TeachME PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CEUs for Teachers and Educators

Developing Teamwork, Empathy, and Support Among Students

Introduction

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, students experienced a loss of the time and community that they usually benefit from during the grade school years. Not only did this result in significant mental health impacts for school-aged children, it has resulted in a lack of familiarity with critical building blocks of relationships and community.

Students, bereft of daily contact with adult mentors and peers, did not have the frequent human interaction often necessary to build skills like support for one another, empathy, and teamwork.

When these students began to return to in-person education, it became clear that the lack of empathy and innate teamwork, though understandable, was an issue. Today, teachers are facing an unprecedented need to teach their students these necessary skills. Fortunately, they go hand in hand with each other. Students who practice teamwork on a regular basis also practice communication and social skills. They have more opportunities to support one another and practice empathy.

In this course, we'll discuss the importance of teamwork, empathy, and support among school-age students. We'll then talk about various ways that teachers can help students grow in these critical ways.

Section 1: The Importance of Teamwork, Empathy, and Support Among Students

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, once remarked that "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." While success can be subjective and our march toward better outcomes for a varied population of students may be far more nuanced than that quote suggests, one thing is clear: If we work together, we can accomplish far more than we do alone.

Unfortunately, the past couple of years have taught millions of impressionable students that working solo is the safest course of action. That will be extremely hard for students to unlearn—if it's even possible for them to do so. Many schools are continuing to teach in at least a partially remote capacity, and that can be very difficult for the students in those situations.

Whether your school is remote or in-person, there are steps you can take to help students learn these crucial community-building skills. To lay a proper foundation for this course, let's start by considering precisely why these skills are so important.

Why is teamwork among students important?

We've already mentioned a few distinct benefits of teamwork: It helps groups of people get more done, and it can help students build their social skills.

Here are a few more reasons why teamwork among students is crucial for healthy individuals and academic communities alike (Borkala, 2021):

- **Teamwork helps students overcome shyness.** While it's not a negative attribute to be quiet or be an introvert, moving through school and, later, a career may be much more manageable for students who feel comfortable in social situations. Experiencing supportive, safe teamwork on a regular basis can help students overcome any unfavorable associations they may have with being around their peers. In fact, if students are feeling leery of interpersonal relationships or exposure after the pandemic, one of the tools teachers can use to help re-establish a new, healthier interpersonal norm is to assign students simple tasks and have small groups of students work together to accomplish them. This allows students to form relationships and social skills without the pressure of focusing directly on the relationship and social skills.
- **Teamwork helps improve a student's speaking and listening skills.** When students are working together, they're going to have to learn how to get their thoughts across quickly. They will also have to listen to others. The ramifications of failing to do either of these (e.g., being misunderstood, getting talked over, missing out on information) should help students realize the importance of effective communication and learning skills. It may help jumpstart this process if you give a brief primer on how to communicate and listen well before breaking your classroom into groups — and give reminders as needed over the course of the year.
- **Teamwork helps students grow in productivity.** Teamwork is a great way to increase productivity in school-age children for three reasons. When students share a workload, there is an instant motivation (in many students, whether it be cooperative or competitive) to make progress toward completing assigned tasks. If students struggle with a specific task and they have established a supportive

relationship with their peers or mentors, teamwork should empower those students to request and receive help that can help them overcome obstacles. Finally, if a group of students has all been assigned a specific task to complete, the different personality types and strengths among the group increases the likelihood that the group will come up with several different ways to tackle the problem as a team. This crowd-sourced, creative approach ups the likelihood that a group of students will develop an efficient or unique way to approach assigned goals.

- **Teamwork helps students build conflict resolution skills.** It's inevitable that students who work together will experience conflict at some point. Not only is this unavoidable, it's not a bad thing. When students experience conflict, they will learn how to cool down from heightened situations and come up with achievable ways to compromise. If they don't learn how to do so on their own, teachers can provide students with ideas.

- **Teamwork comes with built-in time checks.** When a group of people is working together, at least in theory, all the participants should be aware of the pace they're supposed to be going — and cognizant of those who are not working as quickly as they should, or at least aware if they're not progressing as well as they should be. (The diverse personality ranges in any random group should include at least one or two people who are type-A, project-focused people; or, if not, it should be easy for you as the teacher to notice if an entire group is lagging behind). In other words, it's relatively difficult to procrastinate effectively as a team.

- **Teamwork helps build a student's socialization skills.** Whether a team needs to work together remotely or in person, the success of the assignment that the team is tackling depends at least in part on the team's ability to interact with each other. Students will need to learn how to communicate effectively; but, more than that, once students are familiar with the basic nuts and bolts of speaking and listening well, they will begin to see teamwork as a way to build community and learn how to enjoy socialization. In this way, teamwork can be an effective way for teachers to help their students bond if it seems that there may otherwise be difficulty for students to do so (e.g., if you're teaching in a remote environment).

- **Teamwork gets students ready for a successful, productive, and engaging career.** Think back to the last time you interviewed for a new job or position: Very likely,

one of the skills that your prospective employer was looking for was your ability to work well as part of a team. Very rarely in adulthood do we tackle projects that are completely solo. Rather, we use our unique strengths as part of a team to accomplish something together that's far greater than anything we could do by ourselves. Functioning well as part of a team is something that your students will have to do for the rest of their lives. Giving them the ability to do so now gives them ample time to practice this future-proofed skill.

Knowing the importance of teamwork for young learners is a good first step. General ways that educators can help students gain and develop their teamwork skills are included below.

How can young students develop their teamwork skills?

In the third section of this course, we'll go a little further into practical ways that teachers can help young students enjoy more efficient and effective teamwork. For now, these are the ingredients of success for teamwork (Borkala, 2021):

- **Teamwork requires commitment to a group effort.** In order to avoid the classic 'group project' effect wherein one or two people put in all the time and energy while the rest relax and capitalize on these efforts, all students need to be committed to doing their part. (Teachers also need to design team projects that require all participants to do their part, and keep an eye out for any signs of those individuals who aren't pulling their weight.) A good analogy here, if you need a visual to discuss with your students, is canoe racing. In order for a canoe to move forward quickly, the force on both sides of the canoe needs to be equal. If any one of the people paddling isn't paddling well, the forces will be imbalanced, and it will be impossible for the canoe to move in a straight line.

