AN EMPATHY TOOLKIT FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

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We accept the Major Project as conforming to the required standards.

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EMPATHY TOOLKIT

Abstract

This project identified the reasons why it is essential that educators directly teach the skill of empathy, explored the development of empathy and identified researched based methods for teaching empathy to primary students. Throughout the project, the British Columbia curricular and core competencies were considered and linked to lesson ideas. An empathy toolkit was created for teachers to access when teaching empathy. The toolkit consists of four sections; why it is important to teach empathy, how to integrate empathy lessons on a daily basis, classroom lessons and ways to focus on empathy at a school level.

Keywords:

empathy, core competencies, moral courage, kindness, compassion, service learning, self regulation, perspective taking, empathy plasticity, emotional language, roots of empathy
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Chapter 1: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research project was to develop a toolkit of lessons that teachers can access to directly teach the skill of empathy to students from the ages of 7 - 10. The goal was two fold. The first intention was to illustrate the importance of teaching empathy to students. The second, was to develop well researched lesson ideas that lead to best practice when teaching empathy in the classroom.

As an educator with over 25 years of experience, there is a general belief by myself and many of my colleagues that our current students are not as empathetic as the students of the past. The belief is that students today are different than those we taught 20 years ago and have a difficult time relating to one another. We wondered if this was due, in part, to our greater reliance on technology and less face to face connection time (Borba, 2016). Many a staffroom conversation was centred around societal changes such as; the effects of technology, over scheduled children and students who no longer knew how to play. We were curious if this lack of social emotional learning and understanding was triggering more playground and learning issues for our students. We discussed how many societal changes, including the use of technology, can be considered good and forward thinking, we wondered if some of the social emotional skills that used to be taught at home or through play were now lacking.

The effects of a greater reliance on technology, and in particular the use of social media, is complex. Some researchers, such as Szalavitz and Perry (2010) point out the benefits and states, “social networking sites can link us to distant relatives and friends with whom we might otherwise lose touch. These contacts and the emotions they engage are real. And when online social
networks or games add to face-to-face relationships—rather than substitute for them—they can improve our relatedness and compassion.” (p. 228). I agree with this statement, especially about connecting with distant relatives and friends, however, I also wonder if through the advent of social media, it is easier for people to lose the human connection as they hide behind screens. Thus, it could be easier to make judgements without understanding context or feeling connected to a human being. This then could lead to a lack of empathy. For example, in September a social media post was made to a parent’s group that, while at school, a student stated that a sibling of a classmate looked “weird”. The sibling had leukaemia and all the associated visible effects. Many parents commented on how the student was a “bully” and demanded “what is the school doing about it?” Had the parents taken time to learn more about the context, and not just relied on a snippet of information, I believe their response would have been much more empathetic. As an educator, when looking at the context and knowing the child who made the comment, the word “bullying” didn’t fit. However, the student demonstrated a lack of understanding of the situation and was certainly not empathic.

Additionally around the same time period, another student (with challenges) had a tantrum and was on his stomach turning circles on our class table. He was frustrated as he had not been asked to play at recess by a member of the group he wanted to join. In watching the reactions of the other students, I realized that they were unsure of how to react. They were also unaware of how their words and actions had impacted the upset student.

Both of these situations caused me to pause and evaluate what was happening for the learners in my classroom. I recognized that although I teach great children, some of them had a hard time putting themselves in the shoes of others. Some of my students demonstrated low
Empathy. Based on these observations and reflections, I concluded that there was a need for direct empathy training for students.

**Justification of the Project**

It is essential for us to incorporate empathy training in our classrooms. Not only will empathy training help our students today but is important for their futures as well. Tony Wagner (2012) has suggested that as we move from a “product based” to a “knowledge based” society, being empathic is essential to move forward. In order to solve the problems of the future, people will need to not only understand the problem but also the implications of possible solutions. In order to do this, people will need to be empathic. Daniel Pink (2006) believes that the future belongs to a very different kind of person with a different kind of mind. He believes that our new world will belong to creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers. He has found that as we are progressing as a society, logical thought simply isn’t enough. He states that “the capacity for logical thought is one of the things that makes us human. But in a world of ubiquitous information and advanced analytic tools, logic alone won’t do. What will distinguish those who thrive will be their ability to understand what makes their fellow woman or man tick, to forge relationships and to care for others” (p. 66). Thus, being empathic is a trait that not only our students need to be successful now, but also as adults.

Here in British Columbia, our past grades based system primarily focused on the three R’s of reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic has been revamped and there has been a move to the core competencies. The core competencies consist of creative and critical thinking, social responsibility, personal awareness, communication, and positive personal and cultural identity. These core competencies underscore all curricular competencies and has meant that educators
need to recognize the underlying skills students need in order to be successful. Empathy is a keystone to many of these competencies. Empathy underscores the competencies of personal awareness and positive personal and cultural identity but is also found in the thinking core competency. This made the creation of an empathy toolkit very relevant for classrooms today.

Understanding and teaching the whole child is essential for their growth and development, this includes not just academics but also their character. For example, the desire to be at school is greatly influenced by many factors including the ability to form and maintain friendships. Thomas Hoerr’s (2016) work illustrates how students with low empathy have a harder time with friendships, as they are not able to see the perspective of others. Other students lose patience and will turn away as the relationship is one sided. There is also an assumption that children with low empathy are at a greater risk of being a bully or of being victimized. However, when our students are empathic, they have a much easier time self-managing, are better able to deescalate their symptoms and are empowered with skills for long term self care (Costa, 2014). They are able to show care and sympathetic concern for others which allows students to form bonds. It seems likely that the sooner we can help students achieve social success, the more likely this will carry on into their adulthood.

There is a substantial knowledge base supporting the belief that empathy can be directly taught. Dr. Michele Borba (2016) has spent thirty years researching children and what makes a child happy and successful. She has concluded that it is the trait of empathy that allows our children to succeed emotionally and academically. Contrary to a belief that children are naturally emphatic, she states that, “empathy can be instilled and it is composed of teachable habits that can be developed, practiced and lived” (p. xiii). Thomas Hoerr (2016) goes one step
farther and states that, “empathy must be taught, just like any other skill” (p. 41). Through the work of these researchers, it is clear that empathy is something that children can learn.

Thomas Hoerr (2016) identifies six basic steps to developing empathy. These steps include listening, understanding (taking the time to learn what is being said and how), internalizing (placing themselves in others shoes to experience feelings), projecting (imagining how they would react in that same situation), planning (planning a response) and intervening. This can be achieved through direct instruction, modelling and employing a variety of strategies integrated into lessons on a day-to-day basis. Each of these skills need to be explicitly taught and modelled in classrooms and formed the basis for the empathy toolkit.

Despite the evidence demonstrating the importance empathy has in the success of our students, there are few materials available to support the direct teaching of the skill. Many of the tools that were found, such as Second Step and Roots of Empathy, began in the 1990’s. Although the tools may have been updated, schools have not kept pace with the improvements and these materials found in many schools now show their age. Unlike other skills, there is no scope and sequence to use when teaching empathy; the teacher is left to his/her own devices to create something that would work. As such, empathy is often a skill not explicitly taught despite its huge importance. An empathy toolkit provides teachers the materials they need in order to help their students succeed.

**Research Question**

Given the observation that some students are lacking in empathy and the importance of the need to be empathic, my question became “why is the teaching of empathy important and what resources would best support teachers when teaching the skill of empathy to their
students?”. These resources were then organized into a “toolkit” of lessons and ideas to explicitly teach empathy.

**Definition of Terms**

Although there are a few differing definitions of empathy, most models concur with Baron, Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) that empathy is, “the ability to understand and share other individuals’ emotions and thus include a cognitive as well as an emotional component” (p. 163). Cognitive empathy includes recognizing emotions and perspective taking while emotional empathy is the ability to share a feeling more adequately to another person’s situation than to their own. Thus, individuals are able to think about others and from differing perspectives. In order to be truly empathic, one needs to have developed both of these components. While this definition certainly encompasses the true heart of empathy, it does not state why being empathic matters.

Bridget Cooper (2004) used the definition that, “empathy is a quality shown by individuals which enables them to accept others for who they are, to feel and perceive situations from their perspective and to take a constructive and long-term attitude towards the advancement of their situation by searching for solutions to meet their needs” (p. 14). This definition also includes both an emotional and cognitive level but goes farther in identifying what to do with this understanding. Although I strongly agree with most of this definition, I do not believe that being empathetic means that a solution must always be found. Sometimes, being empathic simply means understanding in a constructive manner.

For the purpose of this project, combining these two definitions formed the definition of empathy for this research paper: empathy is the ability to accept others on an emotional level, to
feel and perceive situations from another’s perspective while cognitively working towards constructive understanding.

Toolkit refers to a variety of ideas for integrating direct and indirect empathy lessons. Lesson ideas, suggestions for daily integration and school wide projects form the base of the toolkit.

**Brief Overview of the Project**

The empathy toolkit consists of four sections. The first section illustrates the importance of teaching empathy. The second section highlights ways for teachers to integrate empathy into their already existing curriculum on a daily basis. The third section provides educators with lesson ideas to specifically teach empathy as a skill. The final and fourth section includes ways to build empathy into a school culture.

Teachers recognize that time with their students is precious and need to have clear, well researched reasons to teach what they do. Section one of the toolkit provides the theory and the “why” for teachers. It makes clear links between empathy, the core competencies and current research. Section one provides the justification for teaching empathy.

Section two includes the importance of daily interaction and empathy development. Ways to weave empathy into current curriculum competencies is demonstrated. This section speaks to developing empathy habits.

Throughout section three, teachers will find lesson ideas to teach empathy as a direct skill. The lessons are targeted for ages 7 - 10 but many lessons can be adapted for younger or older students. These lessons are both stand alone and ones that build on one another.
Section four features ideas to build empathy development into a school culture. Service learning and project based ideas are discussed.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to use research and literature to illustrate the importance of empathy in schools today. The literature and research explored validates the importance of teaching empathy to elementary students. In order to teach empathy, it is critical that educators have an understanding of how empathy is developed in children. Once this understanding is in place, classroom strategies were analyzed and best practise ideas further developed for implementation.

The Importance of Empathy

Tony Wagner (2012), in his book *Creating Innovators*, has defined empathy as “one of the essential qualities of character” (p. 23). This understanding is validated by research conducted by Borba (2016), Hoerr (2016), Gordon (2013), Travangar (2014) and others. These researchers are significant as they have all made contributions to the study of empathy. Dr. Michele Borba is a world renowned educational psychologist who has studied what makes students successful both socially and academically. Throughout her studies, observations and many books, she has determined that empathy is the most important skill that our students need to possess. She speaks of empathy as a verb, not a noun. School leader, Dr. Thomas Hoerr has also determined that empathy is an essential skill for our students. He was written four books and over 100 articles. Empathy is featured in his latest book, titled *The Formative Five: Fostering Grit, Empathy, and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs* (2016). Mary Gordon is recognized throughout the world as an educator, child advocate, parenting expert and social entrepreneur. She is the founder of the organization *Roots of Empathy* and consistently speaks of the power of empathy. Many additional researchers concur, empathy matters. Empathy matters not only for
our students today, but as a life long character trait for all. Some researchers (Wagner (2012), Borba (2016), Hoerr (2016) and Thomas-Calloway (2009) believe that it is one of the top five traits that we, as humans, need to possess.

**Empathy in today’s world.** There has been an increase in the study of empathy throughout the last twenty years. Some, like Cooper (2004), believe that this is in relation to the increases in school shootings. In response to these extreme situations, social emotional learnings have become a focus throughout much of the world: Canada, Australia, United States and many countries in Europe as well. In addition, Thomas-Calloway (2009) stated:

> examining the role of empathy is more significant now than ever before because of the compression of time and space and because in this new age, humans are increasingly drawn together spatially and structurally via film, politics, internet, worldwide television … (para 14).

