I. Teaching Students Empathy Resource

II. Curriculum Connections Supplement

III. References
**Teaching Students Empathy**

**Resource**

**What is empathy?**

*Empathy* is the ability to identify and understand another person’s feelings and experiences. It is a collection of skills that allows people to relate to and care for one another.

**Model Empathy**

*The best way to teach empathy is to demonstrate it.*

- Seek to understand the reasons why students behave the way they do.
- Reflect on the emotions you experience in the classroom and how they affect your actions and behaviors.
- Listen to students with an open mind. Don’t look for the responses you’re wanting to hear.
- Do not feign concern, enthusiasm, or other emotions. In sincerity can harm relationships and show a lack of empathy.

**Establish Empathy**

*Take time at the start of the year to teach students about empathy.*

- Teach students how to talk about and recognize emotions (i.e. how they look, sound, and feel).
- Use pictures, short stories and video clips to help students identify or predict how a person is feeling.
- Have students act out and examine different situations as roleplays. These roleplays can help students explain their or someone else’s feelings.
- Share personal life experiences with your students. Describe the emotions you felt, and why.

**Nurture Empathy**

*Throughout the year, use different strategies and activities to continue developing empathy in your students.*

**Curriculum Connections**

- Identify topics or units that deal with emotions, perspective-taking, unfamiliar experiences, and/or individuals from diverse cultures.
- Use text (non-fiction and fiction) that allows students to connect their own emotions and experiences with those of other people.

**Teachable Moments**

- Make instances of conflict, hurt feelings, or confusion teachable moments for talking about and developing empathy.
- As necessary, ask students to recognize and/or explain their own feelings or those of a peer.
- Use any of the following questions to help:
  - How are you feeling? How do you feel?
  - How do you think _____ feels?
  - Why do you think you feel that way?
  - What is it about _____ that made you feel ____?
  - Why do you think _____ feels that way?
  - What might help you ______ feel better?

**Classroom Community**

- Use classroom meetings or circle time to provide students a space to share concerns they are having about school/life.
- Allow students time to share information about themselves with their peers. This information can be as simple as, “What is your favorite thing to wear to school?” or as complex as, “Describe the thing you’re most proud of.”

---

1 (The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, 2017).
2 Students can answer in partners, small groups, or with the whole class.
### Literary

#### Early-childhood
- The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush (1988), by Tomie de Paola.
- The Sneetches (1989) by Dr. Seuss.
- The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (1996), by Jon Scieszka.

#### Elementary
- Stellaluna (1993), by Janell Canon.
- Return to Sender (Alvarez, 2010).

#### Middle and High School
- The Skin I’m In (1998), by Sharon Flake.
- Fade to Black (2006), by Alex Flinn.

### Additional Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description:</th>
<th>Link to resource:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Empathy for the ’A’” (Teaching Tolerance):</strong> This article explains the importance and benefits of incorporating empathy into your classroom culture.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-52-spring-2016/feature/empathy">http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-52-spring-2016/feature/empathy</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Toolkit:</strong> This is a complete toolkit for creating a classroom culture based on empathy. All materials are included.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2016/toolkit-for-empathy-for-the-a">https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2016/toolkit-for-empathy-for-the-a</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humans of New York (Website):</strong> Humans of New York examines the challenges and experiences of specific populations of people living in New York City. You can search for themes such as refugees, or veterans who have returned from war.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.humansofnewyork.com/series">http://www.humansofnewyork.com/series</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Suttie, J. (June 10, 2016). Seven ways to foster empathy in kids. Greater Good Magazine. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_foster_empathy_in_kids