- **Teamwork requires good organization and full understanding of all responsibilities.** In the above canoeing example, the team members are able to move in their desired direction because each of the canoers is aware of the need to paddle forward and match the approximate force and speed of the other canoers. In order to work effectively as a team, students need to know precisely what they are doing, what other people are doing, and how each of their responsibilities match together. No member of the team should be told to complete a discrete task without being fully informed as to how that task will benefit the whole, or how this task relates to the assignments their peers are

tackling. This will help build trust. In addition, we know that children are innately practical people. Providing context and organization should help students want to tackle their team's responsibilities more, not less.

- **Teamwork requires equitable sharing of all relevant information.** While 'there should be no secrets in a team' may be taking this sentiment a little far, withholding information that's pertinent to the team's central purposes is asking for misunderstandings and resentment. Instead, the leadership of the team should make a point to give team members regular updates that contain all of the relevant information the team members need to do their jobs well. In addition, there should be an expectation of mutual information sharing between members of the team: for example, if one student knows specific information that could benefit another team member, that individual should share that information instead of guarding it for any reason (including competition). Students should be aware that in the context of a team, one person's success is another's. This helps students develop ways to support each other practically, as well.
- **Teamwork requires that all students are aware that their actions affect the rest of the team.** If one team member doesn't complete an assigned task on time, that simple action (or inaction) could end up hurting the entire team. In order for teamwork to be helpful for everyone involved, all of those who choose to join the team (or are assigned membership, in a school scenario) need to be aware of their need to hold up their end of the bargain in order to gain the benefits of being on that team. (If viewed correctly, this mentality can help every child realize that their contributions are valued and important!)
- **Teamwork requires that every student or team member be willing to take credit as a team, not individually.** Whether a team's project ends well or poorly, the team must be able to take credit for the praise or repercussions as a unit. Again, we can illustrate this with a sports analogy: When a baseball team wins a game, the team wins — an individual player, no matter how well that person may or may not have performed, did not win or lose the game. There is always room to recognize the outstanding contributions of one individual (or, if needed, quietly provide feedback for one student who could have contributed more), but the main credit should go to the group, not any one person. This can help teach individual students healthy humility and support for their peers, if done correctly.

What is empathy? What are some examples of it in the classroom?

Empathy can be simply yet viscerally defined as the following: Our ability to walk a minute (or a mile) in someone else's shoes. When we exercise our ability to be empathetic, we try to understand the way another person might be feeling (even if it's not something that we may be able to logically relate to) and interpret their actions and connect to them in that light (The Juice, 2021).

Having empathy is considered a critical part of being a kind and accomplished human adult, yet it's not a skill that many people are born with. Rather, it's something that must be introduced strategically, and then practiced and honed over time. This practice and exposure needs to start very early, as empathy should ideally be more of a central character trait for a young student than a skill learned only later in life (The Juice, 2021).

Through empathy, we are better able to evaluate and identify with the way other people may be struggling and growing. It's only with that insight that we are able to be truly helpful team members — and provide meaningful support for our peers (The Juice, 2021).

The specific and outright teaching of empathy as part of social-emotional learning can be a little controversial. There are those who believe that we are born with empathy, and it really isn't something that our teachers need to spend time on in class. That way of thinking may make some level of sense, but it's doing everyone involved a disservice. The latest research that we've been able to glean indicates that it is in everyone's best interest to spend more time discussing our emotions and teaching healthy emotional responses (both to ourselves and each other) in the classroom (The Juice, 2021).

Empathy requires perception, logical thinking, and both courage and compassion. Being empathetic can be awkward and difficult. We need to have a solid grasp of healthy ways to comprehend non-obvious information, and we need to have a good handle on our own emotions, too, before we're able to be as empathetic as possible (or at least, in the most productive way possible) (The Juice, 2021).

Empathy is also a foundational skill that can lead to other valuable behaviors and skills, such as critical thinking and good leadership. All in all, it's clear from many different angles that we should be very intentional in the way we think about teaching empathy to our youngest students (The Juice, 2021).

In the third section of this course, we'll provide a little more detail regarding the way that teachers may be able to do this. The good news is that many of the actions that

teachers already incorporate into their courses may help students strengthen their familiarity with empathy. For example, if you're an English teacher, there's a good chance that you've asked your students to think about what it might be like if they were a character in a story that you've read in class. If you teach Social Studies, you might have asked your students to close their eyes and envision living during a certain period of time, or as a person who lived through or witnessed a specific historic event (The Juice, 2021).

From this, we can see that one of the entryways into learning empathy is imagination. While some students may be able to imagine more easily than others, most children should be able to exhibit enough creativity to pretend, if only for a moment, that they were seeing the world through someone else's eyes. Teachers can go the extra mile in these types of organic exercises to directly make the empathetic connection clear — asking what a student would feel like walking in someone else's shoes, or asking students what they might do to comfort someone who was living in a specific time or storyline (The Juice, 2021). This can take a lot of effort, but, fortunately, we can see that it doesn't go to waste.

Specifically, a recent study out of Harvard demonstrated that there is a clear link between students who exhibit high levels of empathy and students who are better communicators, are more engaged in class than their less-empathetic peers, have higher grades, enjoy more positive relationships, and are even less aggressive overall than other students in the class (The Juice, 2021).

Each of these concrete benefits may come from three specific, less explicit but extremely important benefits of teaching, learning, and practicing empathy. These benefits are as follows (The Juice, 2021):

1. Empathy helps you understand others and yourself better than would be otherwise imaginable. Many of the acceptable behaviors we expect of healthy adults are those that we want to nurture in young students, such as telling the truth and treating each other with respect. Without a solid foundation of empathy, these actions become relatively meaningless rules that a student might follow just for the sake of the rule itself. Empathy allows a student to make sense of his or her own experiences and then apply the same benefit of that discovery to other people. Growing up is hard for everyone, even students at a young age who don't actively appear to be struggling. The earlier that students are able to make sense of their own hardships and connect with the fact that other people

are going through difficult times as well, the better — both for themselves and the people around them.

2. Classroom environments are simply better if a hefty dose of empathy is present in every participant. The way that students interact with each other and with any adults in the room is obviously transformative for the health of the classroom. Without an understanding of how everyone in the room might be feeling, any individual student could easily act out and throw off the positive environment of the room in minutes. The brain chemistry of any one student at any time is extremely volatile; children are sensitive, they're growing and developing, they're experiencing new things with their friends and family every day, and they can be under a lot of pressure. Helping students figure out how to deal healthily with their own emotions and teaching them respect for the emotions of others can make tense situations in your classroom diffuse a lot more easily.