Throughout the world, race, social and environmental issues are at the forefront of much conflict. This is evident with the recent “Black Lives Matter” protest, refugee clashes and pipeline conflict that have been highlighted in the news. We are living in a time where information is at our fingertips. Being able to decipher through this information with an empathic mindset is crucial to moving our civilization forward. Jeremy Rifflkin speaks to this in his Ted Talk titled “the empathic civilization”. He states that, “we have the technology to think viscerally as a family” and uses the devastating earthquake in Haiti to demonstrate how fast we, as a global world, can be connected. In the first hour, following the earthquake, tweets were being made; in the second hour, youtube videos showing the devastation were available and by the third hour, the world was aware and ready to help. At this point “the entire human race [was] in an empathic
embrace.” Whereas at one time, we were part of a distinct society through religion or nationality, according to Rifkin, we are now at a period of time where we need to “rethink the human narrative” and recognize that technology is allowing us to “extend our identities to think of the human race as fellow sojourners.”

There is also a general belief that this informational overload has made it easier for people to remain detached from what they are reading. As Turkle (2011) noted in Seligrem’s research, “the cyber cultures [have] become worlds of alienation and distraction, dividing us from our authentic selves as well as from one another” (abstract). It is also believed that the physical devices used to gather this information is at fault in creating less empathic people as they promote less face-to-face time, which is crucial when practising empathy. “We are teaching [children] to be entertained by an object, letting this object take care of them-rather than kids learning to entertain and care for themselves” (Gopal, “n.d.”, para 6). This lack of socialization is having detrimental consequences in creating empathic citizens.

**Importance of empathy in young children.** Although we are all born with empathy, it is like a muscle and needs to be practised in order to be built (“Empathy 101”, 2011). As Kutner (“n.d.”) stated in his article “How Children Develop Empathy”, “unlike intelligence and physical attractiveness, which depend largely on genetics, empathy is a skill that children can learn” (para 3). Beginning right from birth, face-to-face contact and creating an environment in which empathy is nurtured is important for development. When younger children expand their empathy repertoire, the benefits are numerous.

Moreno, Klute and Robinson (2008) found that, “younger children with higher empathy have been shown to exhibit various temperamental strengths such as positivity, non-
inhibitedness, and less fearful” (p. 617). Children who are fearful have a more difficult time learning and experiencing new situations. Yet, having the ability to enter situations with a positive and “let’s get going” attitude allows children to be more involved in the opportunities that are provided. Further, “empathy is thought to have a key role in motivating prosocial behaviour, inhibiting aggression and providing the affective and motivational bases for moral development” (Decety, 2012, vii). Thus, empathy has a part in helping children develop the self regulation skills that are necessary in order to have successful relationships. Prosocial behaviour includes the beginning of the “helping behaviours” that are so necessary in moving thoughts and actions away from oneself (McDonald and Messinger, “n.d.”, p. 17).

Berkley University’s Greater Good Science Centre researches the neuroscience, psychology and sociology of well being. Education director Zakrzewski, as quoted by O hEochaidh (2013) stated that, “learning to recognize, understand, manage and express emotions is seen as key to building healthy relationships and achieving academic, career and life goals” (para 3). This learning about emotions begins as soon as babies are born and continues throughout their development. Understanding, controlling and relating to these emotions are at the heart of empathy. When emotional understanding is in place, children are able to achieve goals, whether they are relational or life goals.

**Importance of empathy in school age children.** Tavangar (2014), the author of Growing Up Global: Raising Children to Be At Home in the World, and hailed by national education and business leaders, stated that;

my most important back-to-school supply doesn’t fit in a backpack, and it can’t be ordered online. It’s as essential as a pencil, but unlike a pencil, no technology can replace it. In a
sense, like a fresh box of crayons, it can come in many colors. Better than the latest
gadget, it’s possible to equip every student with it, and even better, when we do, it can
transform our world (para 1).

Tavangar was referring to empathy in her statement. As she inferred, when we teach our children
the skills needed to develop empathy, the results are numerous and widespread. In particular,
scientific research is beginning to demonstrate that there is a very strong relationship between
social-emotional learning and cognitive development and performance. Yale’s Centre for
Emotional Intelligence conducted research that showed that, “students with higher emotional
intelligence are better prepared to manage their emotional lives so they can focus, learn, and do
their best in school” (para 3). This makes sense as educators know that when emotions are in
check children are able to focus and learning improves. Jolliffe and Farrington (2011) found that
there is a “fundamental belief that a greater amount of empathy inhibits antisocial behaviour and
increases the likelihood of prosocial behaviour” (p. 59). Again, this speaks to increased learning
opportunities as when children are more social, they are more connected and engaged in the topic
being studied. As cited by Lopez and Dupois (2005) in McKown, Gombiner and Russo’s (2009)
research, “students who are socially rejected, have a much harder time at school and can be at
risk for later adjustment troubles, including academic underachievement, school dropout,
criminal activity and psychiatric problems” (abstract). Keeping our students engaged with each
other, as well as socially successful, has huge benefits in terms of “attitudes about self, others
and school; pro-social behaviours; and academic performance. In addition, conduct and
internalizing problems decreased” (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009, p. 166). This understanding was
also validated by Kutner who recognized that, “children who are empathic tend to do better in
school, in social situations, and in their adult careers. Children and teenagers who have the greatest amount of skill at empathy are viewed as leaders by their peers” (para 3). Empathic leaders are what our world needs.

**The benefits of having an empathic school culture.** The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that, “empathic schools lead to greater school connectedness [and is the] strongest protective factor to decrease substance use, school absenteeism, early sex, violence and risk of unintentional injury” (p. 1). They assert that when students are in environments in which they feel cared for by those around them, there are far reaching effects. Many schools throughout the United States have turned to an organization named *Playworks* to help them achieve this empathic culture. Playworks is an organization that aims to help kids stay active and build social-emotional skills through play. Although Playworks is a program found in low-income schools in the United States, I believe that results can be extrapolated to Canadian schools as results were not focused on a particular school or country, rather on children and the effects of the intervention. In reaching conclusions and gathering data, all Playworks schools were asked to complete a survey. The survey consisted of likert scale rating questions as well as open-ended questions. The survey was completed after most schools had received nine months of programming. Programming included Playworks coaches working at schools, staff training and online support. Based on the 2017 National Results from the Playworks Annual Survey, it is evident that when a concerted effort is made in developing social emotional skills, the school as a whole benefits. Results from 7 998 respondents found;
It should be noted that this was a study completed by the Playworks organization so the results should be viewed with a possible bias. However, the results do support findings from other researchers as well. Dar’s (2016) research also found that, “schools should encourage establishment of school based programs that help children deal with emotions and also promote community service” (p. 2412). Hamre and Painta (2005) referenced, “theories of motivation suggest that students who experience sensitive, responsive, and positive interactions with teachers perceive them as more supportive and are more motivated within the academic contexts of schooling (p.951). When students feel more supported and that they belong, they are less likely to be absent. They no longer feel that they will be bullied or that no one will care if they are absent. This is an important finding, as Romero (2007) found, “absenteeism increases the likelihood of poor academic performance, disengagement from school and behaviour problems” (p. 3). Being present at school is important to a sense of belonging. Additionally, empathic schools find that there is less need for the teacher to spend as much time on classroom management. Students arrive in class ready to learn, providing teachers with more time to teach and leading to increases in overall school performance (Laouri, 2015, para 12).

**The link between empathy and bullying and aggression.** Bullying expert Rigby (2002) stated that, “bullying involves a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + (typically)
repetition + an unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim” (p. 51). Although there has been a general belief that less empathic people are more inclined to be “bullies” or “victims”, research proving this is difficult to find. One of the problems with this type of study is that the research would require a longitudinal approach and one cannot predict who will be a bully or be bullied. In addition to it being difficult to predict who will be bullied or become a bully, it is highly doubtful that a Research Ethics Board would approve a study in which an individual is being hurt. Thus, concrete data is not available. However, there are some assumptions that indicate a link. Fried and Sosland (2009) have stated that, “empathy should be a part of every student’s understanding and behaviour repertoire and that no bullying prevention program can succeed without empathy practice” (p. 81). Lawson (2013) found that being "proactive in teaching empathy as a skill can decrease bullying behaviours” (p. 80). It is important that empathy training is in place as the Roots of Empathy organization has stated that, “high level of childhood aggression is problematic long term as it is a significant predictor of adult criminal behaviour and other anti-social behaviours” (rootsforempathy.org). Noted advocates Lady Gaga, Craig and Mark Kielburger (from “Me to We”) to Bully director Lee Hirsch have suggested that stopping bullying at its root depends on equipping kids with the empathy and agency they need to think and act as change makers (Stanford University Study). Instead of teaching students to “not bully”, providing the skills to be changemakers is at the heart of lasting change. As Lawson, President and Co-Founder of Peace First (2013) stated,

It starts with addressing exclusion and bullying by developing courage, compassion and communication, and goes beyond that to engage young people in seeing themselves as
agents of social change. In an increasingly connected world, our ability to form healthy and productive relationships, particularly across lines of difference, to care for one another, and to work with others to improve the lives of others has no other parallel. Empathy without action is meaningless. Action without empathy is heartless (para 7).

Thus, students who have been part of empathy training find increases in positive and inclusive behaviours including helpfulness, sharing and willingness to include other students in games and groups.

**The lifelong benefits of developing empathy.** Strauss (2017, Dec. 20) wrote in “The surprising thing Google learned about its employees - and what it means for today’s students” that, “what helps you thrive in a changing world isn’t rocket science. It may just well be social science, and, yes, even the humanities and the arts that contribute to making you not just workforce ready but WORLD ready” (para 11). The goal of educators is indeed to create world ready students. Previously, this meant getting students job ready. The current role of educators is much more diverse. The Government of B.C.’s Statement of Education Policy (2017) states; the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to contrive to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy (p.3).

With this in mind, British Columbia’s focus on the core competencies throughout all curriculum is relevant as it is these lifelong skills that are highlighted. There is now recognition that helping students become socially and personally responsible, personally and culturally aware, critical and creative thinkers who can effectively communicate is an essential part of what our students need.
21st century skills. Conventional wisdom about 21st century skills indicate that our students, by graduation, should have experienced an education where a large emphasis was placed on the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Technology) subjects and coding because that is where the jobs are. In fact, at a #BCTE CH Summit (March 2017), then Premier Christy Clark, promised that every K-12 student in B.C. would learn how to code. As Strauss (2017) wrote, “it turns out that is a gross simplification of what students need to know and be able to do” (para 1). The article continued by saying, “STEM skills are vital to the world we live in today, but technology alone, as Steve Jobs famously insisted, is not enough. We desperately need the expertise of those who are educated to the human, cultural, and social as well as the computational” (para 10). No longer are we living in a singular skills based world. Interestingly, Google is one of the companies who discovered that STEM skills alone are not the most desirable skill for employees to possess. Originally, Google only chose to hire computer science students with top grades from elite universities. They then crunched the numbers of their hiring policies and firing records to see if the process of hiring only top students worked. They brought in anthropologists and ethnographers to review the data and changed their hiring policies based on the newfound data. Their new hiring policies include hiring humanity majors, artists and even students with M.B.A.’s. As quoted in “The Washington Post” article, Cathy N. Davidson, founding director of the Futures Initiative, professor in the doctoral program in English at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and author of the new book, “The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux.” wrote that, “among the eight most important qualities of Google’s top employees, STEM expertise comes in dead last” (para 2). The seven top characteristics of success at Google are all soft skills: being a good
coach, communicating and listening well, possessing insights into others, having empathy toward and being supportive of one’s colleagues, being a good critical thinker and problem solver and being able to make connections across ideas (para 5). Even Google, a company that is synonymous with technology, recognizes that empathy is needed for innovative, successful employees.

