



Safe School Culture, Grades 6-8

CURRICULUM

Board Approved: 03/19/2026

Course Information

Middle School
Ongoing Throughout Grades 6-8

Course Description:

This course empowers students to build a safe, inclusive, and respectful school community by fostering a strong sense of self, understanding different perspectives, and developing effective interpersonal skills. Ultimately, students gain the tools to create an environment where everyone feels safe, valued, supported, and connected. This course is designed to teach students how to work well with others, resolve conflicts, and maintain personal safety. It focuses on building self-awareness, interpersonal respect, and responsibility. Every element in the curriculum aligns with Missouri's required learning standards and prepares students to be safe, kind, and respectful members of the school community.

Transfer Goals:

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

1. explore personal traits.
2. maintain respectful interactions.
3. practice all forms of safety.
4. navigate social norms.
5. resolve conflicts peacefully.
6. recognize the impact of their words, symbols, gestures, and actions on others.
7. follow the outlined school procedures for addressing demeaning speech, harassment, and bullying.

Curriculum Standards:

[K-12 Missouri Learning Standards: School Counseling](#)
[Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Health Education GLEs](#)

Curriculum Resource(s): None

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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Family Notification Procedures

Grades 6-8

Whole Class Books

- Titles for books that will be assigned to a whole class will be available on Canvas and on course overviews/syllabi. If this changes during the class term, families will be notified.
- If a teacher plans to offer a choice from a small set of pre-identified books, those titles will be available on Canvas and on course overviews/syllabi. If this changes during the class term, families will be notified.

Library Books

- Families may contact their school's library media specialists to sign up for email notices in Destiny to be made aware of books checked out from district libraries.
- [How Parents/Guardians Can Monitor Student Book Selections](#)

Open Choice Books

- When a class begins a unit involving the selection of open-choice books, teachers notify families and prompt them to ask their students.
- For classes where students can select choice books at a faster pace, teachers will send quarterly emails to families reminding them to regularly ask their students.

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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Unit 1: Understanding Self

Timeframe: Varies By Building

Unit Description: In this unit, students will learn that when they feel connected, respected, and valued, they are more likely to engage fully, support their peers, and contribute positively to the school environment. Students will learn how a positive self-concept fosters personal well-being, resilience, authenticity, and confidence. The unit will address mastering social norms to work harmoniously, recognizing strengths, and appreciating others' contributions. It will emphasize the importance of belonging, physical and emotional safety, and adapting behaviors to different environments. Students will also examine how stereotypes can distort self-perception and affect interactions. Students will learn that accepting themselves and others can contribute to a welcoming community.

Enduring Understandings:

- Self-acceptance and the development of a positive self-concept are essential to personal well-being.
- Understanding and embracing one's identity fosters resilience, confidence, and authenticity.
- Mastery of social norms enables team members to work harmoniously, leverage different perspectives, and achieve common goals more effectively.
- Recognizing and utilizing one's unique strengths and abilities is vital to making meaningful contributions to a team.
- Recognizing and appreciating the unique strengths and contributions of others is essential to effective teamwork.
- A sense of belonging within a school community is essential for personal growth, well-being, and academic success.
- Physical and emotional safety are foundational to creating an environment where everyone feels accepted, supported, and valued.
- Stereotypes can distort self-perception and limit individuals' ability to see themselves and others authentically.
- School-acceptable behaviors may differ from those at home or in the community; one may need to adapt one's actions to different environments.

Essential Questions:

- How does self-acceptance impact my well-being?
- How can understanding and embracing my individuality contribute to resilience and confidence?
- What are the key social norms that contribute to effective teamwork?
- How can social norms enhance team collaboration and success?
- How does my contribution impact the overall success of a team?
- How can appreciating others' talents improve team dynamics and outcomes?
- How does a sense of belonging affect my personal growth and academic success?
- How do I work with others to ensure physical and emotional safety in various settings?
- How do stereotypes influence self-perception and how people view others?
- How do I understand and adapt to expectations for behavior to achieve success in school and relationships?