3. If we instill empathy in our students when they're still young, they stand a far greater chance of being happy, helpful, and empathetic adults. These types of adults are far better equipped to go out and contribute to society with well-honed critical thinking skills that benefit from a proper perspective. Whether these adults take on jobs in the public sector or in private offices, they'll be better citizens, employees, leaders, and people — benefiting their own environments and communities wherever they are.

Section 1 Key Points

- Helping students grow in teamwork can help students overcome shyness, help a student listen and speak better, and help a student enjoy more productivity.
- Because students will need to know how to function well as part of a team for the rest of their lives, helping them learn how to support each other and function as part of a team now is a future-proofed skill.
- In order for a team to function well, there needs to be an equitable distribution of information among the members of the team.
- Empathy is a skill that can be taught, practiced, and learned over time.
- Empathy requires imagination, perception, logical thinking, courage, and compassion.

Section 1 Summary

As functioning as part of a team is such an important part of daily life, it's important that students are able to hone the skills that enable them to be a good team member. Sometimes these skills come easily to students; other times, they require more practice. We'll see in the next section of the course, however, that empathy is worth the time it takes to learn it!

Section 2: Current Research: The Benefits of Support, Teamwork, and Empathy

We know that teamwork is absolutely crucial for companies large and small to get anything done. As we're learning now, for successful projects and personal growth alike even at the elementary school level, thoughtful teamwork is equally vital. Recognizing that everyone has specific skills, talents, and gifts, and coming together to wield those gifts toward a common purpose, can be more than just productive: It can be incredible for the mental health and personal fulfillment of everyone involved.

Helping students realize that they can do this successfully from a young age can be transformative for a student's life. Not only will they be well-poised to benefit from successful teamwork, support, and empathy for the rest of their lives (and bring that skillset with them to various jobs and projects, too), they'll benefit in specific ways. In this section, we'll give an overview of the various ways that, according to science, students can expect to benefit from support, teamwork, and empathy. These include (Middleton, 2022):

- **Increased idea-having and problem-solving aptitude.** Did you know that most scientific discoveries aren't discovered by just one person? Even though we tend to give specific individuals the credit for paradigm-shifting discoveries — e.g. Edison invented the lightbulb, Einstein discovered the theory of relativity, Newton's apple fell on his head and no one else's — these theories and discoveries are almost always the result of a team's effort. Even if one person may have had the initial creative spark that ignited an idea, these theories almost always require several people to fuel them into a flame. Even Newton likely needed to talk to his friends and colleagues about gravity to refine the concept from an idea into a full-blown theory. There's a reason for this, and, as a teacher, it's one that you know well: When you talk about a concept and particularly when

you explain it to others or defend it to a group, you need to know that concept like the back of your hand. Analyzing contrasting concepts with a team, defending them, playing them off each other — that's how great ideas are truly born, and it requires a team with different personalities, perspectives, and competencies in order to make that happen. Researchers out of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are finding that this idea bears out when we look at the science: "We found that groups of size three, four, and five outperformed the best individuals….[We] attribute this performance to the ability of people to work together to generate and adopt correct responses, reject erroneous responses, and effectively process information."

- **Increased ability to innovate.** For similar reasons, researchers are becoming convinced that groups of people with different backgrounds and proclivities are best able to invent new ideas, things, and solutions to problems. Crucially, this means that it may not be in your best interest or your students' best interest to place them in groups with their friends. As one expert put it: "Diversity is a well-documented pathway to unlocking new opportunities, overcoming new challenges, and gaining new insights." (It should be noted that the researcher wasn't specifically speaking of racial diversity here, but rather of students and people from all kinds of different backgrounds.) One study was able to corroborate this idea with a meta-analysis: It found that teams that were made up of members who had, relatively speaking, not much in common (e.g., they were of different ages, different genders, they had different interests) were able to perform better than more homogenous teams by up to 35%. Why? Instead of having just one specific view of a problem, you're getting the benefit of several different perspectives, which can exponentially increase the efficacy of your team.

- **More happiness for all involved team members.** One research team surveyed over one thousand members of various teams across a wide range of industries about their experiences. The researchers found that as long as the team's members practiced mutual respect, personal openness, and gave honest feedback, the members of teams were vastly more likely to report higher satisfaction and emotional well-being than people who tended to work solo more often. And, of course, research from other studies (such as one project out of the University of Warwick in England) does suggest that happy people are more productive than unhappy people; so, even though having happy and mentally healthy students is enough of an end result in and of itself, knowing that they're

better poised to get more done when they're benefiting from the mind-boosting properties of teamwork is a definite perk.

- **More personal growth for team members.** When team members who come from different backgrounds open up to each other, support each other, and share their stories, everyone experiences the chance to grow. For example, team members learn not only from their own mistakes — but from other peoples' as well. This makes personal growth more efficient, and helps individual team members flourish even as their team continues to work toward a specific goal. As members working within a team will have more eyes on their work, they will naturally receive more feedback than if they were working alone. Any blind spots that they may have regarding their work will quickly disappear, as well, which will also make forward progress significantly more likely.

- **The ability to take smarter risks.** This one is simple: When people are working alone, it's harder to put themselves out there. They may feel that, in order to conserve resources or maximize their individual chances of success, they need to play a relatively safe game. This dynamic is different when individuals are working as a member of a team. Instead of feeling that they need to pursue a low-risk strategy, the security that their team offers them may allow individual team members (or all team members) to be more creative. Innovation tends to go hand-in-hand with more interesting, wilder ideas — within reason — which tend to happen more often when team members know they can rely on their peers. There is a limit, however: Data reported in the journal Nature does seem to indicate that smaller teams (5-6 persons maximum) have more disruptive — or interesting and innovative — ideas than larger teams do. There's likely a point where potential interpersonal conflict and drama outweigh the benefits of security and creativity.

- **The ability to make fewer mistakes.** By and large, people who work as a part of a team are less stressed than their peers who work mostly solo. That stress can be lethal when it comes to the integrity of a project. As one researcher pointed out, "Studies show that stress makes us stupid, and leads us to make more mistakes." Serenity in numbers can also have a calming effect. If one team member is frazzled and nervous, putting that individual in a confident team may help turn around an unhelpful mindset (Middleton, 2022) (Marlborough, 2019).