**The importance of empathy on building global awareness.** “Without empathy, we tend to divide people into “us” and “them”, which leads to suspicion, miscommunication and conflict” (Hoerr, 2016, p.38). Throughout history, there have been horrible atrocities committed, in part, due to a lack of empathy. Although extreme, the Holocaust is an example of what can happen when people feel divided and are not able to recognize humanity. The atrocities of the Holocaust were horrific and yet, many populations stood by and did absolutely nothing to help. In the blog, “Empathy-A Vital Skill for Society”, Beall (2016) wrote, “it was better to turn a blind eye, because it may not have involved you, than it was to fathom what the not-so-lucky ones were experiencing and realize that no human being should have to endure such a monstrous event” (para 9). For the people who did demonstrate empathy and help as much as they could, they are remembered with honour. Our history in Canada and British Columbia has also been altered by a lack of empathy. Our abysmal treatment of Aboriginal cultures through residential schools demonstrates what happens when we are unable to see everyone as belonging to the human race. The divide of “us” and “them” allows people to compartmentalize what is happening and allow targeted behaviour. These horrible time periods are an important reminder of the profound difference empathy makes and how important it is for society. Society will only
change when we have more individuals who will stand up and view the world through an empathic lens.

As a society, we need to ensure that empathy is being developed in order to ensure that it is used as a significant tool for humanity. It is especially important for us to remember the importance of empathy as our world is “flattened”. We are no longer unaware of world issues and inequalities throughout the world. Technology has made it impossible for us to not know what is happening worldwide and to turn a blind eye. Thomas-Calloway (2009) shared that this world is “one of anguish, distress, turmoil, and inequality” (para 5). Human inequalities are important to look at in terms of empathy as not only are the imbalances between rich and poor evident but the scale of the inequality has grown. According to census data analyzed by “The Globe and Mail” (2015), “the top 20 per cent among earners saw their employment income increase 9 per cent from 2005 to 2015 and the middle cohort saw growth of 6 per cent over the same period. The bottom group actually saw a decrease of 11% (“Who are Canada’s 1 per cent and highest paid workers”). The highest earners also saw the biggest raises, despite Canada being in a recession. In order to bridge this gap, empathic understanding must be at the heart of decision making. Thomas-Calloway noted that, “much is at stake culturally, economically, and geopolitically when we fail to refashion the world along the lines of empathy” (para 12) and that, “at a time of crucial cultural, economic, and social change, it is imperative to understand how the practice of empathy influences human affairs” (para 7). For example, once our students are able to empathize with people living in Libya who have little water, they would be more likely to seek solutions to solve the issue. Our students today need to be problem solvers. Empathy is the lens they need to use in order to solve the problems of our world.
Barack Obama stated in the Xavier University Commencent speech in 2006 that,

You know, there’s a lot of talk in this country about the federal deficit. But I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit—the ability to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes; to see the world through the eyes of those who are different from us—the child who’s hungry, the steelworker who’s been laid-off, the family who lost the entire life they built together when the storm came to town. When you think like this—when you choose to broaden your ambit of concern and empathize with the plight of others, whether they are close friends or distant strangers—it becomes harder not to act; harder not to help.

Teaching our students to “identify with another person’s feelings often begins with listening and taking the time to not just hear what someone else is thinking and feeling but to understand” (Hoerr, 2016, p. 36) is crucial in developing their empathy and positively contributing to society. Empathy is “foundational to embracing differences, building relationships, gaining a global perspective, conducting richer and deeper analysis, and communicating more effectively” (Tavangar, 2014, para 2). Empathy must be taught and practised in our schools.

**Empathy Development**

Once we know why it is important to teach empathy, it is important to understand how one becomes empathic. Many researchers, such as deWaal (2005), McDonald and Messinger (“n.d.”), and Moreno, Klute and Robinson (2008) have concluded that empathy is an evolved process. Thus, as children grow, most children develop empathic skills in a systematic manner. Socio-economic background does not seem to have an effect on empathy at a young age, although researchers such as Kraus, Cote and Keltner (2010), have shown that this does have an
impact on empathy levels for adolescents and adults. Interestingly, they found that those with a higher socio-economic level were often less empathic than those who were lower on the scale. They concluded that this could be due, in part, to people being further removed from certain situations. Gender and age both have an impact. There is a general belief that females are born more empathetic than males. Schwenck, Hauf, Warnke, Freitag and Schneider (2014) found that females are only a “little more” empathic than males throughout the preschool years, yet “significantly more” by the time they are adolescents. The reasons for this difference is unclear. Is it nature or nurture that creates the change? The difference in empathy levels in age is much more straightforward as empathy levels tend to mirror developmental growth.

Some children have difficulty being empathic due to circumstances beyond their control. Children who have been diagnosed with Autism or on the ASD spectrum have a difficult time demonstrating empathy. This is primarily due to the established theory that individuals on the spectrum have Theory of Mind deficits. Theory of Mind is “conceptualized as the ability to attribute mental states to the self and others” (Premack & Woodruff, 1978 as cited by Johnson, Filliter, and Murphy, 2009, p. 1707). Indeed, there is a school of thought that believes that these Theory of Mind deficits are at the root of an ASD diagnosis. Although there has been much research completed on this topic, the purpose of this paper on empathy focuses on typical development and growth of children.

Researchers have spent time identifying how typical children become empathetic. Many of these studies have required researchers to use alternative methods of data collection as babies and toddlers do not have the language capability to fully explain what is happening in their brains. Empirical, qualitative studies have used perception or responses as a means for detecting
empathy. Thus, much of the research has been conducted through observation, especially in the earlier years. However, research findings have been consistent and there were many similarities found between studies.

**Empathy development birth - age 2.** Prior to 1970, people assumed that babies did not have the capability to demonstrate concern for others (Liddle, Bradley and McGrath, 2015). However, it is now clear that this earlier thought was incorrect and that babies socio-emotional competence begins to develop as soon as they are born. Decety’s (2010) work, completed by observation, shows that as soon as babies are born, they demonstrate *affective arousal* by crying when another baby cries. By ten weeks, babies are capable of imitating expressions of fear, sadness and surprise. For example, when a parent makes a *surprised* face, most babies react by mirroring the parental image. The primary manner in which babies process information is through the reading of faces (Decety, 2010, p. 260). Facial expressions communicate to the baby and help to infer whether a caregiver is pleased or not pleased; happy or sad; or even angry.

Mary Gordon, as stated in Borba’s work (2016) said, “that the best hope for raising caring, concerned, and humane kids rests largely in the early attachment relationship” (p. 6). As Borba (2016) herself states, “the single best predictor of healthy emotional interactions is a lot of face-to-face communication; it’s also the best way to learn emotions and develop human-contact skills” (p. 8). Learning to communicate through non verbal means, such as facial expressions, begins the process of emotional literacy.

Studies of prosocial behaviour with babies is rare as it is very difficult to observe this type of behaviour without the ability for the baby to converse or walk. However, a study from 1988 conducted by Fox and Davidson demonstrated that babies are primed to care. The
researchers fit 38 ten month old infants with tiny skullcaps attached to electrodes. Once the babies were fit, they were held by their mothers. Each baby was then shown a film clip of an actress laughing or crying. When the babies were shown the laughing pictures, they smiled. When the babies were shown the crying pictures, they became sad and some even started to cry. In addition to the visual emotions, the electrodes showed the babies brains were crackling with electrical activity. Their brains were engaged.

There is evidence that by the age of one, some children were able to comfort one another in distress. Many researchers, such as Decety (2010) and Carpenter, Uebel and Tomasello (2013) found that these helping behaviours first appear in the second year of life and that by 14 - 18 months, babies display spontaneous helping behaviours such as “helping” to fold laundry or to put away toys. These shared experiences form the basis for empathy development to begin.

Imitation. Throughout this time period, imitation is used as a means to learn prosocial behaviour. Carpenter, Uebel and Tomasello (2013) stated that, “when we imitate others, or when others imitate us, we connect with them, communicating that there is a likeness between us” and that, “this type of imitation is thought to be a sort of “social glue” that promotes liking and rapport” (para 1). In their study, Being Mimicked Increases Prosocial Behaviour in 18 Month Old Infants, 48 infants (18 months old) were mimicked (or not) during play. As this age group is active, adults “mimicked” the play movements of the infant as they wandered a room, climbed and interacted. Once the interaction had occurred, adults then initiated the “I need help” phase. This phase included verbally asking the infant for help or simply trying to reach for an object. Results demonstrated that infants were more likely to spontaneously help the adult who mimicked them. Infants who were less sociable were dropped from the study which could have
had an impact on the results as children who were more sociable remained to complete the study. However, the results were fairly conclusive. Toddlers who had been mimicked and formed a bond, were more readily willing to help. Empathy development had begun.

**Empathy development 2 years - 4 years.** During this period of growth, language development occurs rapidly and this helps the child communicate her thoughts more readily. Because the child is now able to articulate thoughts and is mobile, there are more researchers studying prosocial behaviour with this age group. Throughout this time period, especially for children who have little socialization with peers, “parents act as the main social objects in the microenvironment of children” (Tong, Shinohara, Sugisawa, Tanaka, Yako, Yamakawa, & Anme, 2012, p. 2470). Therefore, it is especially important for parents to model empathic behaviour as children in this age group have a hard time moving beyond their own emotions and needs. Through their interactions “parents not only transfer the capability of empathy to children by their interactive and empathic behaviours, but also place an emphasis on children’s social emotional growth” (Tong et al., 2012, p. 2459). When situations arise, modelling appropriate actions and talking through feelings are concrete ways to encourage an empathic mindset. Parents showing care and concern for their children, transfers to children showing care and concern for others.

**Tuning into feelings.** Children are beginning to “tune in to feelings” at this age and this is an effective way to build emotional intelligence: “the ability to identify an emotion in yourself or others” (Borba, 2016, p. 7). This tuning in to feelings is especially important as before children can, “‘step into someone’s shoes,’ they must first develop the ability to read non verbal cues in facial expressions, gestures, posture and voice tone” (Borba, 2016, p. 11). Children are
also continuing to build their emotional literacy. “Emotional literacy is what motivates a child to care and it all starts by tuning in to feelings. Identifying, understanding, and expressing emotions are the skills kids need to activate empathy” (Borba, 2016, p.7).

**Theory of mind.** McDonald and Messinger (“n.d.”) showed that, “Theory of Mind helps to transform the early developing affective experience of empathy to a more sympathetic, other focused experience by more fully attaching one’s empathic feelings to a conceptualization of the other’s experience rather than one’s own” (p. 5). Theory of Mind is often demonstrated using a false belief task. McDonald and Messinger explained the false belief tasks in their paper “The Development of Empathy: How, When, and Why.” An example task consisted of children being presented with a scenario involving two characters. One character placed an item somewhere and then left the room. The second character then arrived and moved the item. When the first character re-entered the room, the participating child was asked where the first character would look for the item. If the child has a Theory of Mind, she should respond with the original location rather than the true location, thereby indicating a capability to see the situation from the (limited) perspective of the character who left the room (Wellman et al. 2001). When they are able to do this, children are demonstrating that they are able to see situations from the point of view of others which is an important element in the development of empathy.

**Helping behaviours.** “Children during this time demonstrate a mix of personal (e.g. arousal) and prosocial (e.g. helping behaviours) responses, all of which should be considered part of the ‘empathic repertoire’ in this early stage of development” (Moreno, Klute, Robinson, 2008, 514). Children between the ages of 2 - 4 often love to help others, whether it is around the house or on the playground. It is important to note, as Hoffman states in Tong et al.’s work, that, “the
child tries to help, [but] his actions are misguided because he lacks insight into the inner states of others and assumes that what helps him will help others” (Tong et al., 2012, p. 2458). This is why, when a toddler sees someone who is upset, he will try to share his teddy bear with the upset child. The toddler knows that the teddy bear makes him feel better, so believes that the teddy bear will make everyone feel better. Despite the lack of complete understanding, these beginning helping experiences pave the way to prosocial behaviour and should be encouraged.

