td>
<td>Students will be able to explore the meaning of kindness, describe its importance and identify ways to be kind to themselves and others.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO7_WX-gyVU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO7_WX-gyVU</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 3: Adolescent Brain and Kindness, pp. 15-18</td>
<td>Students will be able to identify changes that are happening in their brains, analyze how these changes are impacting them and discover some techniques that will help them become aware of their emotions.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 4: Emotional Awareness, pp. 19-23</td>
<td>Students will be able to recognize the importance of and develop skills to enhance emotional awareness and emotional regulation.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 5: Managing Emotions, pp. 24-28</td>
<td>Students will be able to recognize emotional styles and evaluate ways to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviors.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 6: Reframing Techniques, pp. 29-35</td>
<td>Students will be able to evaluate how to use reframing techniques as a way to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviors.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDQaEx-0K6U</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lessons in this unit ask students to be vulnerable as they talk about their emotions and coping with stress. Creating a classroom culture where students and teachers trust each other can help students feel comfortable enough to share during RAK lessons as well as during other subjects. RAK has developed strategies to help teachers build a trusting classroom. Listed below are some ways to provide emotional support and create healthy group dynamics. For more suggestions, plus ways to provide academic support and extend learning, please see RAK’s Building Trust in the Classroom.

Provide Emotional Support. How?

by modeling trust and respect for the students through your actions and language. Here are some ways:

- Align yourself with students as a coach and mentor.
- Make it a point to connect with each and every student.
- When a student shares in class, validate their contribution.
- Paraphrase what students say with a statement like: “So, what I am hearing you say is…” Then give students a chance to clarify their ideas if you have misunderstood.
- Start or end each class with a moment to focus on kindness to self and others.
- Help students reframe the language they are using (see Reframing Techniques lesson, pp. 20-25).
- Before class, find out the school policy for reporting concerns about a student’s mental health to a school counselor or administrator.
- Have a list of community resources available for students who want more information about a topic that comes up in class.
- Take care of yourself in and out of school as a way to model to your students the importance of respecting themselves.

Create Healthy Group Dynamics. How?

by encouraging students to think of the class as a place that belongs to everyone. Here are some ways:

- Allow students to define together the rules of class discussions (see SEL and Kindness lesson, pp. 5-10).
- Be intentional about letting students know you want to create a safe place to learn.
- Create a time during class where everyone who wants to has a chance to speak.
- Post group norms, such as RAK’s Kindness Concepts, and refer to them during class. Have students complete the RAK Student Self Assessment to help them decide what concepts they want to develop individually or as a class.
- Break large group activities into smaller groups to help facilitate sharing.
- Take time to solve problems when they arise.
- At the start of the year or when the group is having challenges, play games to facilitate better listening and trust. For ideas see: http://www.greatgroupgames.com/icebreaker-games-for-teens.htm.
- Allow students to define together the rules of class discussions (see SEL and Kindness lesson, pp. 5-10).
- For students who seem to be struggling with emotional regulation, encourage them to take the Emotional Awareness sheet home and answer the questions with their family or talk to a trusted adult about their feelings.
- This lesson may also bring up strong emotions for students. Be aware of students who seem overwhelmed by the concepts in this lesson.
- For students who may have difficulty focusing during the body check in, have them keep their eyes open, focus on an image or listen to music with headphones (quietly enough to hear instructions). See Focusing Strategies for more information about developing a breathing practice in the classroom.
- Contextualize and model emotional awareness by pointing out your emotions and telling others what you observe in them. For example: “My heart started to beat faster when you told me that, I’m so excited.” Or “I can see in your face that you are concerned. What does that feel like right now?”

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LESSON INSTRUCTIONS
Write the following on the board before class: Using your homework as a guide, share with another student or in small groups about what technique helped you care for yourself (taking a deep breath, taking time for yourself, talking to or spending time with others, exercising, having downtime, getting enough sleep, paying attention to your emotions and feelings). Was it helpful? If not, why not? Have students get started as soon as they walk into class. Collect homework.