- **The ability to learn social skills in addition to subject matter.** Clearly, if a student is working as part of a team, he or she will be able to hone communication skills

alongside whatever the more academic aim of the project is. A student will emerge from an experience working on a team with heightened listening and speaking skills. In order for a team to work together well, students will need to be respectful. They will need to communicate well. And they will need to understand how to express their own ideas persuasively and confidently, as that's the only way that they're going to get other students excited about their contributions to the group. These are skills that students will be able to leverage for the rest of their lives (Marlborough, 2019).

- **Improved levels of self-confidence.** When students go through a successful and productive teamwork experience and know what it feels like to be supported, they understand the importance of giving and receiving respect. They also recognize that their ideas will be valued. And, with that healthy expectation firmly in place, your students will be empowered to know when they are in a healthy working environment or if it's better for them to move along. If you teach your students how to be a good member of a team now, other people will be less able to take advantage of them in the future. These young people will be confident about what they're able to offer to the world, and they'll know how to leverage their specific value in a group setting (Marlborough, 2019).

What are typical characteristics of an empathetic student?

As you're teaching your students how to be more empathetic human beings, you may wonder how you can tell if your approach is working or not. One way to do so is simple: Learn what the characteristics of an empathetic person are, and see if your students get closer to or further away from that ideal over time. To aid you as you piece together your own personal rubric, we'll present several habits of empathetic students here that you could start keeping an eye out for in your classroom.

That said, every student is different — and, in many ways, these characteristics represent ideals. Just because you have a student who is quieter and shyer or one who occasionally acts out does not mean that these individuals aren't progressing toward higher levels of empathy. That just means that they're human! Characteristics of empathetic students are as follows (Borba, 2020):

- **Students who are more empathetic will exhibit emotional literacy.** Students who are able to first recognize and then understand what different tones of voice, types of body language, or facial expressions mean will be better equipped to

deal with the emotions these visible indicators represent. The best way to become more emotionally literate is to see people experiencing real emotions — the wider range of emotions, the better; the more people who may exhibit those emotions in different ways, the better! In this respect, a classroom filled with young people may actually be one of the most ideal places to teach and practice empathy, as these students will undoubtedly exhibit many different types of emotions over the course of just one morning! If possible, depending on your situation and your school's regulations, allowing your students to interact face-to-face is the most helpful way to help them subconsciously become more familiar with these emotions and expressions. It may also be helpful to do a little pre-work with your students: For example, give them an emotional vocabulary to equip them with the words they need to navigate this arena. Discuss what it means to be happy or sad — or why someone who is short or taciturn may be hurting, and how best to support them. Simply getting the conversation out there in the open can go a long way toward making this close-to-the-chest topic a lot less awkward.

- **Students who are highly empathetic will likely exhibit a stronger moral identity.** While it's not an exact correlation, it does seem that students who have activated and practiced their empathetic skills may have a stronger internal ethical code. For a basic example, we can turn to a general moral law, one exhibited in most major religions and even considered a basic tenet of politeness and civilization — being nice to and respecting each other. Students who are able to put themselves in another's shoes and benefit from a different perspective from time to time will be better able to internalize the ramifications of this type of moral code (and the hurt and sadness that could result if they did not follow this code).

- **Students who have higher levels of empathy may have a stronger moral imagination.** As we discussed above, one gateway to empathetic skills is through literature; before we talk about connecting to the other humans around us, it can be easier to start by connecting with our favorite songwriters or characters in fantasy tales. Students who are becoming more empathetic might frequently say things that demonstrate that they're thinking about the interior state of a person in a book — for example, expressing sorrow that a character might be getting tired, or hoping that certain characters might complete their goals so they can feel fulfilled. If students are able to empathize with a book character in this way, it may be easy for them to make the leap to empathizing with their neighbors in a short time (Borba, 2020).

- **Students who are growing in empathy may show that they're able to collaborate better as a part of a team.** They may seek less individual attention, work harder toward shared goals, and make suggestions that clearly demonstrate they're thinking about everyone's best interest. (You could say that empathetic students are better able to take a 'we' mindset over a 'me' one.) You'll be able to tell that students are growing in empathy especially if they're able to practice this kind of cohesive connectedness even with students they don't know or don't particularly like

- **Finally, students who have been practicing empathy and are growing in it successfully may demonstrate higher levels of moral courage.** These students may be able to pick up on cues in their environment, situational or social, and immediately seek out ways to be kind and reduce pain — even if it's not immediately obvious, easy, or popular to do so. Examples of this type of behavior are the kind you may already notice and happily report to beaming parents! Students with high levels of moral courage are those who notice when others are sitting in the cafeteria by themselves and go sit with them — or put their own social status on the line by inviting the new, lonely kid to hang out. These are also the students who rush to defend someone who's getting picked on in class, or who ask the tough questions in class (e.g., points out that a character in a book acted in a dishonorable way).

What is the science behind empathy?

Did you know that empathy, strictly speaking, is a sign that our brains are functioning as they should? Here's a quick overview of the neural mechanisms that fuel empathy:

> *"Our brains house a "mirror neuron system" that is engaged when we observe actions. It internally "mirrors" observed actions and helps to understand them, thus generating empathy" (Cherodath, 2022).*

This sequence of events and the parts of our brains that perform them get stronger every time we complete an empathetic action, which is very good for our brains and the rest of our bodies. It's a little bit like performing a workout or exercising a specific muscle — but it feels a great deal more intrinsic and innate. For example, when we hear that someone else has experienced joy and our synapses mirror that feeling, we're being empathetic now and making it much easier to be empathetic in the future. The same

goes if we find ourselves tearing up when friends are sharing something that made them sad (Cherodath, 2022).

It may feel automatic, but it's a real skill that we are exercising.

Empathy may come more automatically to some than others, but to whatever extent, empathy is an intrinsically human trait. Studies have shown that even human babies empathize with each other; it's one of the reasons they cry when they hear another newborn crying. (One of the reasons — being disturbed and confused themselves is also part of it, but researchers looking at newborn brains do see the empathy mechanisms beginning to fire) (Cherodath, 2022).

This does indicate from the very beginning that humans are wired to 'feel' emotions that aren't exactly theirs. It's one of the types of glue that keeps us together — and, evolutionarily, has kept us in communities and enabled us to survive. In this view, what is empathy — and why is it important?