**Difficulties predicting empathy.** It is difficult to predict empathy for this age group due to possible factors outside the home. Childcare, peers and developmental achievements all have an impact on the ability to accurately predict whether or not a child is demonstrating empathy. Moreno, Klute and Robinson (2008) have found that although it appears that empathy takes a nose-dive during this time of growth, it could be that these young children are more in tune with adults being there to help (thus the child doesn’t need to intervene) or can recognize when someone is not truly hurt and instead “playing”.

**Empathy development 5 years - 6 years.** This is an exciting age for prosocial development because now children are able to “learn about empathy by talking about hypothetical problems” (Kutner, 2016, para 10). As Poole (“n.d.”) noted, empathy develops from self awareness. “As children enter the preschool and elementary school years, there are significant gains particularly in the area of cognitive awareness” (McDonald and Messinger, “n.d.”, p. 5). These gains could in part be due to the children’s ever increasing vocabulary which allows in-depth discussions to occur. These discussions are key for empathy development.

**Empathy plasticity.** Goldstein (2012) refers to these years as “watershed years to demonstrate plasticity in empathy” (p. 19). He researched empathy plasticity by observing an
acting class for children and implementing a Theory of Mind experiment. Through this experiment, children participated in a variety of role playing activities in which they worked through hypothetical situations. Once these classes had completed, additional hypothetical questions were provided to both the acting group and a control group. It was found that the children who had participated in the acting class were much more empathic than their peers. There is a question with the validity of this experiment as although the classes were comprised of children from different cultures and gender balanced, the results could have been skewed as children who participate in these classes are generally thought to be more empathic in the first place. However, even with this taken into consideration, the results indicated that children who participated in the acting classes were more empathic than their peers. This indicates that empathy is a skill that can be taught and practised.

**Showing compassion.** Children at this age are now able to start showing compassion towards one another. Compassion is defined in the Oxford dictionary as “sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others”. Thus, compassion is the ability to feel for another. Empathy differs from compassion as it is also the ability to feel for another, but also to put yourself into the shoes of another, to actually become one with the other. Thus, compassion and empathy are closely linked. “If we want our kids to be empathetic, they must see themselves as caring and learn to value the thoughts and feelings of others” (Borba, 2016, p. 27). As Narvaez (2017) states, “there is a sense of fellow feeling that encompasses the same concern for the other as for self in terms of justice, care, mercy, and reciprocity. Me+ me becomes we.” (p. 178). In order to promote a compassionate and “we” mindset, asking questions such as,
“what can we do to help?” and “what would make you feel better if you were in that situation?” are great questions to ask when building compassion.

**Empathy development age 7 - age 9.** Throughout these years, empathy development continues to grow and earlier skills become ingrained and normalized. As has been stated, developing empathy is a gradual process. Although one can learn to become empathic, empathy must be “natural, spontaneous, and sincere” (Poole, “n.d.”, para 12). This age group is now capable of showing empathy on a greater level, in a natural manner. As McDonald and Messinger (“n.d.”) noted, “the early developing affective experience of empathy is more sympathetic, [and Theory of Mind helps to transform] by more fully attaching one’s empathic feelings to a conceptualization of the other’s experience rather than one’s own” (p. 5). Prosocial behaviour is growing. Children are now beginning to not only recognize and react to the emotions of another, but are able to provide understanding in a meaningful manner.

**Self awareness.** Throughout the mid-late primary years children continue to develop self awareness. They are much better able to determine their own strengths and weaknesses which in turn allows them to relate with others on a deeper level. “In order to be truly empathetic, children need to learn more than simple perspective-taking, they need to know how to value, respect and understand another person’s views, even when they don’t agree with them” (Lahey, 2014, para 3). With increasing language in-depth discussions can occur and children are better able to demonstrate their understanding of another. After all, as Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl (2001) state, “real empathy isn’t just about knowing that other people feel the same way you do, it’s about knowing that they don’t feel the same way and caring anyway” (p. 39).
**Brain development.** Schwenck et al (2014) studied the brain and found that functional brain images showed neural networks are indeed different from childhood to adolescence. This shows that connections are continually being made and that development continues throughout the childhood years. Decety’s (2010) work also supports this as his research found that emotional regulation parallels the maturation of executive functions and that this is “implicated in many aspects of social cognition, notably prosocial behaviour, morality and the regulation of aggression” (abstract). Thus, as relationships develop, empathy moves from a fundamental to a profound level (Cooper, 2004, p. 20).

**Teaching Empathy**

Dar (2016) wrote that, “the purpose of education should be the preparation of individuals who maintain cognitive as well as affective abilities in a fine balance” (p. 2407). Further she states, “classrooms and the curricula must act as active agents to ensure healthy [emotional and pro-social] developments” (Dar, 2016, p. 2408). No longer are we living in a world where education is simply about gathering knowledge. With the advent of technology, the focus of education has needed to morph into thinking and social-emotional skills. Again, this is evident by the British Columbia government’s shift to include the core competencies throughout all curricular areas. As has been stated, empathy is woven into all of the core competencies. “By helping children learn empathy, we raise the odds they will have strong positive social relationships, truly care for others, and be able to set appropriate limits in their own lives without using angry behaviours or words” (Hadler, 2017, para 8). We will be helping set our students up for success.
Teaching empathy incorporates six steps, as defined by Hoerr (2016) in his book “The Formative Five”. These steps include:

Step One - listening

Step Two - understanding (taking the time to learn what is being said and how)

Step Three - internalizing (placing themselves in others’ shoes to experience feelings)

Step Four - projecting (imagining how they would react in that same situation)

Step Five - planning (planning a response)

Step Six - intervening

When designing lessons with an empathic mindset, ensuring time for each of these steps is important. As students have time to process and move systematically through the steps, empathy becomes more naturalized.

Dar’s analysis of the questionnaires used in the study, “Empathetic and Pro-Social Awareness of Primary School Students,” led to the conclusion that students found the social emotional lessons taught at school were important enough to be shared with their parents when at home demonstrating that these lessons have an impact on their learning. When it comes to social-emotional programs, implementation is extremely important for successful outcomes and real, lasting change in school culture (O hEorchaidh, 2013).

**Classroom environment.** Research is clear that the classroom environment has a huge impact on empathy development. This is supported by research completed by Cooper (2004), Hamre and Painta (2005) and Tavanagar (2014). Tavanagar (2014) suggested three steps that should be present when creating an empathic environment. These steps include:
Step One: Create a safe space, lead by example, develop emotional competency

Step Two: Engage, group play, story telling, immersion, problem solving

Step Three: Reflect and act, identify shared values and differences, install courage and enable action (p. 25 -27).

Hadler (2017) concurred, stating that, “teaching empathy in the classroom begins with the teacher and modelling appropriate responses to a variety of situations” (para 7). Therefore, in order to create this empathic environment, teachers must recognize that they are at the epicentre of change. Thus, even when disciplining, teachers much understand the why and how of the behaviour. As Dar found, “when teachers encourage students to restate their ideas in positive terms, tolerate students’ errors, clarify the students’ intent, and give students time to think, more creative and thoughtful responses follow” (p. 2408). These thoughtful responses give rise to empathy development.

**Importance of supportive environments.** Results of a lengthy study, completed by Hamre and Painta (2005), demonstrated that young children who were part of a less supportive environment, actually had their empathy development inhibited (para 6). The study, “Can Instructional and Emotional Support in the First-Grade Classroom Make a Difference for Children at Risk of School Failure?” gave evidence that when children were in supportive classrooms, they had more growth in social - emotional learning and had fewer conflicts. This was a large qualitative study and initially involved meeting 8 986 mothers who had just given birth in a variety of hospitals across the United States. The hospitals were chosen to represent a large, realistic sample of the population. From the original 8 986 participants, 5 416 met the eligibility criteria and agreed to be contacted in the future. The researcher then randomly chose 1
364 children to observe. Criteria was in place to ensure economic, educational and ethnic diversity. Children were then observed both in Kindergarten and again, in Grade One. Children who were thought to be “at risk” in Kindergarten were given the Woodcock-Johnson test and student-teacher conflict was recorded. The children were then observed in Grade One and measures recorded. 910 students, from 747 schools, had complete data and analysis began. Results showed that children who were in the more supportive classrooms had more growth in social - emotional learning and levels of conflict (compared to the kindergarten student in the lower supportive classroom). This study suggests that,

focused literacy instruction, high-quality feedback, and the engagement of students in discussion of academic concepts may be particularly important in facilitating achievement gains for children with fewer socioeconomic resources. In these classrooms, teachers were aware of and responsive to individual students' needs, offered effective and proactive behaviour management, and created a positive classroom climate in which teachers and students enjoyed each other and their time in the classroom (p. 961).

Further, results demonstrated that when these instructional practices were in place, high functional risk children in the supportive classrooms had similar scores on the first-grade Woodcock-Johnson as their low functional risk peers, while high functional risk children in classrooms offering low or moderate emotional support displayed significantly lower levels of achievement than did their low-risk peers. These results indicate that a supportive classroom is essential to social-emotional growth.

The qualitative study, “Empathy, Interaction and Caring: Teachers’ Roles in a Constrained Environment”, completed by Cooper (2004), also demonstrated the importance of supportive
teachers when developing empathy. Following the Dunblane Massacre in the United Kingdom, competence-based teacher training was introduced by the government. It required that teachers be trained to promote personal, social, moral and spiritual values in schools. Research was conducted using grounded theory methodology. The researcher clearly states why this particular method was chosen and what grounded theory means. It was a lengthy study conducted in two phases with around 60 lessons that were observed, transcribed and analyzed using WinMax pro-software to assist with coding. These methods (as illustrated by Wolcott) ensured the validity of the research. More than one method of gathering data was used, through both interviews and observations. The interview method was flexible and open-ended. A table was used to illustrate that empathy is varied and different depending on the context. Quotes were added throughout the analysis, further adding to the credibility. The findings of the article illustrated the difficulties that teachers face when trying to form these empathic relationships. These difficulties included class size, time, curriculum, policy and management. In addition, the researcher found that when teachers worked with students individually or in small groups, they were able to “demonstrate profound empathy which enriches the learning experience” (p. 20). However, when teaching a large group, the group acts as a whole and these meaningful interactions are not able to happen. Without these meaningful interactions, it is difficult to develop empathy. Cooper concluded that, “intensive positive interaction generates engagement, rapid processing and emotional attachment” and, “as relationships develop, empathy moves from a fundamental to a profound level” (p. 20). It is important for educators to move beyond the constraints in place in order to make these important connections to move empathy forward.
Hoerr (2016) affirmed that, “it is important to understand our students, not just as learners but as people. We can successfully develop the attributes that they will need to thrive in the world beyond school” (p. 34). Taking time to understand students and truly get to know them is important when trying to create successful change.

**Perspective taking.** A key element in teaching empathy to students includes perspective taking. Perspective taking is when an individual is able to step into someone’s shoes and see the world through his eyes. It allows an individual to understand a concept or perceive a situation differently than first thought. The importance of perspective taking on empathy development has long been considered. As cited by Knowles (2014), Piaget and Inhelder in 1969, argued that children must develop the ability to see the world from another's perspective in order to experience empathy. The ability to perspective take is vital to the development of empathy.