Unit 1: Standards

priority standards indicated in **bold*

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STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
6-8.IID.5C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can use active listening and clear communication to help my team reach a common goal. ● I can identify my specific responsibilities in a group and complete my work to help the whole team succeed. ● I can give and receive helpful feedback to keep my group on track and solve problems together. ● I can identify my unique talents—like leadership, creativity, or organization—and use them to make my school a better place. ● I can find ways to be an active citizen in my school, whether it's through clubs, helping others, or following school values. ● I can compare and contrast my own cultural background and beliefs with those of people with different worldviews. ● I can demonstrate respect for different cultures by being open-minded, asking thoughtful questions, and challenging stereotypes.
6-8.IID.5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can identify my unique strengths, talents, and skills and explain why I am proud of them. ● I can honestly look at my own work and behavior to find specific areas where I want to grow or improve. ● I can set a realistic goal for an "area of growth" and track the steps I take to get better at it. ● I can recognize the "inner voice" I use when I face a challenge or make a mistake. ● I can evaluate whether my self-talk is helping me stay motivated (positive) or holding me back (negative). ● I can practice "flipping" a negative thought into a productive one to help me stay focused and resilient.

Unit 2: Interacting With Others

Timeframe: Varies By Building

Unit Description: In this unit, students will learn and apply the skills needed to interact respectfully with others. Students will learn the difference between curiosity and judgmentalism, how to connect with others without making assumptions, and how to engage with various cultures and perspectives. Students will enrich their understanding of others and contribute to an environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued. Students will discuss the significance of respectful interactions while exploring peaceful problem-solving techniques for conflict resolution. Additionally, students will examine the importance of words, symbols, gestures, and the crucial role every student plays in fostering acceptance and belonging.

Enduring Understandings:

- The distinction between curiosity and judgmentalism means acknowledging what someone doesn't know and developing the skills to learn about others.
- Getting to know others without making assumptions is essential for building genuine connections and fostering mutual respect.
- Exposure to different cultures and people enriches our understanding of others and broadens our perspectives.
- Acknowledging, valuing, and promoting the unique qualities in others fosters an environment where everyone feels seen and appreciated.
- Social safety encompasses the well-being of individuals within a community, emphasizing the significance of respectful interactions.
- Utilizing peaceful problem-solving techniques can support resolving conflicts and repairing harm.
- Respecting others with different abilities or backgrounds means recognizing the impact of words, symbols, and gestures.
- Everybody plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of acceptance and belonging.

Essential Questions:

- What is the difference between curiosity and judgmentalism?
- How can curiosity enhance my ability to learn about others?
- How could making assumptions interfere with maintaining respectful relationships?
- How can I experience different cultures to deepen my appreciation of others?
- How can recognizing and appreciating differences help create a place where everyone feels welcomed and valued?
- What does social safety mean, and why is it crucial for the well-being of individuals within a community?
- What are peaceful problem-solving techniques that can aid in resolving conflicts and repairing harm?
- How can words, symbols, and gestures impact others?
- What skills and language do I need to advocate for others?

Unit 2: Standards

STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
6-8.IID.4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can create and use strategies—like active listening and standing up against stereotypes—to show respect for people of all backgrounds and beliefs. • I can act as an "upstander" by promoting an environment where everyone's culture and beliefs are valued.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can explore and describe my own cultural identity, including the traditions, history, and values that have shaped who I am today. ● I can explain how my cultural background influences the way I see the world and interact with others. ● I can research and explore cultures, family structures, and belief systems that are different from my own to better understand the world. ● I can identify common human experiences that connect me to people from backgrounds that seem different from mine.
6-8.IID.3B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can evaluate different conflict-resolution strategies—like compromise, mediation, or "cooling off"—and choose the best one for the situation. ● I can successfully resolve a disagreement by listening to all sides and working toward a solution where everyone feels heard. ● I can take the problem-solving skills I've learned and apply them to new or difficult challenges I face with friends, family, or peers. ● I can recognize my role in a conflict and take responsibility for my words and actions. ● I can reflect on how my behavior affects the outcome of a disagreement and make adjustments when needed, to keep things peaceful.
FS2C6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can respond respectfully to others from different backgrounds and abilities. ● I can model healthy communication skills by sharing ideas, asking questions, and listening to others. ● I can recognize and understand different perspectives when talking with others.
FS2C8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can identify the different needs and characteristics of others, including those with different abilities and backgrounds. ● I can show respect and kindness to classmates who have different abilities or come from different backgrounds.

