

# Empathy in the Classroom

*Empathy is the ability to share someone else's feelings or motivations and to understand their perspective. Affective empathy is the ability to emotionally relate to someone else's feelings. Cognitive empathy is the ability to imagine what someone else is feeling.*

For the item, "I feel badly when someone gets his or her feelings hurt," students' responses were:  
Not at all true: 7%    A little true: 21%    Pretty much true: 35%    Very much true: 37%

## Focus on Similarities

Use activities in which students identify characteristics, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that they share with others.

## Create Bonding Attachments

- Have students draw a picture, bring a photo of, or just visualize someone they feel safe with.
- Use cooperative learning strategies to build bonds between students.
- Have students play music together.
- Express and show care for your students.

## Role-plays & Acting

- Incorporate role-playing into classroom lessons in Language Arts, Social Studies, and even Math.
- Encourage students to act in plays.
- Create an afterschool drama program.

## Identify Feelings

- Ask students how they are feeling.
- Have students notice how others are feeling.
- Teach vocabulary words related to feelings.



## Why is empathy important?

Studies have shown that students who have empathy:

- Do better in school.
- Are more cooperative with others.
- Make morally sound decisions.
- Are more resilient.
- Are more altruistic.

Teachers who have empathy:

- Are less likely to burn out.
- Have students with better academic outcomes.
- Are more likely to respond to bullying behavior.
- Have students who display more prosocial behaviors.

## Resources

*Teaching Tolerance*  
*Empathy in Education*  
*Teaching Empathy*  
*Feelings Inventory*  
*How Empathy Affects Learning*