

the TEACHERS GUILD

Unit 1

Empathy

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Instructions

Make a copy of this document. Answer each reflection question in 1-2 paragraphs. Save it as a PDF and post it in your district's collaboration space on www.teachersguild.org.

Reflection

Who are you? How does your identity and role affect how people interact with you?

This is an interesting questions. As an Assistant Principal, I feel like I have to adjust who I am based on who I am talking to. When working with teachers. I need to know their personality traits, communication preferences and learning styles. Then I adapt based on what I know. I would prefer to be direct and cut to the chase but know that does not work with everyone. If I want to be effective, I have to make those adjustments. This also rings true when working with students.

This is hard sometime because I know as a leader it is my role to adapt to others. There are times I just want to be myself and have but then see the repercussions.

Which Empathy activity did you complete? Reflect on how it felt to complete the Empathy activity. Please post any videos, notes, or artifacts from your Empathy activity.

I did Empathy Interviews with a group of 7th grade students. After reading the empathetic discipline article, I was really curious to hear the perspective around discipline from students. I used StoryCorps to record my interviews. I am not sure I know how to upload it, yet!

I feel like it was really helpful insight from a student's perspective. I asked the following questions:

If you could change one thing about Thunder Valley, what would it be?

How do you feel when students are disruptive, disrespectful or misbehave?

Why do you think students are disruptive, disrespectful or misbehave?

If you were a principal how would you make school better for students?

What do you want teachers to know about Middle School students?

If you had the choice to change schools, would you? Why or Why not?

What might some solutions be when students are disruptive, disrespectful or misbehaving?

It was powerful to hear their insight. I interviewed a mix of students. Students who are constantly disruptive, students who are always doing what they are suppose to and some in the middle. I think the bottom line is students care about their teachers, they have great ideas on how to problem solve. I was inspired and want to challenge some of these students to create actionable solutions based on the ideas they shared. One was to have a class that students are allowed to be up and moving and more active. This will help students who struggle to concentrate. Students do have empathy for their teachers and feel bad for teachers when they are being treated disrespectful.

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How do you collect information on students' experiences, emotions and motivations at your school? What do you do with this perspective?

When students are having challenges in school, I always try to understand. I explain to students that if I understand why I can better help and support them. I ask a lot of questions and try to connect with students. I try to create a safe space for students to be honest about what makes them angry. Then I make decisions on how to support the student.

During this I build great relationships and learn what is going on in students lives that is causing behaviors. The challenge is that I understand their perspective and work with them in getting back to class. Sometime it is difficult for teachers to understand why they are back in class and were only "talked" to. It is a challenge to be on the same page with so many different teaching personalities. Some teachers really want students punished when I know that is not going to help the situation or the student to improve. I am sharing the article with teachers so they can reflect on where their beliefs are.