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Unit 3: Interpersonal Safety

Timeframe: Varies By Building

Unit Description: This unit explores the critical elements of student safety, encompassing physical, social, emotional, and moral dimensions. Students will learn to identify unsafe behaviors and understand how such actions impact both individuals and the broader school community. Through studying the effects of bullying, demeaning speech, and harassment, students will develop strategies to support a safe school culture, including creating personal safety plans and understanding school-wide resources for intervention. Students will also learn essential topics like recognizing and addressing sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation as required by state law, as well as the importance of respectful communication. Students will be introduced to resources like school staff, counselors, peer programs, and school resource officers that support safety and well-being. By applying strategies for personal and communal safety, students will gain the skills to actively reduce problems within their school communities and foster a respectful, safe environment.

Enduring Understandings:

- Student safety includes physical, social, and emotional safety, as well as being able to express opinions, values, and concerns without fear of judgment, discrimination, or reprisal.
- Identifying unsafe behaviors is essential to maintaining personal safety and the safety of others.
- Recognizing the impact of bullying on individuals and communities is essential to a safe school culture.
- A safe school culture includes creating a personal plan and knowing how to utilize school-wide procedures to address and reduce bullying, demeaning speech, and harassment.
- It is important to recognize sexual harassment, bullying, abuse, exploitation, and demeaning speech and to implement strategies to address, prevent, and report such issues.
- Understanding the various resources available for addressing social problems empowers students to seek help and fosters a supportive environment.
- By applying safety strategies and accessing available resources, individuals can address and reduce problems for themselves and their communities.
- Recognizing the impact of words, actions, gestures, and symbols is essential for fostering respectful communication and promoting a safe school environment.

Essential Questions:

- What does student safety include, and why is it important to address physical, social, and emotional safety in my school?
- How can identifying unsafe behaviors contribute to my safety and the safety of others?
- How does bullying impact individuals and communities, and how can I help to create a safe school culture?
- What strategies can I include in my plan to combat bullying, demeaning speech, and harassment?
- What school-wide plans can I use to combat bullying, demeaning speech, and harassment?
- How can recognizing sexual harassment, bullying, abuse, exploitation, and demeaning speech help in preventing and addressing these issues effectively?
- What resources are available for addressing social problems, and how can I be empowered to utilize those resources to seek help?
- How can I use safety strategies and resources to reduce social problems in my community?
- Why is it important to recognize the impact of words, actions, gestures, and symbols?
- How does understanding the history behind certain words, actions, gestures, and symbols promote respectful communication and a safe school environment?

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Unit 3: Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
6-8.IID.2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can identify behaviors that are risky—whether physically, socially, or emotionally—and predict how they might affect my future. ● I can weigh the "pros and cons" of a choice to decide if a risk is worth taking or if it could lead to harmful consequences. ● I can recognize how outside influences (like friendships and social media messages) can impact the way I solve problems and make decisions. ● I can recognize when peer pressure is clouding my judgment, step back to think for myself, and then decide how to move forward. ● I can take ownership of my decisions and realize that I have the power to choose what happens next in my life. ● I can use my refusal skills to say "no" confidently when I am pressured to make a choice that isn't safe or healthy for me.
ME4E6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can formulate a personal plan to address and reduce bullying. ● I can recite a school-wide plan to address and reduce bullying. ● I can discuss sexual harassment issues and create a plan to address these issues. ● I can demonstrate strategies to prevent, manage, or report social problems related to abuse, exploitation, harassment, or bullying. ● I can investigate resources available to cope with social problems related to abuse, exploitation, harassment, or bullying (i.e., school, police, peers, hotlines, counselors).

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