**Roots of empathy.** Worldwide, many researchers (Perry, Belsky and Fox, 2015) have found that one of the most effective programs for teaching empathy is a Canadian program developed in Toronto named *Roots of Empathy*. Founder and President, Mary Gordon, began *Roots of Empathy* in 1996. Since then the organization has won numerous awards for innovation and best practice in education. In addition, it has been recognized by the Assembly of First Nations as being compatible with traditional First Nations Teachings. *Roots of Empathy* matches a baby (from two to four months) to a group of children, usually a class, for a series of nine lessons throughout a year. Rootsofempathy.org states that the goals of the program include:

- fostering the development of empathy
- developing emotional literacy
• reducing levels of bullying, aggression and violence to promote children’s pro-social behaviours
• increasing knowledge of human development, learning, and infant safety
• preparing students for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting

Once the baby - class match occurs, school children observe the interaction between the baby and its parent. Observations allow children to learn how a baby shows his needs and how to effectively respond. “Teaching children to honour the uniqueness of each baby will teach them to respect every child’s uniqueness in a classroom. The outcome [. . .] is kinder classrooms and less bullying on the school playground” (Pemberton, 2001, para 6). It trains the students to think of the needs of others. In addition, it has been found that when Roots of Empathy was used there was a significant decrease in aggression. It is a program that was withstood time and has significant value to classrooms today.

Theatre/acting classes. In a study completed by Goldstein and Winner (2011), it was found “that acting, an activity in which one must step into the shoes of others, leads to growth in both empathy and theory of mind” (abstract). The researchers completed two studies in which they followed elementary children and adolescents who received training in either acting or others arts, such as visual arts or music, for a year. The participants were separated into two groups, an acting and “other" art group, for the purpose of the study. The researchers decided to not have a control group for this experiment as they were concerned that it could impact findings. They were concerned that the results could potentially be due to children simply being involved in an after school program, rather than the focus being solely on theory of mind and empathy. They assessed theory of mind before and after the intervention using three activities: Faux Pas
(Baron-Cohen, O’Riordan, Stone, Jones, & Plaisted, 1999), Strange Stories test (Happe, 1994) and “Reading the Mind in the Eyes test (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste & Plumb, 2001). The Faux Pas assessed the ability to recognize unintentional insults, the Strange Stories test assessed the ability to recognize a true meaning of a particular story which ends with a nonliteral or false utterance, the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test assessed the ability to recognize mental states just from observing the eyes. Empathy was measured using the Index of Empathy for Children (Bryant, 1982) which assessed the extent children have to react to the emotional reaction of another. In addition, empathy was measured using the Fiction Emotion-Matching task which the researchers created. This test included identifying emotions after watching short video clips. Control measures were put in place as parents completed a questionnaire specifying previous acting or visual arts classes. The children also completed the Wechsler Intelligence Scale Fourth Edition, Vocabulary Subtest. This was done to control for possible differences in verbal intelligence. Results from this study indicated that the students involved in the acting classes did show an increase in empathy levels but not, theory of mind. Researchers questioned this result and wondered if the theory of mind measures used were not true to life or sensitive enough. In addition, they wondered if the tasks were skewed towards representing beliefs, rather than emotions. They also questioned the validity of the findings as they wondered if those who registered for acting classes were already predisposed to be more naturally empathic. However, Goldstein and Winner did find through their research that, “there is promising evidence that leads us to hypothesize that training in acting leads to growth in both empathy and theory of mind. A demonstration that acting trains empathy and theory of mind has
implications for our understanding of how these skills develop and could provide support for the conclusion that at least one means by which these skills grow is through role-play” (p. 21).

*Using literature to teach perspective taking.* The benefits of using literature when teaching has been long understood by educators. Dar (2016) notes, “when readers respond to texts, associate with characters, themes and culture, the feelings of empathy are invoked and make students more sensitive” (p. 2408). She further asserts, "when teachers focus on topics like effects of behaviour on other people’s feelings, well-being and ability to learn students become more sensitive towards such behaviours” (p. 2408). It is this sensitivity to behaviours that leads to growth in empathy. There are many examples of children’s books that allow students to learn from characters, from fairy tales to more recent tales. Bury (2013) quotes psychologist Kidd, who says that, “what great writers do is to turn you into the writer. In literary fiction, the incompleteness of the characters turns your mind to trying to understand the minds of others” (para 5). When reading, students are able to extrapolate the experiences in text to real world situations. This allows a safe way to explore questions such as; “what would you do?”, “how is the character feeling?”. Good, well chosen literature also allows students to connect with characters and to look at matters with a new perspective. As Borba (2016) writes, “books can transport children to other worlds and transform their hearts” (p. 73).

*Self regulation.* Self regulation skills are essential for children demonstrating empathy. It is viewed as a proactive process that students use to acquire academic skills, such as setting goals, selecting and deploying strategies and self - monitoring one’s effectiveness. Research substantiates the importance of self regulation for our learners. “Self-regulated learning refers to the self-directive processes and self beliefs that enable learners to transform their mental
abilities” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 166). It allows our students to have self control, also known as ‘ego control’. Learning to control emotions is important, as emotions compel actions. In particular, empathy may help initiate guilt and then the feeling of relief when a solution is found.

Roberts, Strayer and Denaham (2014) completed a study with a goal to assess the relation between empathy, adaptive guilt (prosocial behaviour) and anger (antisocial behaviour). The researchers examined friendly and hostile behaviours with peers and cooperative behaviours with adults by studying children between nine and thirteen. The study took part in Southwestern British Columbia and 99 children participated. In gathering data, researchers completed two home visits. During the first visit, participants completed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (items were read to younger children) and parents completed the Child Description Q-sort (specifically designed for the study). During the second study, same sex best friends described the participating children. Family measures were collected and teachers were interviewed. The data was then sorted into: empathic categories such as, “is sensitive and responsive to others sadness, fear or anxiety”; guilt categories such as, “accepts responsibility for misbehaving” and “apologizes to others”; and anger categories such as, “minor frustrations lead to anger” and “is easily irritated.” Results found that, empathy and adaptive guilt have a strong relationship and thus children who feel adaptive guilt, demonstrate more friendly behaviours. “The importance of adaptive guilt […] suggests the importance of internalization and self-regulation for both friendly and hostile behaviour with peers and for cooperative behaviour with adults (Roberts, Strayer & Denham, 2014, p. 472). Thus, self regulation is an important skill for children to learn in order to demonstrate empathy.
**Moral imagination and moral courage.** Moral Imagination allows tools such as: emotionally charged films, sites, literature and images, to be used as a source of inspiration to feel with others (Borba, 2016, p.xx). Borba writes that “in some cases, a book can whip our conscience, shift our perspective, or activate our feelings so we stand up and change the world for the better” (p. 96). Moral imagination can lead to moral courage which prompts children to speak out, step in and help others. In schools, this moral courage is often modelled through service learning.

*Using emotionally charged art to develop a moral imagination.* As previously stated, using thoughtful literature is a fantastic way to encourage a moral imagination and teach empathy. Not only can literature help students learn perspective taking skills, it can also be key in helping students develop their moral imagination. Additionally, using art pieces can have a similar effect on children. Asking students to share their visualizations, compare the piece to other cultures and beliefs and sharing what they notice, all help students to create deeper understanding. The saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words” is very true when developing empathy. Additionally, when students are the ones responsible for creating a response to an issue through art, a deep level of moral understanding can be reached.

This was demonstrated in a research study completed by Lopez (2012) titled “Undocumented Immigration: Using the Visual Arts as a Tool to teach Understanding and Empathy”. The participants were from a school that encompasses students from more than 85 distinct cultures. The lessons included a pre-assessment component where the researcher had a simple conversation with the students about immigration. Following the conversation a questionnaire was handed out to provide a clear understanding of how students related to one
another from differing backgrounds. It was stressed to the students that this process was not a test, and questionnaires are anonymous. Norman Rockwell was chosen as an artist to explore as his art related to current events. Throughout a series of lessons, undocumented immigration was studied and students were given a sheet of paper with “The Saturday Evening Post” as a masthead and asked to create an image under the masthead based on the issue of undocumented immigration in the United States. Students were asked, “if Norman Rockwell was creating a Saturday Evening Post cover in 2012, what would it look like? What subjects, themes, or current events would he use to capture the public’s imagination?” (p. 45). Following the creation of the art piece, discussions occurred surrounding the creators understanding of the concept.

Throughout the art process, the researcher kept a reflection journal and observation notes which helped shape the analysis. The researcher found that the participant responses “were insightful, and innocent and portray their interest in fair play; typical of students at this developmental stage who are aware that there are societal rules that good citizens must follow” (p. 58). The conclusion was made that, “their own artwork demonstrated visual narratives that depicted empathetic, perspective, and interpretive understanding of the issue.” The researcher also found that it is difficult for students to connect with an issue in which they have little background knowledge. Scaffolding knowledge is important for success.

Moral courage leading to service learning. Service learning is “a method in which children can learn through active participation in organized service experiences to meet the needs of a certain population and/or environment” (Fox, 2010, p. 1). The benefits of service learning are numerous and there are many examples of schools involved in service learning throughout Canada. Fundraising opportunities, like the Terry Fox Runs, Jump Rope for Heart, and Tour de
Rock, are common activities many schools in British Columbia participate in, however; simply participating in fundraising opportunities does not create lasting change when developing empathy. Teachers need to incorporate learnings surrounding the events in order to make them meaningful. Successful service learning incorporates student choice or relation. When there is already a “buy in” for the students, it is a better learning experience. As noted in the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform (1993), “children should be able to use their academic skills toward authentic experiences beyond the classroom, thereby seeing the purposefulness of their learning. In this way, children’s sense of caring for others is both developed and maintained” (“n.d.”). When students find the moral courage to help others, profound empathy is demonstrated. Fox states, “projects should provide a structured time for students to explore issues through talk, journaling, and expressions in art for them to have appropriate time and opportunity to select on the experience” (p. 2). One of the biggest mistakes an educator can make when creating a service learning opportunity is to only give the project lip service and not to delve deeper into the issue. When students are given the time to experience the opportunity, the results are magnified.

**Summary**

It is clear from the literature and research analysis that empathy is a vital skill our students need to develop. Guiding students to appreciate their own background, recognize and understand the perspective of others, become involved with causes, and consistently think with an empathic mindset all have a positive impact on developing successful global citizens. In order to equip our students with the skill of empathy, educators must take time to create a supportive environment where social-emotional skills are emphasized. Based on these literature
and research findings, an *Empathy Toolkit*, with sections on why empathy needs to be taught, classroom implementation ideas, school culture ideas and lesson ideas, provides a structure for educators to use when teaching.
Chapter 3: Rationale

The Rationale for my Empathy Toolkit

I would love to teach a group of students who:
   Know each other’s names,
   Smile when they see each other,
   Lend a hand when pencils drop on the floor,
   And pick up the paper on the ground, even when it doesn’t belong to them.

I would love to teach a class of students who:
   Care when a classmate is away,
   Initiate conversations with the child sitting alone,
   Share with all,
   And invite others to play a game at recess.

I would love to teach a class of students who:
   Recognize how lucky they are to have a place to learn,
   Understand that differences are actually a good thing,
   And actively look for ways to make their school,
       their community,
       their country,
       their world,
       a better place.

I would love to teach a class of students who are empathic.
   And, maybe one day, I will.

Choosing to create an empathy toolkit was a project close to my heart as I want to teach a
class of empathetic students. I want the class described in the above poem to be the reality and
the norm for all of our classes. I firmly believe that our students succeed not because of the
academics we teach, but the lifelong skills that we instil.

Our current British Columbia curriculum (2016) recognizes the importance of these
underlying skills and has woven the core competencies throughout all curricular competencies.

1 J. Pickard, March 2018
The core competencies of Personal Awareness, Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Social Responsibility, Critical and Creative Thinking directly relate to the skill of empathy. Empathy is found in these core competencies as accepting yourself and others and is at the core of being personally aware. In order to make empathic decisions, students need to be able to think critically and creatively. When students are able to make these decisions, they are socially responsible.