SHARE (2 mins)
Say to students: “Last time, we talked about how the brain is changing during adolescence and what it means to have insight or deep understanding of ourselves and others. Today we are going to be exploring emotional awareness, which is about understanding how emotions make us and others feel mentally and physically, and what they look like. One way to develop emotional awareness is to use deep breathing to calm our bodies, which you may have tried as your Kindness in Action. We are going to practice for two minutes, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths – in through your nose for five seconds and out through your nose for five seconds. (Say each body part slowly) Now, become aware of your head...your arms...your hands...your fingers...your upper body...your legs...your feet...your toes. Now, open your eyes. What did your body feel like?”

Breathing Activity (2-4 mins)
Then say: “Now, let’s identify some emotions.” Allow students to volunteer emotions and write these on the board. Or you could have students brainstorm and physically, and what they look like. One way to develop emotional awareness is to use deep breathing to calm our bodies, which you may have tried as your Kindness in Action. We are going to practice for two minutes, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths – in through your nose for five seconds and out through your nose for five seconds. (Say each body part slowly) Now, become aware of your head...your arms...your hands...your fingers...your upper body...your legs...your feet...your toes. Now, open your eyes. What did your body feel like?”

Identifying Emotions (5 mins)
“Last time, we talked about how the brain is changing during adolescence and what it means to have insight or deep understanding of ourselves and others. Today we are going to be exploring emotional awareness, which is about understanding how emotions make us and others feel mentally and physically, and what they look like. One way to develop emotional awareness is to use deep breathing to calm our bodies, which you may have tried as your Kindness in Action. We are going to practice for two minutes, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths – in through your nose for five seconds and out through your nose for five seconds. (Say each body part slowly) Now, become aware of your head...your arms...your hands...your fingers...your upper body...your legs...your feet...your toes. Now, open your eyes. What did your body feel like?”

Optional: Role-Plays (5-7 mins)
Divide into small groups and assign a few different emotions to each group. Then explain: “Just like caffeine and sugar can make you jittery or hyper, emotions can also affect how our bodies feel. When I point to your group, each group member will act out the emotion you were assigned. Say the emotion and what you are feeling in your body, which might be different for different people! So, for example, when you feel angry, you might feel a knot in your shoulders, chest or stomach. If you feel excited, this might make your legs or arms jittery or you may have butterflies in your stomach. There are no right answers.”

Move quickly from group to group. If you have time, allow students to go again.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS
Resources
- Adapted with permission from www.schoolpsychiatry.org, Jeff Bostic, MD, KisD, Mass General Hospital. http://www2.massgeneral.org/schoolpsychiatry/classesroomselfregulation.asp
Information provided by KidsHealth®, one of the largest online resources for medically reviewed health information written for parents, kids and teens. For more information, visit KidsHealth.org or Team4Health.org © 1995-2014. The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth®. All rights reserved.

EXPAND STUDENT AND TEACHER KNOWLEDGE
Kindness Paradigm Highlighted for Reference
Scripted Language to Use or Adapt

END WITH A KINDNESS MINUTE AND TAKE HOME KINDNESS ACTIVITY

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IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

Research shows that the most effective SEL programs are supported by school leadership and include professional development for teachers. RAK strives to provide the appropriate tools for teachers, administrators and staff to help with implementation of our program. As such, the RAK lesson plans are designed to fit seamlessly into any classroom and can be taught by a classroom teacher, school social worker, paraprofessional or counselor.

Educators can choose to implement RAK’s Kindness in the Classroom resources in individual classrooms or as a whole school. Implementation in all classes throughout the school will have a greater impact on school culture. RAK believes strongly in district, school and teacher collaboration and support and offers:

- Implementation models.
- Teacher training and technical assistance.
- Online tutorials and presentations, including a video introduction to RAK.
- Self-assessments for elementary, middle and high school students to help reflect on their practice and set goals around kindness as they are being taught the RAK instructional materials.
- Self-assessments for elementary, middle and high school teachers to identify ways they can grow, care for themselves and increase a sense of self-efficacy around teaching kindness.
- Collaborative Learning Guide to facilitate discussions around teaching and modeling kindness and to set individual and collaborative kindness goals.

PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR IMPLEMENTATION

Principals or Directors can use our 12 Kindness Concepts to set school climate and culture goals. Kindness goals can be added to the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), school climate surveys and accountability measures. There are many ways to successfully implement the Kindness in the Classroom program:

- Have the school’s leadership team study the importance of social and emotional learning by reviewing the RAK website or the CASEL website to gather information and make a “Wonder Wall” that documents the team’s findings.
- Create a professional learning community around kindness and use the RAK Collaborative Learning Guide to guide discussions.
- Assign a RAK Site Coordinator for your school.
- Ask a RAK trainer to work with your school to provide professional development and training.
- Encourage discussion about how to develop caring relationships with students and among staff, and how to use RAK’s Focusing Strategies and Problem-Solving Strategies.
- Start each staff meeting with a quick activity from a lesson or discuss a kindness concept definition.
- Show a short Foundation for a Better Life “Pass it On” video (www.values.com) during staff meetings to prompt discussions about kindness.
- Monitor teacher or staff concerns and questions about RAK and give feedback to the school’s RAK Site Coordinator. He or she can contact RAK’s Education Program Manager: teacherhelp@randomactsofkindness.org.
- Focus on kindness through morning announcements, bulletin boards and assemblies; have students or teachers share their kindness stories.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to discuss stress or challenges as a way to help them care for themselves and others.
IMPLEMENTING RAK

TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers can set goals and norms around the 12 Kindness Concepts to create a healthy, safe, kind, and positive classroom environment. The concepts can be taught through the lesson plans and projects during advisory periods, subject periods, specials and problem-based learning projects to reinforce the development of kindness skills.

There are many ways to successfully implement the Kindness in the Classroom program:

- Model kindness in the classrooms and around the campus for others to follow.
- Become the school’s RAK Site Coordinator.
- Create a community of kindness using RAK Kindness Concept Posters and student-created bulletin boards in hallways, restrooms and libraries.
- Use RAK lessons and activities to teach across the curriculum, using the suggested Implementation Models described on p. 22. RAK Education Program Manager is available to discuss how to implement or to help create a model for your school (teacherhelp@randomactsofkindness.org).
- Talk to other teachers to see what RAK lessons and activities they are doing. Each week, discuss a Kindness Concept, show a video from The Foundation for a Better Life, and do an activity with students.
- Submit the weekly RAK Kindness Concept, definition, and video link to families through the school and/or classroom newsletter and web site.
- Write a blog for the school newsletter and share your blog post with students during discussion time.
- Visit the website weekly for ideas and support.
- Have students journal about one RAK activity that they did that day.
- Use teachable moments to talk about kindness with your students.
- Post the weekly Kindness Concept on the school marquee as a statement to the community that you are a RAK school.
- Use the RAK teacher self-assessment tools for elementary school, middle school and high school to reflect on how RAK is helping develop your ability to teach kindness.

SOCIAL WORKER AND COUNSELOR IMPLEMENTATION

Under the guidance and with the support of the Principal or Director and fellow faculty and staff, school social workers and counselors are encouraged to support the Kindness in the Classroom program in the following ways:

- Form and lead school-wide small groups of teachers, parents or students to address playground problems, how to develop social and emotional skills, school culture goals, parent engagement in teaching pro-social skills, prevention and intervention strategies.
- Start a RAK Club during electives, study hall, or before or after school.
- Create and facilitate peer mentoring groups to help students develop their kindness skills.
- Provide one-on-one counseling to students who are struggling with social emotional learning. Use The Foundation for a Better Life videos (www.values.com), the RAK Focusing Strategies, Problem-Solving Strategies and Kindness Tool Kits to help students develop their kindness vocabulary and skills.
- Post the RAK Kindness Concept Posters in your office and refer to them during discussions with students.
To assist teachers in implementing Random Acts of Kindness, we have developed implementation models that show how to teach the lessons at each grade level. To create these models, we mapped the lessons from each unit (four per grade) over an academic year and connected project ideas to the lesson plan themes. The project ideas are designed to be done after completing the lessons. A sample implementation model for 3rd grade is shown below.