According to psychologists, the boiled-down definition of empathy is this: It's the very human, natural capacity to understand, share with, and respond to the affective state that exists in others. Even if we don't tend to think that we're exceedingly empathetic individuals, most of us have at least some level of empathy. Empathy fuels socialization and communication; it's the intuition that helps us understand why people are acting the way they are (Cherodath, 2022).

Oddly, in order to understand more about empathy, we can look at the few people who, for whatever reason, don't have any. Humans with psychopathic personalities are often antisocial and exhibit aggressive behavior. They also don't tend to understand basic moral systems, which makes sense: Much of our moral understanding is based on very simple expectations regarding our respect for and connection with other humans (Cherodath, 2022).

Researchers who have dedicated their lives to studying empathy have found that empathy has three distinct components. They include (Cherodath, 2022):

1. **Emotional contagion.** This is the ability of individuals to perceive the emotions of others — or share their own emotions with others. While the word 'contagion' may feel odd, it's appropriate: This component literally requires emotion or the perception thereof to leap from one person to the next, much like the common cold, but in a healthy way.

2. **Theory of mind.** This is the cognitive aspect of empathy. Once we have perceived another person's emotions through 'emotional contagion,' the theory of mind aspect allows us to take on that other person's mindset for a moment. If emotional contagion is the process of walking in another person's shoes, theory of mind is the component where we're able to put them on and walk a mile, if only for a short time.

3. **Sympathy.** This connects our brains back to our bodies: Now that we've picked up on other people's emotions and walked in their shoes, our sympathetic response allows us to feel for those individuals, whatever they're going through. This is the mechanism by which we start tearing up, even subconsciously, when someone else tells a story about going through something tough — or, when a friend calls to say to share great news,, we find ourselves inexplicably happy and excited, too.

While these ingredients for empathy are present in most humans, some of them require time to mature. Others will require some degree of practice. The 'theory of mind' component of empathy, for example, does not seem to mature in children until they're about four years old (Cherodath, 2022).

To learn more about the neuroscience of empathy, a complex process relying on the sensorimotor mechanisms in our brain — neurons firing and creating physical responses based on mental stimuli — researchers conducted experiments wherein they disrupted a subject's neuron mirroring systems. Doing so strategically resulted in patients who had a very difficult time recognizing emotions and responding to them properly. To confirm these findings, the researchers sought out anecdotal reports of the behaviors of patients who had brain trauma in the specific areas of the brain associated with emotional recognition. These patients displayed a similar difficulty understanding, for instance, when another person was angry and it was challenging for them to respond in an effective manner to diffuse the situation (Cherodath, 2022).

Why might people lack empathy?

Leaving aside the possibility of a (rare) brain lesion, there are many reasons that people, particularly young, growing people, may have difficulty practicing empathy. It's not because they're psychopaths; it's because — even though this is an innate and natural skill — it's one that requires our active input to practice well. This doesn't always go hand in hand with our basic instincts. When you're searching for ways to help your

students experience and utilize the power of empathy, you'll need to find ways to help them overcome the following difficulties (Robbins, 2021):

1. **It's hard to practice empathy when you feel threatened.** Think about this from an evolutionary perspective for a moment: While we are all built with the urge to connect with the people around us, at the very least for community and basic survival, we're all programmed to keep ourselves safe, as well. If we perceive that we are in a dangerous situation (even if that's a parasocial modern equivalent of being 'in danger,' such as being confronted with the possibility of sitting alone in the cafeteria), then we may have warring instincts at play in our brains. Particularly for young people, who may still need time and grace to strengthen their empathy muscles, it's very easy to let the individual need for protection and survival win out over the need to connect with peers. In this situation, individuals who feel threatened may shut down or lash out instead of acting in a way that opens themselves up to others.

2. **It's hard to practice empathy when we're being judgmental.** In this case, 'being judgmental' refers to our tendency to believe that we are right and other people are wrong. This, too, is a protective mindset that's built into most of us; it takes humility and flexibility to be able to override that basic notion. However, when we are being judgmental and we look around ourselves continually judging the actions of those around us, it's much harder to be empathetic with people (whether we believe that they are acting rightly or not). It puts ourselves on a pedestal above other people, which is not conducive to practicing empathy, as this requires a more level playing field.

3. **It's hard to practice empathy when we're afraid.** Fear — and our strong inclination to deny that we are feeling afraid — is at the root of many of the reasons it may be difficult to practice empathy. There is nothing wrong with fear. Fear keeps us safe. However, when we don't have a healthy relationship with fear or if we deny fear, that denial can make it harder for us to be open with and support the people around us. For example, our tendency to defend ourselves against 'threats,' real or perceived, often leads to our being overly-judgmental of the people we interact with in our lives.

What are signs that a student in my classroom may be having a hard time practicing empathy?

If you have a goal as a teacher to help your students practice more empathy on a daily basis, it is helpful to realize when a student may need to invest more time and attention into this specific skill. Some indicators that you may be able to look for that could demonstrate a student's lack of empathy include (Robbins, 2021):

- If a student is perpetually critical of other people's appearances, work, or other aspects of their being.
- If students don't seem able to control their emotions or their response to stimuli.
- If a student simply doesn't seem to be aware of the emotions of others — e.g., if another student is crying, not seeming to 'get it' or respond in any type of appropriate manner.
- If a student tends to accuse other people of being too sensitive
- If a student perpetually overreacts to very small things
- If students simply won't admit when they are wrong
- If a student behaves insensitively to other people
- If a student tends to have a hard time maintaining healthy relationships
- If a student does not seem to handle uncomfortable situations in a healthy way
- If students tend to believe that the world is out to get them, seeing slights against them everywhere they look

It can be easy to take offense to any of these behaviors, or simply to punish students when they are being brash or insensitive. One reason why this is so easy is simple: Many of these reactions and behaviors are programmed into our own emotional response, whether we were born with them or we honed them carefully over time. When as teachers, we see a student, someone we've been tasked with training and forming over years, display this type of troubling behavior, we quite literally don't know how to react (Robbins, 2021).

As mentioned above, just because certain students may seem to have a hard time practicing empathy, it does not mean that they are hopeless or in danger of becoming

sociopaths. This just means that we have an opportunity to help teach that student a more helpful way to go through life. Giving students the tools to unlock empathy will make their lives easier, fuller, and richer both now and later (Robbins, 2021).

In the third and final section of this course, we'll discuss a few effective ways that you can help your students grow in empathy.