Throughout Chapter Two, the importance of teaching life long skills, and in particular empathy, was validated by research conducted by Dr. Michele Borba (2016), Amy Lawson (2013), Thomas Hoerr (2014) and others. Each of these researchers concluded that not only is empathy important for our students, empathy is a skill that must be taught. Raimundo (2013) states that school based programs, “positively impact behavioural and academic outcomes by significantly reducing problems and increasing competencies” (p. 167). The empathy toolkit provides lessons and ideas to implement school based programs.

The Product

I chose to create a toolkit as I concluded that this was the best method to provide teachers with the tools needed to teach empathy. The Oxford Dictionary refers to toolkit as “a personal set of resources, abilities, or skills”. I believe that this described what I created, as the toolkit that I developed is a comprehensive set of resources that help teachers use their abilities to develop student’s empathy skills. It is an all encompassing resource. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011) found evidence that, “schools have limited resources, time constraints, and competing demands, such as enhancing academic performance, so educators must prioritize and effectively implement evidence-based approaches” (p. 406). The
choice to focus the toolkit for students age 7 - 10 was deliberate as, not only is this the age group that I teach but when looking for resources there was little available. A K - Grade 2 program was found from kidshealth.org but nothing comprehensive for this next age group. Thus, providing teachers for this age level with a well researched, age appropriate resource was important.

**First section of the toolkit.** The first section provides the rationale for why empathy matters to our students and why it must be taught in our schools. Research from Chapter Two was condensed to provide the teacher with an overview of the important milestones in empathy development, why our students need this training and possible outcomes of teaching empathy.

**Second section of the toolkit.** The second section includes ways for teachers to include empathy training on a daily basis. Cooper (2004) stated that, “showing that you care profoundly provides the right climate in which students learn most effectively” (p. 13). Thus, it is important for teachers to be demonstrating empathy on a daily basis. Not only does the research demonstrate that caring helps our students learn but it also helps them to build these important skills themselves. Borba’s (2016) “9 Habits of Empathy” form the basis of this chapter. These habits, taken from her book, *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*, include:

- recognizing feelings
- having a moral identity
- understanding the needs of others
- having a moral imagination
- keeping their cool
- practicing kindness
- sticking their necks out
- thinking “us” not “them”
- wanting to make a difference

**Third section of the toolkit.** The third section builds upon the second section (daily integration) to specific classroom lessons. These are a series of eight lessons that are designed to be taught over a concise time period (recommended over a month). All lessons follow the suggested lesson format on the BC Government Curriculum website. Each lesson contains the big idea (what students will understand), curricular competencies (what students will do), concepts and content (what students will know), materials and technologies, pre-class preparation, and resources and references. In addition, each lesson contains suggestions for adaptations for younger or older students. The lessons are meant to build upon each other as the students work through a continuum. Assessment strategies consist of suggestions for self assessment. In order to be empathetic, it is important for students to identify and relate to others. To understand others, students must first know themselves and reflect upon their own self and learning. The assessment strategies are designed to guide students to a greater understanding.

**Rationale: Lesson by Lesson**

**Lesson one.** The first lesson asks students to use a creation app to demonstrate emotions and possible reasons for particular emotions. This lesson encourages students to think about why an individual may be happy, sad, concerned or angry. “Coming to understand that others have thoughts, perceptions and feelings that are separate from one's own, along with the ability to explicitly infer these mental states in others, are important developmental milestones” (Farrant, Devine, Maybery and Fletcher, 2011, p. 175).
Reflective journal entry. Following the field test of this lesson, changes were made to the original lesson plan. Originally, students were given the freedom to choose any emotion to demonstrate. This freedom then became about finding the best fit picture for an emotion, as opposed to the intent of the lesson which was two fold; to demonstrate an emotion and to state why a person may feel a particular emotion. Thus, when designing the lesson for the toolkit, I placed a greater emphasis on the why in order to ensure that students stuck to the original intent. In addition, I suggested assigning emotions to groups. In order to create greater discussion and teaching points, students needed to have chosen the same emotions. Using the app “Educreations” was a good choice as it was simple enough for the students to use effectively. Thus, the lesson was about the content rather than navigating through the app.

Lessons two - four. The second, third and fourth lessons revolve around the importance of “perspective taking”. Manney (2015) stated that, “we learn by [being] in the shoes of another person through real-life observation or storytelling” (para 4). For these lessons, students are asked to understand that perspectives differ based on individuals and situations. As this is such an important concept when demonstrating empathy, it was determined that more than one lesson was needed.

Reflective journal entry. Following the field test of a single perspective lesson (standing in the shoes of others), it was determined that additional practise with this important concept was needed. Thus, three lessons were created instead of one. The purpose of the first lesson is to introduce the concept of perspectives when looking at the same image. Based on findings from Chapter Two, art was chosen as a tool to demonstrate learning. Students were assigned pairs and sketched the same scene. Once the scenes were completed, students then compared their
sketches in order to identify similarities and differences. Interestingly, when discussing similarities and differences, students rarely mentioned ability, comments instead focused on why the content of the sketches differed. This lesson emphasized to the students that even though they are looking at the same scene, their eyes and brain processed what they saw differently.

Following this first lesson, a whole class lesson focusing on perspective taking in specific situations was introduced using different scenarios. This was a popular lesson as students really enjoyed discussing their scenarios in groups and responding from different viewpoints. This would also be an easy lesson to modify to the interests of the group as any situation would work as long as the chosen scenario was high interest. The final perspective taking lesson was originally the only perspective taking lesson. This lesson focuses on putting all of the pieces together and putting ourselves into the shoes of others. Originally this lesson only included the skits. Once it was field tested, a picture book reflection was added as an introduction in order to remind students of the vocabulary and important concepts of perspective taking before they were asked to demonstrate the skills through skits. This lesson was a hit! As stated in Chapter Two, using role play is an excellent tool to use when teaching empathy.

**Lesson five.** The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of being able to show empathy through actions. Through a class project, creating a comfort quilt, students learn that they have the power to not only identify with others but to effect change.

*Reflective journal entry.* Although this lesson may be a bit overwhelming for teachers, I felt it was important to include as this project is when my students “got it”. This lesson can be modified so that it becomes a single art lesson, creating a paper quilt, instead of the larger fabric quilt process. In creating the quilt, students continually were reminded of the intent of providing
comfort to others and took great pride in their square. Once the quilt was donated to the library, students noticed that others truly did wrap themselves in our great thoughts and even suggested that children snuggle with it when they noticed others feeling sad.

Lessons six and seven. As determined in Chapter Two, it is important to teach students the steps to demonstrate empathy. In designing the lessons, it was thought that one lesson would suffice but as I was writing it, I realized that using a guided release method was important with this age group. Thus, lesson six is a whole group lesson using a flow chart and picture book to identify each of the five steps. The seventh lesson follows up on the sixth lesson by allowing students to implement the steps using role play. Students were also encouraged to use the flow chart (introduced in lesson six) to guide their skit.

Reflective journal entry. Using a guided release method was a good choice as it allowed the students to be more successful when developing their skits. Ensuring that all students have a similar understanding of the fairy tale that they recreated was essential when students were developing their skit. In my class we had studied fairy tales so this basic understanding was there (although we had a discussion about ensuring that all group members understood which version of the fairy tale was being used). Teachers may need to build this understanding with their students or use different suggestions for skits. I chose fairy tales as the intent of the lesson is to demonstrate the steps of empathy so felt that having a basic plot already in place was important.

Lesson eight. The final lesson, “Top Secret Empathy,” moves students away from responding to empathy in group and contrived situations to the real world. The rationale for this lesson is to show students that demonstrating empathy is important and can make a difference to
those around them. It is also a way for teachers to continue to make empathy training a focus in their classroom moving forward.

*Reflective journal entry.* Students really enjoyed the mysteriousness of their letters and it definitely set the tone for the project. Some students did require suggestions of how they could be involved but once they had the suggestion were very eager to follow through and see the results. An unexpected benefit of this lesson was the talk at home and how this became a family project for many of the students. Even though students were only asked to record two empathy interventions, students continued showing empathy and performing ‘missions’ long after the lesson officially “ended”.

**Fourth Section of the Toolkit.** This final section of the toolkit offers ideas and suggestions to create an empathetic school culture. Barr and Higgins-D’Allessandro (2007) note that, “a positive school culture is one in which teachers and students care about and support one another, share values, norms, goals, and a sense of belonging” (p. 234). A positive school culture is an empathic school culture and is important to cultivate. Ideas in this section help educators move empathy training beyond their classrooms.

Beaudoin and Taylor (2009) suggested that empathy can be increased by having older students reach out to younger students through buddy programs, using peer helpers and mentors and offering student support programs (p. 84). Peer helpers are already in place in many schools. Using the language of empathy brings another level to these interactions.

Inviting others into schools provides another opportunity to build empathy. The PADS program (Pacific Assistance Dog Society) or the Roots of Empathy program are two examples of programs that can be used to increase empathy throughout a school. Rolheiser and Wallace’s
study (2005), as cited by rootofempathy.org, states that, “by providing many opportunities to see skills modelled, to apply these same skills in real-life situations, and to reflect on their learning, the program increases the chances that students will develop competencies that will guide their future behaviours and shape their dispositions” (Research Overview, para 5). Using these programs allows students an opportunity to use empathy skills in real life.

The quilt project is presented as a school based project. This project involves students designing and creating a comfort quilt. Students develop empathy skills as they create something for another person who may be struggling. When the quilt is complete, it is then given to the school library (or other important communal place in the school). The quilt is used by students who may not be having a good day and need comfort. When they are wrapped up in the quilt, they are surrounded by the good thoughts of the creators.

An additional method presented in the toolkit is service learning. Service learning provides the opportunity for students to choose a cause and work towards understanding and supporting the specific cause. “Service learning has been found to have a wider impact on society than community service or community exploration because it allows students to have a hands-on experience … while learning” (Scott and Graham, 2015, para 4). When students are involved and view these projects as purposeful, understanding increases as they move beyond themselves and towards fostering empathy within.

Reflective journal entry. Service learning began in September (2017) as a means to build class community. Students chose BC Children’s Hospital as their personal cause due to recent personal connections for some of the students. Because of the direct link to Children’s Hospital, students were very eager to become involved and saw how their efforts directly impacted the
hospital. As a class, we investigated the hospital and how we could help. In addition, parents who had recent experience with the hospital spoke to the class and shared how much the support means, both financially but also feeling the support from the community. With guidance, students chose to coordinate a coin drive and host a bake sale. The Vancouver Island “Tour de Rock” visited the school at the end of September so that became the timeline for the culmination of this effort. Students were told that for each of the past three years, approximately $300 ($1.00 for every child) was donated to the Tour. Using this knowledge, students set a goal to raise $500. Two weeks prior to the Tour arriving, students began their coin drive. Prior to the drive beginning, students made posters, wrote an item for the newsletter, made announcements and visited each class as a team to share their message. Each day students collected a different coin and visited each class. For example: on Monday, students collected nickels; on Tuesday, students collected dimes; on Wednesday, students collected quarters; on Thursday, loonies were collected and on Friday, toonies. Having students visit the classrooms each day to collect and advertise the “coin of tomorrow” proved invaluable and made for a very successful coin drive. In addition, on the Friday prior to the tour, students hosted a bake sale. Because the students saw the need for their work and were seeing results of their efforts, 22/23 students brought baked items to share. Every single student chose to give up their recess time to contribute to the sale. On the following Monday, students began counting the money and rolling coins. When all was counted, the class had raised $1 493.26 that was donated to the Tour. They were thrilled! I, of course, was also thrilled at the amount they raised but was more impressed by the differences I saw within my class. My students now understood what was happening for some of our families, they recognized that when someone looked “different”, it wasn’t “weird”, but rather an
opportunity to demonstrate empathy. I have been involved in service learning throughout my 25 year teaching career and this was one of the most successful I have been involved in. In reflecting as to why, I realized that this was due to the flip in my purpose in introducing service learning to my students. In the past, I have identified a cause that I thought would impact the students and then worked to build understanding. This time, I looked at it in the terms of building empathy within my students. How could service learning be used as a vehicle to move my students towards better understanding? In the past, after the money had been donated, the project was finished and students moved on. I noticed that this time, after the money was donated, students wanted to continue to discuss Children’s Hospital and children who were affected, they demonstrated more empathetic behaviours towards each other and they went home and shared their thoughts and feelings with their families. They had developed important empathy skills.