Implementation models for each grade can be found at www.randomactsofkindness.org

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC YEAR SCHEDULE</th>
<th>UNIT TITLE &amp; OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>LESSON TITLES (ONE PER WEEK)</th>
<th>PROJECT TITLES (ONE PER WEEK)</th>
<th>REQUIRED BOOKS/MATERIALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNIT 1: 4 Weeks (lessons) 4 Weeks (projects)</td>
<td>Communicating with Empathy Students will put empathy into action and offer kind things to say.</td>
<td>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters Expressing Empathy Caring Role Plays Empathy Across the Genres Discovering Africa (optional)</td>
<td>Baskets of Caring School Beautification Caring Songs Reading to Younger Students</td>
<td>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters book, RAK journals, newspapers/magazines or internet images, role-play sheets, paper &amp; pencils, posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIT 2: 4 Weeks (lessons) 4 Weeks (projects)</td>
<td>Complimenting Others This unit allows students to practice acknowledging and valuing everyone for who they are.</td>
<td>Who Am I? Who Are You? Genuine Compliments Creative Compliment Cards</td>
<td>Complimenting Others Compliment Cards Self-Care Mural Self-Care Campaign</td>
<td>Activity sheets, bingo game, prizes for bingo (optional), chart paper, popsicle sticks, pencils, markers, card stock, magazines, scissors, posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIT 3: 4 Weeks (lessons) 4 Weeks (projects)</td>
<td>Feelings and Emotions Students will learn about emotion management; how to identify, label and express their emotions in kind and healthy ways.</td>
<td>Feelings Game How Did I Feel? Ways To Respond Go Feelings How Do They Feel?</td>
<td>Kindness Flower Bed Self Discipline in the News Food Drive Responsible People in History</td>
<td>Feelings statements, hat or basket, activity sheets, kindness meter, chart paper, clothespin, book report guide, list of books, posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIT 4: 4 Weeks (lessons) 4 Weeks (projects)</td>
<td>How I Treat Myself and Others Matters Students will learn to manage differences, and interact with peers and their environment in safe and respectful ways.</td>
<td>Time Out! Respecting Differences Respecting Other People’s Ideas Treating Myself With Kindness Caring For Our World</td>
<td>Food Drive Complimenting Others Self-Care Mural Caring Songs</td>
<td>Video clip, RAK journals, magazines, scissors, hat or basket, chart paper, activity sheets, research sheet, posters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMPLEMENTING RAK

ADAPTING LESSONS

Successfully implementing RAK materials may mean using the lessons as designed. Other teachers may choose to adapt the lessons to fit the needs of their students or their classroom in the following ways:

- Describe an activity in their own words.
- Adjust the suggested time for an activity.
- List a different book that makes a better connection to what the class is studying.
- Use the “Tips for Diverse Learners” found in the lessons and described below.
- Modify a lesson from a different grade for a class if it’s not currently being used in that grade (i.e., a third grade class might need to learn more about sharing, so the teacher could take the kindergarten lesson on that theme and add age appropriate activities and materials).
- Teach the Kindness Concepts in a new way.

Teachers are encouraged to make these types of professional decisions, while still preserving the objectives and content of the intentionally designed RAK lesson materials.

The lessons can also be used as a resource and adapted for after-school programs, peer mentoring groups, or with others in the community who wish to teach kindness.

TIPS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

RAK believes that all students should have equal access to learning. In order to support teachers in making the lessons work best for their students, we have included Tips for Diverse Learners with every activity. A diverse learner is any student who has a unique approach to learning. Some examples of diverse learners are students who have an identified special need, are talented and gifted, are learning English, use multiple modalities when learning new material, or are developing their social and emotional skills and need additional support.