Section 2 Key Points

- In teamwork, practicing empathy leads to an increased ability to solve problems, innovate, and be happier with the members of your team.
- As long as the members of a team practice personal openness, honest feedback, and mutual respect, surveyed members of teams report higher satisfaction than people who work alone.
- Empathetic students may exhibit emotional literacy, a strong moral identity, and strong moral imaginative skills.
- Emotional contagion is the ability of one person to perceive the emotions of another or to share personal emotions with another.
- It's hard to practice empathy when we're afraid. The basis for many of the reasons students may not practice empathy is ultimately rooted in fear.

Section 2 Summary

Emerging studies delving into the neuroscience underlying empathy are showing us that empathy, support, and the experience of working in a team are very good for human health and happiness. However, empathy is a skill that doesn't always come easily to many. Fortunately, with a heightened awareness of what it takes to be supportive and empathetic, we may be in a good position to help our students grow daily in this essential skill.

In the third and final section of the course, we'll take a look at the specific ways we can make that happen.

Section 3: How to Teach and Practice Support, Empathy, and Teamwork In the Classroom

The benefits we mentioned in section two about empathy, support, and teamwork may sound well and good — but if you're a teacher, you know that getting students to work together isn't always constructive or easy. How can we practically help our students incorporate and practice these skills while keeping everyone healthy and happy? Incorporating some of the tips in this section may help.

How can we teach students how to work together as a team?

The art and skill of successful collaboration is one that is required not only for a good experience in school, but also for most adult careers. Equipping our students with the skills needed to collaborate well with their peers right now will help them both now and later!

It's important to realize that the skills and attributes that make a student a good team member don't always come naturally. In fact, many students will likely experience difficulties as they work toward

being a productive and helpful team member. These challenges, along with possible solutions, include (Curletto, 2020):

1. **Students who talk too much (or too loudly).** As you are likely well aware, there are some students in every classroom who like nothing more than the sound of their own voice. It can feel like asking students to collaborate is just inviting those students to speak out of turn during class. Quiet may seem preferable, even if it means that students need to work by themselves. Alternatively, if your school has rules about how loud students can be in class, it may seem like teamwork or collaboration may be out of the picture. If this is the case, you might have a conversation with your students at the beginning of the year about inside and outside voices, and the practical reasons why students shouldn't be yelling while they're in class. This is a time where it might be fun and practical to use technology to your advantage: Perhaps you can find an application on your phone or computer that measures the ambient decibel level of your classroom and challenge your students to keep their dull roar under a certain decibel limit. Children are innately practical, and many like a good challenge. Keeping a decibel

meter on a visible screen during teamwork times can be a simple way to help students visibly keep their noise levels in check].

2. **Students who resort to arguing too easily.** Students of all ages may encounter difficulties when they are working with different people with varied personalities. This can result in continued arguments about the specific way that students would like to see a task or project play out. Monitoring and helping mediate all of those discussions can seem like just too much, and that makes sense! One thing that may help is assigning students discrete and well-defined roles within their team. Providing clear expectations regarding which student gets to make specific decisions that impact the team can help diffuse conflicts. One of the roles you may assign within a team structure is simply that of student moderator. (The Social and Emotional Intelligence (SEL) parallel, if you're interested in assigning team roles based on SEL competencies, may be something like 'relationship manager.')

3. **Students who indulge in off-task behavior.** You may start a teamwork session with high hopes and clearly-outlined expectations, only to start walking around groups five minutes into the session and learn that the various teams aren't working on their studies; they're discussing their favorite scene in the latest popular movie to hit the big screen. This is to be expected; some small talk is natural — but finding ways to help your students keep themselves on task will save everyone involved a lot of time and frustration. Having one of the roles that you assign within your team structure be that of 'time keeper,' a student whose job it is to keep everyone on track, may be helpful.

4. **Students who don't do their fair share (and students who shoulder most of the burden).** This is so expected that it's almost a trope at this point: Group projects tend to go hand in hand with an unequal distribution of work. This may mean that it's time to invest in more considered management of the group structure. Assigning team roles may help, as will making it clear to your students that you will be grading students individually. Asking students to rate each other on their input and team performance privately may help, as an exit-ticket system. You may have to interpret their input with a grain of salt, but you may also be able to pick up on trends within the feedback that can help you address any issues that may be occurring.

How can I teach my young students empathy in the classroom?

When we're hoping to teach young people how to unlock and practice their own senses of empathy, we're teaching them the following:

- How to feel what another person is feeling
- How to take on the perspective of other people by imagining what it's like to stand in their shoes
- How to take concrete action that helps another person who is struggling

Teaching empathy is therefore all about recognizing what another person is going through and connecting that realization to actions that we are able to take. Since this is such a personal, intrinsic skill that you are trying to teach, it's not exactly something that you can put on flashcards or get your students to repeat and memorize. It's abstract — which means that one of the best ways to teach this concept is by modeling it yourself. A few practical strategies to help you teach empathy as successfully as possible include the following (Kidspace, 2020):

- **Model empathy through your own actions.** Telling students to recognize emotions in other people and act in kind is a difficult concept to portray verbally. Instead, set a good example for your students. This can take the form of obviously, overtly, and audibly acknowledging the emotions that you're seeing in a classroom. For example, when it's time to moderate a dispute between two students, you could take the extra step of asking each of the students how they are feeling, what they are feeling, and how to best handle those emotions once they have been clarified. Helping students realize that they are upset, that their friend is upset, too, and that the same strategies that might diffuse their bad mood could work for their friend as well, is an incredibly powerful conflict resolution skill that could help your students avoid excess stress in their future. You can also model empathy by describing your own emotions, even if you do so in an overly-exaggerated or oversimplified way. For example, if something happens in the classroom that might clearly make you upset, you may say something along the lines of — "Wow, I'm feeling upset right now, so I'm going to take some time to think about what happened. When I feel a little better, we'll talk about how we might be able to work toward a solution." This might seem overly-obvious and verbose to you, but it models a thought pattern that a child may need to have spelled out in a clearer way.

- **Teach children how to observe others productively.** Simply slowing down and being observant enough to glean a few key details from other people can tell you a great deal about the emotions they're experiencing. For example, if someone is frowning with crossed arms, an adult may be able to intuit that the person is struggling at that moment. Children often need time to learn this type of observation and connotation. You can give your students a head start by, again, verbally processing what you see and attaching it to an emotion. You might say something like, "Wow, you sure are stomping your feet right now —- which means, I think, that you are mad. Do you feel angry? What happened to make you feel that way?" You can also add helpful charts to the walls of your classroom that connect some observable facial cues and mannerisms to emotions. You could even play some kind of acting game with your students ("Look surprised — now, look sad!") to help them draw the link between the body movement and the emotion. Then, once your students are getting a little better at recognizing emotions, you can start to talk about how a student might be able to help a person who is going through an observably tough time.

