

EMPATHY

Teacher Resource

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

Understanding others' thoughts, feelings and actions.

BENCHMARKS

✓ **HE.912.R.1.2** Demonstrate **empathy** in a variety of contexts and situations. Clarification: Identifying others' feelings, perspectives, circumstances, experiences and active listening.

✓ **HE.912.R.1.3** Adjust behavior to respect the needs of others.

PURPOSE

► These interactive activities will help your students explore the characteristic of **empathy** in a variety of contexts and situations and adjust behavior to respect the needs of others. Share the suggested introduction with your students, choose one or more of the activities below, and conclude with the suggested wrap-up. Feel free to modify or revisit activities throughout the week to continue reinforcing **empathy**.



Suggested Introduction:

"You are familiar with **empathy** and understanding others' thoughts, feelings and actions. **Empathy** is about connecting with others' emotions and responding in a caring way. It involves recognizing the emotions and the reasons behind them. True **empathy** requires us to listen without judgment, imagine ourselves in others' situations and offer support in ways that make a real difference. By practicing **empathy**, we create stronger bonds and a more compassionate world."



Activities to Build Empathy:

1 Role Reflection: Understanding and Respecting Others

Discuss with students the perspectives of different individuals or groups in a situation referenced in the state academic standards. A social studies example would be during World War II (e.g., Allied and Axis soldiers, Rosie the Riveter, senior citizens). Be sure to include details of each role so students can reflect on how each individual or group thought, felt and acted during WWII. Have students reflect on how they would feel in these roles and discuss how adjusting their behaviors shows respect to the needs of others.

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GRADES
9–12



Activities to Build Empathy (Continued):

2 Empathy After Natural Disasters

Present students with recent news stories that highlight challenges faced by individuals or groups after a natural disaster. Students will discuss the perspectives of those involved and brainstorm **empathetic** responses. Encourage students to reflect on how their behavior and actions can be supportive and respectful in similar situations in their communities (e.g., volunteering for a community service or disaster-relief organization).

3 Resiliency Reading Connection

Have students analyze the speech “I Have a Dream” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the Resiliency Reading List. Have students underline key passages that express feelings and the injustices that Dr. King cited during this historic address. Discuss how different people reacted to his speech and how his speech and the events during the Civil Rights Movement influenced people to adjust their behavior to respect the needs of others. Visit **buildresiliency.org** to learn about other books listed on the Resiliency Reading List; each title has a corresponding Family Reading Guide.



Suggested Wrap-Up:

“You have explored **empathy** throughout your childhood. As you move beyond high school, remember the importance of demonstrating **empathy** with others. By understanding others’ feelings and responding with compassion, we can build strong relationships with others and make a powerful impact in our surroundings.”