The goal of the tips is to encourage teachers to use their professional judgment in deciding the best way to teach an activity while still achieving the lesson objectives. The tips that are provided are not an exhaustive list for each activity but rather a selection of a few that might work well with the activity. However, teachers are encouraged to develop a repertoire of approaches and strategies that best fit the needs of their class and/or specific students. Examples of the Tips for Diverse Learners are listed below:

- Work with a partner or in a small group.
- Assign roles to students to help them in completing activities.
- Have extra copies of a read-aloud book for students or displaying the book on the document camera.
- Prompt students to use posters and other visuals to remember vocabulary words or skills that have been taught.
- View written responses on a posted T-chart or graphic organizer.
- Add pictures, photos or other visual aids to help explicitly teach skills.
IMPLEMENTING RAK

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

RAK’s Kindness in the Classroom program is thoughtfully designed to create a framework for learning skills that will help students act more kindly toward themselves and others and work through problems or conflicts respectfully. However, students may still be developing the social and emotional vocabulary and skills to succeed in the classroom. It takes time to learn how to be kind!

In the meantime, there are challenging behaviors in any classroom that may prevent students from learning. This may be due to a variety of factors. In addition, during the course of the lessons, teachers may be discussing, and in some cases uncovering, challenging situations their students have faced. It is important that teachers provide support and encouragement, while helping students apply the skills learned in the lessons to everyday challenges.

When these situations arise, teachers can:

- validate the students’ feelings or help them reframe their thinking, if necessary.
- ask them what skills or strategies could help them manage the situation; consider referencing the Focusing Strategies, Problem-Solving Strategies and Kindness Tool Kits.
- reinforce the Kindness Concepts throughout the day.
- consider helping the student create an action plan using the Kindness Concepts (i.e. “How can I show respect when I feel frustrated?” or “How can I persevere when math is hard for me?” or “How can I show compassion when I don’t really like someone?”)
- prompt the student to use a particular skill or strategy (i.e. making a list, drawing out a simple cartoon, creating a social story).
- encourage the student to keep asking for help and let the student know if you think other adults might be able to help (i.e. family member, a school counselor, another student).
- involve the school counselor or other support staff as needed to assist the teacher or student.

Sometimes the challenges that are disclosed go beyond typical childhood issues and might raise concerns about someone’s safety. In these cases, it is critical that the proper reporting procedure for your district is followed so everyone can stay safe.
IMPLEMENTING RAK

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

In addition to the RAK instructional materials, there are other pieces to the Kindness in the Classroom program: Creating Caring Relationships, Focusing Strategies and Problem-Solving Strategies.

CREATING CARING RELATIONSHIPS AND BUILDING TRUST

RAK materials encourage the development of positive, healthy relationships in the classroom, especially between teachers and their students. According to CASEL, social and emotional learning “... is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful.” The relationship between teachers and their students is pivotal in student achievement and happiness (Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Baker, 2006; McCormick, et. al. 2013; ). Students are more likely to succeed when they feel that their teachers care about them and their learning (Gregory & Ripinski, 2008; Berry & Connor, 2009). As Nel Noddings (1998), professor emerita from Stanford University, states, “We do not merely tell them [students] to care and give them texts to read on the subject, we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them.”

The teacher’s role in authentically modeling caring and trust in the classroom, in both planned and unplanned ways, is an essential component of creating a kind classroom that can transform a student’s life, and RAK materials support that process. As stated by Jones, Bouffard, and Weissbourd (2013), “Students learn from the way teachers manage frustration, maintain control of themselves and the classroom, stay focused in the face of distractions, and shift tactics when needed.” In addition, RAK materials encourage students to respond to each other through intentional listening, responding to each other’s opinions, becoming a supportive ally, caring for one another, and seeing things through other people’s eyes.

For additional strategies, see Building Trust in the Classroom. While designed specifically for high school classrooms, some strategies can be used for K-8 classrooms as well.
FOCUSING STRATEGIES (K-12)

RAK’s Focusing Strategies are designed to help students develop a better sense of intention, attention and attitude, and can be easily integrated into the classroom. These strategies are part of RAK’s comprehensive approach to creating a culture of kindness in the classroom that also includes Problem-Solving Strategies, thematic lesson plans and other resources.

Through consistently practicing these Focusing Strategies for the body, mind and heart, research shows that students can better develop the skills needed to pay attention, have a more positive attitude, regulate their emotions, and boost their desire to learn (Goleman, 2013; Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; Schonert-Reichl, et al., 2007). Educator and author Linda Lantieri (2008) states that practicing self-regulation strategies with children of any age “gives them a clear message that we value and recognize their inner capacities. And it is important to do them regularly to get the benefits they can provide.”

PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES (K-8)

RAK’s lesson plans are designed to support students in learning how to be kind to themselves and others. However, everyday problems can test the ability to respond in a kind way. Whether a student is stressed and struggling to treat himself or herself kindly, experiences challenges at home, or has a disagreement with friends, practicing strategies learned in the lessons can help students develop healthier responses in tough situations. We have identified activities from K-8 lessons to create our Problem-Solving Strategies. Together with RAK’s Focusing Strategies, these Problem-Solving Strategies help students maintain calm minds and bodies while trying to solve problems. Teachers should use their professional judgment in determining what strategies might be useful to their students and adapt the activities to a class or students’ developmental needs.

“A lot of our kids come from homes where unfortunate things occur. I think [RAK] is helping them to take responsibility and feel empowered and it gives them ways to succeed and be in charge of themselves.”

Colorado Elementary School Teacher
IMPACTOF TEACHERSELF-CARE

While teaching is rewarding, it can be an emotionally challenging profession. Teachers are expected to not only teach core subjects but also help students navigate an increasingly complicated and complex world. As Harvard researchers Jones, Boufard and Weissbourd (2013) state: “There is good reason to believe that social and emotional competencies like managing emotions and stress are needed more today than ever before. The latest MetLife Survey of the American Teacher found unprecedented levels of stress and dissatisfaction among teachers and principals, with just over half of teachers reporting ‘great stress at least several days a week’.

These researchers suggest four interventions to support teachers’ stress management and promote self-care:

• Emotion-focused training, which helps teachers recognize the emotional nature of teaching, identify and work on feelings and their causes, cope with difficult emotions through reframing, receive support with problem solving and emotional management.
• Relationship-building intervention, designed to foster positive teacher-student interactions.
• Mindfulness and stress reduction, which is both a state of being and a technique that promotes focusing on the present in a nonjudgmental and accepting way. Strategies include deep breathing, reflection, yoga, and meditation.
• SEL routines. Teachers, like students, benefit from SEL routines and instruction. Thoroughly embedding an SEL approach within a teacher’s instruction creates a more predictable, safe and supportive classroom for teachers and students, which nurtures healthy relationships and helps reduce burnout.

RAK SELF-CARE TIPS

Self-care is one of the RAK Kindness Concepts, and we believe both teachers and students benefit from practicing kindness in this way. Here are some strategies to care for yourself and others:

• Use the RAK materials to create a predictable, safe and supportive classroom.
• Find ways to reduce stress, including healthy eating, talking through problems and exercising.
• Try deep breathing, reflection or other stress reduction strategies individually or in groups.
• Laugh! Find ways to promote humor in a way that supports fellow teachers and helps everyone realize they share common goals and challenges.
• Meet regularly with a trusted colleague to discuss strategies for coping with classroom challenges.
• Practice random acts of kindness throughout the school, both between classes (kindergarten providing snacks to older grades on testing day) or between teachers (organizing “Secret Pals” to leave small gifts in mailboxes, holding doors open, writing a thank you note to a colleague).
• Organize a community outreach project that inspires the staff.
• Offer to make copies or return books for another teacher.
• Make coffee or tea for the front office staff (complete with flavorings) as a special surprise.
• Suggest inspirational videos (see www.values.com) for your principal to show at a staff meeting.
CREATING KIND SCHOOLS

POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

RAK believes that fostering a positive school culture is essential to creating kindness in the classroom and the school. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. The National School Climate Center describes this climate as:

- Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People who are engaged and respected.
- Students, families and educators who work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributing to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

HOW RAK FOSTERS A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

The National School Climate Council suggests assessing school culture based on four areas: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the external environment. RAK lesson materials foster the creation of a positive school culture in each of these areas through teaching students how to be kind to themselves and others and show kindness as an active and engaged community member.