- **Teach students that it is our goal in life to invest in others.** As a teacher, this is clearly not a foreign concept to you! However, again, some students may need a little help learning this basic concept, even if it comes more easily to others. As humans, we thrive in community; and communities are built by people who take the time to invest in each other's success and happiness. In order to be the best version of ourselves, we need to spend time looking outward, at the people around us, and do what we can (at least some of the time, in some way) to help them. Students should know that this is a different skill than simply being outgoing; you don't have to want to spend time with people all of the time in order to help them. Rather, just keeping an eye out for other people's moods, helping other people when a situation presents itself to us, and other simple tasks can make a huge difference for our community. Helping students realize that this is a basic human need and that doing this can make both ourselves and our neighbors happier and healthier people may lay a logical foundation for empathy. (Frustrated students, and even parents, may wonder why you're spending so much time and focus teaching them how to recognize and respond to emotions. For parents, going over some of the evidence laid out in section two of this course may help. For students, it may be enough to simply ask them how they feel after they help another person.)

- **Teach students that the goal of listening to other people should be to understand, not just to respond.** We've all been in that situation at a party where we know that the person we're speaking to isn't actually taking in what we're saying; rather, the person is just waiting for the next opportunity to speak. This is a frustrating situation, and one that we should teach students to avoid from a young age. While some part of the human brain will always be working on our ability to respond in any situation — that's innate and protective — we need to respect the art of listening, and listening well. Listening allows people to feel valued and seen, which can reduce frustration and stress. Teach your students how to listen well, with eye contact, pauses after sentences, and follow-up questions. See if the conversational atmosphere in your classroom changes. Ask students how they feel after having a more considered conversation (even if it's staged or only a few seconds long), as opposed to having one person run all over a conversation. If you wish to challenge your students to practice the art of conversing well, pair the students up in small groups and give them something to talk about. Walk around the groups and moderate, as needed, to make sure that more outgoing students aren't simply running the show. This will be an ongoing initiative, but it's one that should pay off in spades.

What does a supportive classroom environment look like?

Research shows us that the environment where students are educated has a significant impact on their happiness and on the overall effectiveness of their education. As a teacher, you likely know that already — which is why you and many teachers all across the nation tend to spend an abundance of time and resources making sure that the classroom is a safe, happy, and beautiful place to be.

As we reflect on the importance of empathy, support, and teamwork, it is critical to think about ways to prioritize and emphasize the value of support through classroom design. Practical ideas include the following (Kidspace, 2020):

- Acknowledge the fact that a classroom itself can serve as a means to teach children positive ways to treat one another. Many young students are visual learners. Even those who aren't will turn to the physical objects and visual resources available in your classroom for cues, subtle or overt, as to how they need to act. Include prompts throughout your classroom that make it clear your classroom is a community of kind, empathetic, and supportive individuals. A photo wall full of candids of your students interacting kindly and happily can

promote this atmosphere, as can a chart that helpfully illustrates different emotions — or even a chart that provides common sentence starters to help students navigate conversations with each other.

- In your messaging, whether it's verbal or physical, always emphasize that your students are capable and strong. Psychological studies show us that when students react out of spite or malice, this usually comes from feeling weak or insecure; acting in a more measured, connected way comes from a place of central strength and power. Feature and reinforce this central thought throughout your classroom environment.

- Ground all of your academic exercises — or as many of them as possible — in real-world experiences. This doesn't necessarily mean mentioning pop icons or current events in all math problems, for example, but young people are interested in events or stories they can relate to. One of the biggest differences between purely academic exercises and work that's grounded in reality is the expectation for quick perfection and the arrival at a single predetermined, pre-approved answer. While there are necessary instances when there is only one correct answer, there are also cases where students should be rewarded for tackling projects that are a little more creative in nature, and where they may not have one set answer. When they find that they are having problems or cannot find a solution, make sure that they and everyone else knows that trial and error teaches resilience and that mistakes are found abundantly in reality, and it's not a big problem. Support them through their setbacks, and frame mistakes as inevitable chapters on the way to success. This will make students feel both emotionally and academically supported — and it may even strengthen their creativity and problem-solving skills for use in other areas of their life.

- Make sure that your students are able to get up and move over the course of the day. This will help students feel healthier and happier, and will support helpful, positive thoughts as opposed to more frustrating, solitary ones.

- Whenever your students experience an achievement of any kind, recognize that. You don't need to have a trite participation trophy corner of your room; rather, it may be enough to simply foster an environment wherein you and your students are able to recognize when someone else is proud of an accomplishment. When this happens, you should teach your students to offer up simple congratulatory sentences and meaningful compliments. (Again, having these sentence stems on

a poster in your classroom may be very helpful for your more visual learners) (Kidspace, 2020).

- Teach your students that happiness, success, and support is not a zero-sum game. In the larger culture, many people feel that they need to attack people who are doing well because they believe that success and happiness are only granted to a few — and that another person's happiness directly and negatively affects their own ability to be happy. This is the psychological root underlying jealous attacks and passive-aggressive 'compliments' often paid to people who are celebrating a win. If at all possible, impress on your students that you're working toward a framework wherein everyone can win and be happy — and, so, there doesn't need to be anything bitter about another student's successful moment. (As a central authoritative figure in your classroom, you can reinforce this by celebrating the triumphant moments of all students, often, on a regular basis. (Kidspace, 2020).

- Turn your classroom into an environment of celebrating who each individual student is. The diversity, cultural, and socioeconomic makeup of the average American classroom is swiftly changing, and that can create an atmosphere where bullying, confusion, and resentment exist. Be up front with your students about the differences apparent in your classroom, and take the time in your day to examine and celebrate the stories that make each of us who we are. This can be subtle — e.g., assigning books written by diverse authors.

What are some specific strategies we can use to encourage students to get along and support each other?

If you're a teacher, you know that this is something that you constantly have to be aware of and that you are always working to perfect. You can have all of the sky-high plans and dreams you want for your students, but they can, at times, despite your best efforts, be mean to each other, ignore each other, fail to work flawlessly as a unit during team projects, or even pretend to do all of the above while silently and invisibly being incredibly unkind to one another.. Children may act cruelly from time to time.

