



SOUTH DAKOTA

# STURDY

A brief program of study for the  
elementary school counselor program,  
the elementary school classroom, and  
the middle school classroom

# South Dakota Sturdy

School counseling classroom instruction can make a positive, proactive impact on student wellness and career development. As school counselors look for new ways to teach resiliency and healthy coping skills, finding lessons and resources can be time consuming.

“South Dakota Sturdy” is a free resource available to elementary and middle school counselors for use in classroom counseling. It’s geared for students in grades four through six. Not only do the lessons tie to school counseling, but they are also suitable for elementary and middle school teachers as a complement to their literacy or social studies program. It is suitable for the classroom teacher looking for a way to bolster their students’ work ethic or lagging pursuit of achievement. The lessons also offer opportunity for school counselors and teachers to co-teach.

The intent of “South Dakota Sturdy” is to help students find in our state’s people, landmarks, or even animals a lesson they can apply to their own lives and studies. It’s not so much guidance as it is aspiration, less character development than edification. In a world where so many seem committed to tearing each other down, it provides examples of lifting each other up, by assistance, by mentoring, by example.

Why is this particular instruction needed? It is no surprise that life is full of stress and adversity. Instead of running from problems and being fearful of hardship, children should be equipped with *resiliency*, the ability to adapt and overcome. Some students are already facing challenges unimaginable to others, and resiliency is the tool they need the most.

OK, enough intro.

The Lay of the Land: The “South Dakota Sturdy” program consists of 10 units. Each will take probably one or two 30- or 40-minute sessions. Thus, it can take about a semester, assuming about one lesson per week. It can also take less than that amount if you are selective, offering, say, seven of the lessons rather than all 10. You can use it all, use any amount of it you wish, or use none of it. Each lesson also comes with a supplemental lesson that may be used instead of the regular lesson or in addition to it. (See the Appendix.)

Below are the titles of the 10 lessons:

1. Teddy Roosevelt: The Self (Re-) Made Man
2. Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Girl of Grit
3. Crazy Horse (Tȕašúnke Witkó): The Warrior-Servant
4. The American Bison: Facing Your Fears
5. Billy Mills: Prepare Yourself for the Road, not the Road for Yourself
6. The Corn Palace—Never a Boast or Brag
7. The Ring-Necked Pheasant: Seize the Day!
8. Joe Foss: Fortune Favors the Bold
9. General Beadle: Focus!
10. L. Frank Baum: A Hero’s Journey

Each of the lessons intends to teach a life lesson. The lessons attempt to make our children more “sturdy” through relatable South Dakota examples.

In so doing, it also has cross-curricular connections, and each of these will be reflected in the lesson with specific reference to school counselor competencies (*South Dakota Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success*), as well as

content standards from Social Studies, English/Language Arts, and Science. After all, anytime we can reinforce learning in one area with lessons in another, we maximize the utility of instructional time, which is always in short supply.

Each lesson has certain components, which include:

- I. Lesson Title
- II. Brief Description of the South Dakota Feature
- III. Lesson Plan Steps
  - A. Anticipatory Set
  - B. Objective and Purpose
  - C. Resources to be Accessed

The lessons include a reading that you can choose to read aloud to the students or have them read individually in class. We understand that giving homework in classroom counseling is a rare thing, especially given the brief timeframes you have and the extended space between lessons. While there are occasionally ideas for extending the lesson beyond the classroom, the expectation is that the entire lesson occurs within the 30-40 minute allotted timeframe. Some of the lessons can be completed nicely within that timeframe. In other cases, you may wish to teach one of the 10 lessons over two of your periods. Your choice entirely.

- D. Modeling
- E. Guided Practice / Checking for Understanding
- F. Independent Practice
- G. Student-Led Closure

One of the best means of cementing the learning for students is for them to conduct a closure activity in which they summarize what has been learned for themselves, for you, or for other students.

- H. Standards Addressed

Conclusion: We hope you find this resource useful. If you do, or you have suggestions for its improvement, drop us a line at [doe@state.sd.us](mailto:doe@state.sd.us). We'd like to know your thoughts on "South Dakota Sturdy."

