

Teaching Social Awareness to Middle School Students

Presented by

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What is social awareness?

- CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) defines social awareness as being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences and recognizing and making best use of family, school and community resources.

Empathy, why is it important and how do we instill it in our students?

- Definition: identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives.
- Empathy is a learned skill.
- Interpret social cues accurately to be successful in school and later in life.
- Promote social-emotional skills which lead to improved academic achievement, fewer conduct problems, better grades and test scores, and less emotional stress.
- Student should be able to demonstrate caring and concern for others.
- Instill empathy by involving students in SEL skill training programs during school and after school.

Students without empathetic skills:

- May be sociopaths and not able to learn empathetic skills.
- Tend to be in a state of emotional distress.
- Find it easier to bully others.
- May be psychopaths.
- May end up in jail/prison or in politics.
- Do poorly in school, cheat on tests, fail a couple of grades.
- Have no positive role models at home or in the community.
- Will be in your schools: students, parents, co-workers, administrators, community leaders, etc.

Empathy Myths

1. Never give into your emotions. (Coleman, P.)
2. Feelings are a weakness and you have to be tough in life to make it. (Coleman, P.)
3. Adults think children do not have empathy. (Weissbourd, R.)
4. Talking about whether children have empathy is misleading. (Weissbourd, R.)

Do you have good empathy skills?

- Before you can teach empathy, you must be able to learn to be empathetic towards others, which means you have to look at your own beliefs. If you are against divorce and your friend is going through a divorce, you have to have the ability to put aside your feelings, biases, values, concerns and prejudices. What prejudices' do you have that might prevent you from being able to teach empathy to your students?

Bell Work Exercises-

Examples for students to write about how they would react in each situation

- A classmate trips and falls down the steps on the way to lunch.
- A classmate thinks you intentionally pushed him when in fact you bumped into him by accident. He yells at you and says mean things to you.
- A classmate gets sick and throws up in the classroom.
- A classmate does poorly on a test and cries.
- You get angry at a classmate and hit him or her.
- You have a birthday party and invite all your classmates except one.
- You are choosing teams for soccer. There is only one person left and you know he/she is not very good. So you and the other captain argue about who should have that player on their team. You argue right in front of the person, and that person starts to cry.

Lesson Plans 1-17

- SEL competency-Social Awareness
- Skills taught
- Learning sequence
- Indicators of success

Group Activities:

Empathy building activities.

- Activity-who do we appreciate? (Class)
- Story-Rusty and Raymond-animal
- Story-Greg's Dilemma-animal
- Legislating equal access (Word Work)
- Fighting prejudice and discrimination against people with learning disabilities (English/language arts)

Bibliography

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Websites

- Diversity Council.org
- Teaching tolerance.org
- <http://info.wheelock.edu/aspirewire/bid/142555/Three-Myths-That-Challenge-Empathy-In-Children>
- <http://www.deewr.gov.au/>