Other students take a significant amount of time to understand basic lessons about the importance of being good to each other.

This does not mean that these students are necessarily malicious or 'bad.' It just means that this may be a counter-cultural movement — and that supporting each other can be

difficult and non-intuitive at times. Part of teaching well is teaching the nuts and bolts of positive student-student interactions. As tempting as it is to assume that this is something that comes naturally, it isn't.

Here are a few specific strategies you can use to help students figure out how to express themselves helpfully, build rapport with other students, become more comfortable with each other, and work better as a team in full support of each other (Ingle, 2019):

- Make 'two minute talks' a habit in your classroom. Create a series of simple prompts or conversation starters (such as 'what's your favorite dessert?', or 'which would you rather do, go to the beach or a mountaintop?') and place them in an accessible format — print them out and cut them up, or simply put them in a flashcard on your screen so you can easily present one at a time to the entire classroom. Periodically and strategically throughout your students' days (or even just once during your class period), signal that it's time for a rapid-fire two-minute talk, and flash the question at hand. Ask the students to speak to a very specific person — e.g., the person on their left, the person they're assigned to work with, or someone that they haven't spoken with yet that day. The extreme structure of this practice should reduce pressure; the students will already know exactly what to talk about, and they need only talk for two minutes. (If you have students for whom this may still be a problem, consider showing them the question ahead of time or something similar.) Perhaps this could become a ritual that occurs at the beginning of a team activity as an ice-breaker or it can be used as a short social break in between longer periods of study. Either way, this will help students practice quick, effective conversations and learn more about each other.

- Construct a class playlist—perhaps a new one for each month or semester, so it's something that your students are able to look forward to on a regular basis. When it's time to create the playlist, have each of your students get up and write the name of an artist or a song they like on the board in your class. (You can adapt this practice to your classroom format; perhaps students could type suggestions into a chat, or something similar.) Make it clear that you have veto power, and that students should exercise some wisdom regarding appropriate song suggestions. Forcing students into a situation where they need to brainstorm something fun together like this can prompt easy conversation. You could also have students suggest music as a two-minute talk or exit ticket, instead, and then have students explain why they made their picks in small groups. This is a fun activity that can help students bond and help open their minds a little bit. If any

one student is being loud or judgmental about another student's music choices, challenge the student (or see if another does) to have a more open mind about the situation.

- When you're forming student groupings, be very intentional. You know your students better than anyone, so you're the person best suited to creating teams that will work together very effectively. Put students together who will be able to learn from each other in the best way possible — personalities that seem to suit each other well, and a good mix of introverted and extroverted students. This can help keep the social dynamics balanced so that the students, when grouped, will stand the best possible chance of working together as a cohesive unit (Kaechele, 2020).

- Consider employing group contracts. While it might be tempting to throw students together (even well-chosen, highly-strategic groups of students), and hope for the best, your chances of success will skyrocket if you give the students some semblance of a structure to cling to. Your students may in fact work together naturally, but developing a group contract (or something that sounds a little more fun and personal) can be beneficial. This will help solidify each student's personal role within the group, the expectations for the group as a whole and each person within the group, and more. You could call this document a whimsical Cast of Characters, a Group Charter, a Productive Plan, or anything else — but listing the requirements and expectations up front and giving everyone a copy is as good an idea for a group project as it is in a business situation (Kaechele, 2020).

- Assign roles within the group with an eye toward SEL competencies. After creating a group contract, you should have an idea of the various roles that will need to go into the team structure. However, if you think outside the box a little bit, you could overtly or subtly make the assigning of team roles into an SEL exercise. Instead of making one student the captain or leader of the project, put one person in charge of Responsible Decision Making. Instead of having another student do research for the project, have that individual be in charge of Social Awareness or Relationship Skills. Along with this, you will likely have to have some traditional roles represented in your team structure in order for the students to efficiently complete the task (Kaechele, 2020).

- Have your students critique another collaboration. Pull up a video of a famous cast of characters (or a group relevant in pop culture) completing a task at hand.

Old sitcoms might be good for this, as long as they're age appropriate, or YouTube compilations may also help. Give your students an overview regarding how a group works well together (e.g., listening to each other, staying on task, making sure that each person understands what another person is saying) and then watch the clip, asking the students to notice whether the group is working together and understanding each other as well as they can. (This is why a funny clip might work well, as the crux of many older sitcom jokes is actually, very simply, the characters not functioning very well as a team.) When the clip is over, invite the group of students to decide why or why not the team worked together in an effective way. Alternatively, you could invite your students to watch the result of a massive group effort (say, a short scene from a Star Wars movie, or you could ask them to examine a large architectural structure) and then ask the students exactly what project roles and competencies were required to get that job completed so well (Kaechele, 2020).

- When in doubt, have your students play a game that doubles as a team building activity! Ask them to tell a story where each person contributes one word, build a small structure out of something inconvenient (like chopsticks or marshmallows), or even imagine how they might tackle a larger project (e.g., building a structure in your town, or filming an episode of their favorite TV show). Coming together to brainstorm and execute a spontaneous project can force your students into their roles as an effective team — and, if this doesn't happen intuitively and naturally for a group of students, you can be there to help ensure that every student is working together as kindly and productively as possible with simple guidance (Kaechele, 2020).

- Have your students take a quick personality assessment (such as the Myers Briggs framework). These types of personality quizzes are fun for students, easy to administer, and can help give students a context for understanding both themselves and each other's needs in a team setting (Kaechele, 2020).

Section 3 Key Points

- Assigning team roles may help with many of the common downsides of working within a team structure. These roles may include options such as relationship manager, project leader, and timekeeper.

- When we're helping young people unlock empathy, we need to teach them how to take on the perspective of another and then act according to that information.
- Teachers can model empathy by talking about their own feelings, sometimes in an overexaggerated way, to help students understand the connection between emotion and action.
- Simply observing another person can be enough to tell us a lot about how that individual may be feeling.

Conclusion

Teaching, practicing, and learning empathy, as well as teaching students to support each other and participate in high-quality teamwork can take a lot of patience, but the end result is worth it. Helping students learn how to function alongside their peers now will help them far into the future! By teaching your students how to recognize and deal with emotions productively, you're helping them enjoy more meaningful relationships and more productive teamwork experiences. These efforts will help every member of your classroom and help boost the community in your class, as well.

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