



Ontario Institute for Education Leadership L'Institut de leadership en éducation de l'Ontario

*Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.*

Empathy as a Tool For Equity

By El-Mallah, S., Pfister, T. (2022, February 1), ASCD

In this article, the authors argue the importance of empathy as a quality an educator draws on to foster and promote equity. They point out that the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on student learning confirmed the role that empathy can play in addressing inequities. They point out that there are barriers to empathy. These can be addressed using the strategies at three levels – the individual, the classroom and the system; for example:

- Unlearning racism and learning antiracism
- Engaging in effective allyship,
- Rooting out unconscious biases
- Practicing empathetic communication
- Modelling empathy in interactions
- Integrating discussions about issues such as white supremacy,
- Displaying culturally relevant symbols to students,
- Calling in, rather than calling out,
- Being open and vulnerable about personal biases, and
- Using stories to support evidence of inequity and disparity.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the ways you have observed educators using empathy to connect with their students?

2. The authors mention using Flipgrid, apps and virtual exhibits for fostering/promoting empathy and diversity. How can school leaders engage their staff to integrate technology into diversity programs/courses?

3. What are barriers educators might have in implementing empathy in the school and classroom? What are some ways that think personal experiences can both erode and enhance empathy?
