



## Recent Classroom Counseling Lessons Focus on Feelings and Emotional Self-Regulation

by Robin Gregg, School Counselor, AES and Pierce School/BES

At Antrim Elementary School and the Pierce School all staff members provide students with instruction in the social/emotional skills needed by successful learners, friends, and community members. Employers in our region and beyond are seeking to hire people with these skills, such as the ability to deal with strong feelings through self-regulation, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to solve problems. One way we teach these skills in all of our district's elementary schools is through regular **classroom counseling lessons** by the school counselors.

The focus of recent classroom counseling lessons at AES and BES is on noticing, understanding, and dealing with feelings. **Kindergarten** students become "**feelings detective**," looking for such clues to other people's feelings as facial expressions and body language. What feeling do raised eyebrows suggest? Downcast eyes? Clenched fists? A smiling mouth?

In **first grade**, students are learning that people have different feelings and responses about the same thing. For example, I may think that a snake is a charming, interesting pet, but my classmate may feel otherwise. Students are learning about **empathy**, the ability to discern what other people are feeling.

**Second grade** students have practiced **assertiveness**, asking for what you need or want in a respectful, strong, clear way, and they also are learning about **empathy** and **perspective taking**

In **third grade**, students are learning about "**the zones of regulation**" (blue, green, yellow and red)--- different states of alertness and different states of readiness to learn, listen, and think. They are learning various strategies for **emotional self-regulation**, ways to calm or energize themselves, such as **positive self-talk**, mindful movement, breathing practices, and the use of a personal "mind-control"/remote control.

**Fourth grade** students also are learning about the **zones of regulation, self-awareness, and emotional self-regulation**. They are beginning to develop a "**toolbox**" of strategies for emotional self-regulation, including positive self-talk, breath work, mindful movement, and other mindfulness practices.

Future classroom counseling lessons in all of the classrooms will build on these skills and will incorporate additional skills and topics, such as impulse control, problem-solving, career and job awareness/readiness, and dealing with change.