The Process

In creating the toolkit, many hours were spent researching empathy; why it is needed, why it is lacking and how to effectively teach empathy to our students. Books, journal articles, case studies and websites were analyzed and explored. Researchers such as Dr. Michele Borba, Thomas Hoerr and Tony Wagner were paramount in creating the foundation of the toolkit. Additional researchers added validity to the project and provided an in-depth understanding of empathy and it’s importance.

Lessons were field tested at Arrowview Elementary School in Qualicum Beach, British Columbia. The school had approximately 300 students and 13 classrooms. The school is in an affluent area of the town and students are generally well supported by their families. As such,
some students/families have a difficult time thinking about those who may have a different life than the one they are living, thus making this group an ideal candidate for empathy training. Lessons were primarily delivered to a blended Grade 3/4 class. The class was composed of 9 Grade 3 students and 14 Grade 4 students. 13 students were male and 10 students were female. The class also contained three students with Individual Education Plans and a full-time educational assistant. Additional lessons were field tested with a Grade 1/2 class and a Grade 4/5 class at Arrowview Elementary School by the researcher. Further, another teacher from another, less affluent, school field tested lessons with her Grade 4 class.

After each field tested lesson, reflections were made using a journaling format. Research conducted by Dymant and O’Connell (2013) concluded that, “through the process of recording actions and experiences, journals permit students to step outside those actions/learning and take a critical look at the how, what, why, and when of that experience” (p. 343). A reflective journal allowed me to critically examine each lesson, with an eye to what worked well and what would help to improve the lesson.
Chapter Four: Design Project

Empathy Toolkit

for Grades 2 - 4

Created by Jen Pickard
One Day

I would love to teach a group of students who:
   Know each other’s names,
   Smile when they see each other,
   Lend a hand when pencils drop on the floor,
   And pick up the paper on the ground, even when it doesn’t belong to them.

I would love to teach a class of students who:
   Care when a classmate is away,
   Initiate conversations with the child sitting alone,
   Share with all,
   And invite others to play a game at recess.

I would love to teach a class of students who:
   Recognize how lucky they are to have a place to learn,
   Understand that differences are actually a good thing,
   And actively look for ways to make their school,
      their community,
      their country,
      their world,
      a better place.

I would love to teach a class of students who are empathic.
   And, maybe one day, I will.

J. Pickard
Why Empathy?

Section One
Why is empathy important to teach in today’s world?

Throughout my extensive 25 year teaching career, there has been a noticeable shift in society. Where once my focus was primarily on academics; mainly reading, writing and ‘rithmetic, lately a change has been made to teach more of the soft skills; the social skills that our children need. With the addition of the core competencies to B.C. Education, there is recognition that our students need more than simply the academics that I used to teach. We now realize that our students need a different skill set to be successful. Our students need to be creative and critical thinkers, have a cultural identity, be good communicators, and be personally and socially responsible. These core competencies are now expected to be a part of every curriculum we teach.

When I first heard about the core competencies, I thought, “no problem,” we talk about these skills all the time, I simply needed to bring them to the forefront. However, when observing the students in my class, I realized that not all of my students had the emotional language or understanding to be able to fully develop these skills. Even though I thought we were ready, the truth is, I needed to take a step back and look at the underlying skills of the competencies. I kept circling back to empathy and how it is a key component to all of the soft skills that we were now hoping to develop in our students. My journey had started.

Tony Wagner in his book Creating Innovators defined empathy as, “one of the essential qualities of character”\(^2\). Indeed, many influential researchers such as Dr. Michele Borba, Thomas Hoerr, Homa Sabet Tavangar and Carolyn Calloway-Thomas believe that empathy is one of the top five traits that we, as humans, need to possess making it an important skill to teach.

\(^2\) Tony Wagner, Creating Innovators (New York, Scribner, 2012), 23
Empathy is so important that top companies, such as Google, are now realizing that, “what helps you thrive in a changing world isn’t rocket science. It may just well be social science, and, yes, even the humanities and the arts that contribute to making you not just workforce ready but WORLD ready”\(^3\). In fact, the seven top characteristics of success at Google are now all soft skills: being a good coach; communicating and listening well; possessing insights into others; having empathy toward and being supportive of one’s colleagues, being a good critical thinker and problem solver and being able to make connections across ideas\(^4\). These are the skills that our students need to be taught.

With the increase of awareness of bullying and school violence, there has been an increase in the study of empathy. Even though finding research linking a lack of empathy and bullying is difficult, there is a general belief that there is indeed a link. Fried and Sosland have stated that, “empathy should be a part of every student’s understanding and behaviour repertoire and that no bullying prevention program can succeed without empathy practice”\(^5\). Celebrities Lady Gaga, Craig and Mark Kielburger (from “Me to We”) and Bully director Lee Hirsch have suggested that stopping bullying at its root depends on equipping kids with the empathy and agency they need to think and act as change makers. Instead of teaching students to “not bully”, providing the skills to be changemakers is at the heart of lasting change. As Lawson, President and Co-Founder of Peace First states,

\(^3\) V. Strauss, “The surprising thing Google learned about its employees - and what it means for today’s students”, The Washington Post, para 11


\(^5\) S. Fried and B.E. Sosland, Banshing bullying behavior: transforming the culture of pain, rage and revenge, (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2009) 81
It starts with addressing exclusion and bullying by developing courage, compassion and communication, and goes beyond that to engage young people in seeing themselves as agents of social change. In an increasingly connected world, our ability to form healthy and productive relationships, particularly across lines of difference, to care for one another, and to work with others to improve the lives of others has no other parallel. Empathy without action is meaningless. Action without empathy is heartless.

Students who have been part of empathy training find increases in positive and inclusive behaviours including helpfulness, sharing and willingness to include other students in games and groups. Empathy training makes a difference to the entire school population.

Our students are significantly more connected, through the use of technology, than we were at their age and thus, are more aware of conflict throughout their community, country and world. This type of connection though does not allow for the human touch and full experience. The face-to-face meeting is not likely there and it is this face-to-face meeting that promotes empathy. Being able to connect in an authentic manner is important to our humanity. However, this constant informational overload, has made it easier for people to remain detached from what they are reading and viewing. This is having a profound impact on our ability to relate to one another and the apparent lack of empathy that we are experiencing.

All is not lost though. With direct empathy training it has been found that young children with higher empathy have been shown to be more positive, more outgoing and

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6 A. Lawson, Teaching empathy through literature lessons to alleviate bullying. (Peace First, 2013), 7
less fearful. These traits then help to develop the self regulation skills that are necessary to have successful relationships. Understanding, controlling and relating to emotions are at the heart of empathy.

When we teach our children the skills needed to develop empathy, the results are numerous and widespread. Scientific research is beginning to demonstrate that there is a very strong relationship between social-emotional learning and cognitive development and performance. Yale’s Centre for Emotional Intelligence conducted research that showed, “students with higher emotional intelligence are better prepared to manage their emotional lives so they can focus, learn, and do their best in school.”8 This makes sense as when emotions are in check and children are able to focus, learning improves. Jolliffe and Farrington found that there is a, “fundamental belief that a greater amount of empathy inhibits antisocial behaviour and increases the likelihood of prosocial behaviour”9. Again, this speaks to increased learning opportunities as when children are more social, they are more connected and engaged in the topic being studied and are less fearful of social rejection. Keeping our students engaged with each other and socially successful has huge benefits in terms of “attitudes about self, others and school; pro-social behaviours; and academic performance.”10. Kutner recognized that, “children who are empathic tend to do better in school, in social situations, and in their adult careers. Children and teenagers who have the greatest amount of skill at

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7 A.J. Moreno, M.M. Klute and J.L. Robinson, Relational and Individual Resources as Predictors of Empathy in Early Childhood, (Social Development 17(3), 2008), 617

8 Yale’s Centre for Emotional Intelligence, para 3

9 D. Jolliffe and D.P. Farrington, Is low empathy related to bullying after controlling for individual and social background variables? (Journal of Adolescence, 34, 2011), 59

10 M. Beaudoin & M. Taylor, Responding to the culture of bullying & disrespect: New perspectives on collaboration, compassion, and responsibility, (Thousand Oaks, Corwin, 2009), 166
empathy are viewed as leaders by their peers.” Empathic leaders are what our world needs.

Having an empathic society is essential to our world today as, “without empathy, we tend to divide people into “us” and “them”, which leads to suspicion, miscommunication and conflict.” Society will only change when we have more individuals who will stand up and view the world through an empathic lens. The divide of “us” and “them” allows people to compartmentalize what is happening and allow undesirable behaviours to continue. As a society, we need to ensure that empathy is being developed in order to ensure that it is used as a significant tool for all of humanity. Empathy is needed to bring people together.

It is especially important for us to remember the importance of empathy as our world is flattened and we are more aware of global issues and inequalities throughout the world. Technology has made it impossible for us to not know what is happening worldwide and to turn a blind eye. Calloway-Thomas shares that this world is “one of anguish, distress, turmoil, and inequality.” Human inequalities are important to look at in terms of empathy as imbalances between rich and poor are evident and the scale of inequality has grown. In order to bridge this gap, empathic understanding must be at the heart of decision making. Calloway Thomas notes that, “much is at stake culturally, economically, and geopolitically when we fail to refashion the world along the lines of

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11 L. Kutner, How Children Develop Empathy, (Psych Central) para 3
12 T.R. Hoerr, The formative five: Fostering grit, empathy and other success skills every student needs, (Alexandria, Virginia, 2016), 38
empathy”\textsuperscript{14} and that, “at a time of crucial cultural, economic, and social change, it is imperative to understand how the practice of empathy influences human affairs” \textsuperscript{15}. This means for example, that as educators, our students need to be able to empathize with people living in Libya who have little water. When our students are able to empathize, they may be able to solve the issue in a creative manner. Our students today need to be problem solvers. Empathy is the lens they need to use in order to solve the problems of our world.

As Barack Obama stated in the Xavier University Commencement speech in 2006, You know, there’s a lot of talk in this country about the federal deficit. But I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit—the ability to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes; to see the world through the eyes of those who are different from us—the child who’s hungry, the steelworker who’s been laid-off, the family who lost the entire life they built together when the storm came to town. When you think like this—when you choose to broaden your ambit of concern and empathize with the plight of others, whether they are close friends or distant strangers—it becomes harder not to act; harder not to help.”\textsuperscript{16}

Teaching our students to “identify with another person’s feelings often begins with listening and taking the time to not just hear what someone else is thinking and feeling

\textsuperscript{14} C. Calloway-Thomas, Empathy in the global world: An intercultural perspective, (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2009), para 12

\textsuperscript{15} C. Calloway-Thomas, Empathy in the global world: An intercultural perspective, (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2009), para 7

\textsuperscript{16} Obama, Barack: Xavier commencement speech, 2006
but to understand and is crucial in developing their empathy and positively contributing to society. Empathy is “foundational to embracing differences, building relationships, gaining a global perspective, conducting richer and deeper analysis, and communicating more effectively”.

Empathy is an important skill that must be taught and practised in our schools for the betterment of all.