Consider these effective ways to implement the RAK program as a school-wide initiative:

- Have the school’s leadership team study the importance of social and emotional learning by reviewing the RAK website or the CASEL website and gather information to make a “Wonder Wall” that documents the team’s findings.
- Consult with RAK to answer questions that arise from the staff’s research.
- Encourage a “Kindness Club” at the school using the RAK materials.
- Share the materials with others at the school, including guidance counselors and administrators.
- Share the videos from values.com to inspire staff to act in a kind way.
- Focus on kindness through morning announcements, bulletin boards and assemblies.
- Create a professional learning community around kindness and use the Collaborative Learning Guide to determine best practices around teaching kindness.
- Use the RAK 12 Kindness Concepts to set school climate and culture goals and display the Kindness Concept Posters around the school.
RAK has completed over four years of focus groups, pilot projects, feedback campaigns, and quantitative and qualitative pilot studies to examine RAK program implementation feasibility, teacher perceptions of student changes, and compare student’s scores on standardized social and emotional measures both before and after they received the program.

Results and feedback showed that these students and teachers perceived:

- Increased level of trust among staff, students and administration, with more instances of adults modeling kindness and treating each other with respect.
- A decrease in disciplinary action.
- A stronger tendency toward pro-social behavior with a significant improvement in classroom climate and school culture; students were more inclined to help each other, show respect and become involved in community service.
- Students across grade levels showed improvement on the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and students in grades K-3 had particularly large improvements.
- Male students participating in RAK improved self-awareness skills (a CASEL Core Competency) from the 36th percentile to the 60th percentile; female students improved from the 53rd percentile to the 76th percentile.

We are expanding our research in the 2014-2015 school year with a randomized control trial study in British Columbia, Canada and Portland, Oregon and research results are pending. Our research reports and other evidence on the success of SEL implementation can be found on our website.

These preliminary observations support what other evidence-based programs have discovered when a program is well implemented: students meet SEL standards and there is an increase in student confidence and positivity, an increase in student displays of kindness, and improved school climate. Nationally, 75% of teachers surveyed believe that SEL in schools increases attendance and graduation, workforce readiness, college readiness, and life success. A recent CASEL study of 280,000 kids showed students receiving quality SEL programs had an 11% increase in academic achievement; other studies have shown increases in teacher retention, classroom management, improved attendance and students demonstrating more pro-social behaviors.
**IMPACT ON STUDENTS**

Students, teachers and parents all perceived that RAK helps students be kind and develop SEL skills. They reported that:

- Students are able to identify kind words and behaviours in their peers and how it makes them feel.
- The majority of teachers reported that RAK helped them to meet Colorado’s SEL standards.
- Students and teachers identified improvements in classroom culture and more inclusive behaviour.
- Parents reported kindness language and activities learned in the classroom transferring to home.

**IMPACT ON ACADEMICS**

Both teachers and parents reported that social and emotional learning has a moderate to strong effect on academic performance, and they link RAK activities with improved academic performance.

- Teachers linked RAK lessons with students’ increased confidence and positivity, which led to better academic performance.
- Teachers noted improvement in students’ writing skills, as students wrote with more precision and clarity when writing about compliments.
- Teachers reported improvements in students’ ability to identify characters’ emotions in their literature unit, which helped their reading analysis and comprehension skills.

**IMPACT ON CLASSROOM & SCHOOL CLIMATE**

Teachers noticed school-wide and classroom climate changes and rated school relationships significantly better after implementation of RAK.

- Teachers often associated improved classroom and school-wide climate with kind words and actions. According to the teachers, their students were more likely to:
  - be inclusive of other students.
  - use kind words.
  - understand and show empathy.
  - observe and/or intervene when witnessing bullying.
  - increase kind acts and demonstrate respect.
  - use kindness language outside of the classroom.
  - identify teachers as someone they trust.
- Several teachers mentioned that RAK also reminded them to be kind and to look for kindness in their students.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

These initial findings and feedback are very promising. A randomized control trial is currently underway to assess the feasibility and outcomes of the implementation of the Random Acts of Kindness curriculum, for both students and teachers. This study includes a larger and more diverse population, which will provide a more thorough understanding of what schools can expect when they implement RAK.


“School Climate Council.” National School Climate Center: About Us : National.