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17 T.R. Hoerr, The formative five: Fostering grit, empathy and other success skills every student needs, (Alexandria, Virginia, 2016), 36

Empathy Everyday

Section Two
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

The Space

“It is important to understand our students, not just as learners but as people. We can successfully develop the attributes that they will need to thrive in the world beyond school” (Thomas Hoerr).

Taking the time to develop a supportive classroom is essential when developing empathy in our students.

When designing your classroom, you may want to consider:

- are there areas that facilitate small group learning or discussions? Carpet areas? Break out space?
- are there materials that allow students to explore perspectives (props, etc.)?
- is there a vocabulary wall where words can be added to help build emotional vocabulary?

When speaking with your students, you may want to consider:

- restating ideas in a positive format
- asking follow up questions such as; “how would you feel if . . . ?”, “what do you think is needed?”
- focusing on the effects of a specific behaviour on others
- when disciplining, ask the “why” and “how” questions of the behaviours
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Self Regulation Strategies

“When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to modulate their emotions; pay attention; ignore distractions; inhibit their impulses; assess the consequences of an action; understand what others are thinking and feeling, and the effects of their own behaviours; or feel empathy for others.” Stuart Shanker

As the teacher, it is very important to respect and model feelings in a natural manner throughout the day. As vocabulary is increased, students have an easier time naming their emotions and relating to others. It is also important for the teacher to model these strategies both when directly teaching but also continuing throughout the day.

* practise calming strategies
  - blowing out a candle
  - taking belly breaths (hand on belly and in and out breathing)
  - taking deep breaths and counting to 10

* yoga for kids

* colouring/crafting

* brain breaks

* five point scale for check in’s
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Build Emotional Language

“A large and more complex feeling vocabulary allows children to make finer discriminations between feelings; to better communicate with others about their internal affective states; and to engage in discussions about their personal experiences with the world.” - Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

* communicate feelings yourself. Students will do what you do! Use words such as “I feel”, “I felt”, “I remember feeling” to share your own thoughts and build vocabulary.

* read stories and use literature to discuss perspectives and feelings of characters.

* share art pieces that evoke emotions and language.

* host daily “check ins” either informally as students are coming in or as a more formal part of the day. Ask “how are you doing today?” Honour feelings and guide discussions around connecting.

* consider using feeling check in cards such as the “Five Point Scale” or a class made card. These cards can be especially helpful for those students who escalate quickly. Using the scales allows students to self assess where they are on the scale and makes the emotions clear.
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Build Emotional Language Through Literature

“When readers respond to texts, associate with characters, themes and culture, the feelings of empathy are invoked and make students more sensitive” Fatima Dar

Well chosen literature can provide an awesome opportunity to explore empathy in a non-threatening environment. When literature is chosen with powerful characters, discussions become rich. The following pages contain generic graphic organizers that can be used with any of these books (or others).

Great Literature to Use to Build Empathy in the Primary Grades

We’re All Wonders - R.J. Palacio
Chrysanthemum - Kevin Henkes
No One Else Like You - Siska Goeminne
Red: A Crayon’s Story - Michael Hall
A Color of his Own - Leo Lionni
One - Kathryn Otoshi
The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade - Justin Roberts
Bear Feels Sick - Karma Wilson
The Monster Who Lost His Mean - Tiffany Strelitz Haber
Those Shoes - Mari Beth Boelts

Books added in the Lessons section:

The Invisible Boy - Trudy Ludwig
Hey, Little Ant! - Phillip M. House
Voices in the Park - Anthony Browne
Giraffe Can’t Dance - Giles Andreae
Name _______________

______________________________

(Title)

My character is _____________________.

I think my character will

Words/Images that describe my character

My character showed empathy when

J. Pickard, Empathy Literature Response
Prove your character knows about empathy by adding to the web below.

My character

J. Pickard, Empathy Literature Response
Name ____________________

__________________________________________

(Title)

My character is _____________________________.

The problem in the story was

The problem in the story was solved by

USING EMPATHY the problem could have been solved by:

OR

J. Pickard, Empathy Literature Response
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Build Moral Courage

“Moral imagination can lead to moral courage which prompts children to speak out, step in and help others.” Dr. Michele Borba

Exploring empathy through drama is an excellent way to explore moral courage in a non-threatening environment.

Drama Games to Promote Empathy

- ask students to retell a story from a different perspective (fractured fairy tales are great for this)

- use everyday situations that may arise, to problem solve through dramatic play. Take time to explore the variety of solutions that may arise.

- “Reader’s Theatre” opportunities to explore perspectives and grow courage
Emotion Party
Empathy Target: Recognizing and changing emotions

1. Each person thinks of an emotion.
2. One person (the host) begins in the centre of the room, setting up for a party.
3. The host “acts” in the manner of his/her emotion.
4. Another player knocks on the door and is let in by the host.
5. The new player acts in the manner of his/her emotion.
6. The first person now begins to act in the manner of the second player’s emotion (having guessed what that emotion is).
7. A third person knocks and enters with a different emotion.
8. Now players one and two must independently identify the new player’s emotion and begin to act in the manner of the emotion.
9. Play continues until all of the players have entered the party.
10. Players then begin to leave the party, one by one, in the order in which they come and with the emotion he/she demonstrated.
11. This continues until the first player, the host, is left alone again, and is back acting in the manner of his/her original emotion.

Mirror, Mirror
Empathy Target: Paying close attention to others

1. Pair students and assign each an A and B.
2. Tell A’s that they are looking in the mirror.
3. Tell them to move VERY slowly. B’s are the mirror and must follow A so closely that an observer would not be able to tell who is leading and who is following. Encourage them to mirror not only body movement but also facial expression.
4. Have them switch after a minute of so.
Changing Emotions
Empathy Target: Understanding the Needs of Others

1. Ask two players to take the stage.
2. Assign two different emotions to each of the players.
3. Ask the audience for a setting and conflict, and have the two players improvise and improvise a scene starting with the emotions they were assigned.
4. Throughout the course of the scene, the players must gradually display less of their own emotion and more of the emotion of the other player.

Emotional Greetings - Can you do it without laughing?
Empathy Target: Keeping your cool!

1. Have the class stand in a circle.
2. Instruct the kids that they are to go around the circle one by one introducing themselves. However the catch is; instead of using their real name, they will introduce themselves as the most disgusting food you can think of.
3. The introduction should follow this format, “Hi everyone, I’m [beef liver with raw eggs on it]. I am happy to meet you.”
4. The goal is for the student who is speaking to always keep a straight face, never laughing or breaking character. The rest of the class can laugh.

Variation: change the greeting to any other silly character that you can think of.
Meet My Friend
Empathy Target: Listening to others

1. Assign random pairings and A/B partners.
2. Instruct the kids that you are going to set a timer and for one minute A is going to tell B as many things about himself (anything goes here)
3. Start timer and let them go
4. Now, for one minute B is going to tell A as many things about him/herself as possible.
5. Start timer and let them go.
6. Gather everyone into a circle.
7. Go around the circle; each student must say 3 things about their partner beginning with the phrase “Meet my friend . . . “

Who is the leader?
Empathy Target: Paying close attention to others

One actor leaves the room while the others stand in a circle and choose a secret leader.

The leader will start with a repetitive motion that the others follow and the leader will slowly change the motion while the others follow without missing a beat.

The student from outside will come back in and try to figure out who the leader is.

He/she will only get two or three guesses.

Reference: http://www.bbbpress.com/dramagames/
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Teach Kindness

“Kind acts don’t have to cost a dime, take much time, or require any particular talent. In fact, the easier the task, the more willing kids are to practice kindness.” Dr. Michele Borba

Remember to be kind to yourself so you can be kind to others. The more you do it, the more the students see you do it, the more it will become a habit for all.

Ideas to Grow Kindness

- paint rocks with kindness messages and hide around your school community for others to find
- leave an anonymous kind note in a library book for someone to find and enjoy
- pay attention to what is going on in your class and community. Is there a way to connect through cards/letters/fundraiser? This doesn’t need to be a ‘big deal’, rather an opportunity to relate to a situation.
- litter clean up
- have a kindness board in the classroom with post-its for students to anonymously (or not) write/draw when they notice kind actions
- kindness buddy - draw names for a “secret buddy”. Throughout the day, notice when your secret buddy is doing something kind and point it out. OR, do something kind for your secret buddy.
- write kind messages using sidewalk chalk around the school
Creating an Empathic Classroom Environment

Kindness Quotes to Promote Discussion and Thinking

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” – Aesop

“Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.” – Henry James

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.” – Dalai Lama

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” – Dr. Seuss

“Be Somebody who Makes Everybody Feel Like A Somebody.” – Kid President

“Kindness begins with me.”

“A warm smile is the universal language of kindness.” – William Arthur Ward

“A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees.” – Amelia Earhart

“How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” – Anne Frank
Empathy Lessons

Section Three
Lesson Title: Recognizing Feelings and Possible Causes
Level: grades 2 - 4

Empathy Target: emotions can be identified yet reasons for a particular emotion may differ depending on perspective/experience.

Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):

Career Education -
Strong communities are the result of being connected to family and community and working together toward common goals.

Applied Design, Skills and Technologies -
Technologies are tools that extend human capabilities.

Curricular Competencies: What Students Will DO

Students are expected to be able to do the following:
* choose materials and tools
* make a product using known materials
* develop skills through play and collaborative work
* use tools and technologies to extend their capabilities
* share ideas, information, personal feelings, and knowledge with others
* work respectfully and constructively with others to achieve common goals

Concepts and Content: What Students Will KNOW

Students are expected to know the following:
* emotions differ between individuals
* emotions can be identified through visual cues
* emotions may change depending on situations and perspectives
* social awareness
* podcasting basics using technology

Materials and Technologies

* iPads (one for every two students)
* graphic organizer “Creating an Empathy Podcast”
* reflection sheet

Pre-Lesson Preparation

* ensure “educreations” or “explain everything” is downloaded on iPads (or alternate podcasting/creation app)
* photocopy the graphic organizers (one per pair) and reflection piece
* choose and download three emotions and images that all students must include in podcast
### Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)

- share lesson goal with students and explain learning intention -
  "to create a podcast demonstrating different emotions and share possible causes for the emotional response" (clarify vocabulary "emotional response")
- develop criteria together
  
  **Suggested criteria** - include five emotions, three images are the ‘must haves’ and the other two are choice emotions. Each slide must contain an image clearly showing an emotion and writing stating the emotion. Audio should include a description of how you are able to recognize the emotion and a possible reason for the particular emotion (see example criteria).
- share and explain graphic organizers
- ask for a student to repeat instructions (check for understanding)
- as students complete graphic organizers, they transition to work on their podcast using iPads
- "air drop" the three pre-selected images to each of the iPads in order for all pairs to have the same three images
- students create podcasts (while referring to the criteria) while teacher circulates
- share podcasts as a large group
- teacher asks guiding questions:
  "how can you tell when someone is sad?", "what clues tell you that someone is happy?", “why is it that our first and second presentations showed people who were happy but they had different reasons for being happy?”, “can you think of a time when you were scared when someone else wasn't?”
- students complete the “after learning” reflection piece

### Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Adaptations/Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* student reflection</td>
<td>* students may include less/more emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* script for students who require additional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections

**Extensions:**
* instead of using images, students create short scenes demonstrating emotions and accompanying situation

**Cross Curricular Connections:**

**Language Arts:** Using language in creative and playful ways helps us understand how language works, texts can be understood from different perspectives to build shared understanding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide One</th>
<th>Title Page (make it creative!)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slide Two</td>
<td>Emotion: Clues: Cause of emotional response:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide Three</td>
<td>Emotion: Clues: Cause of emotional response:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide Four</td>
<td>Emotion: Clues: Cause of emotional response:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide Five</td>
<td>Emotion: Clues: Cause of emotional response:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide Six</td>
<td>Emotion: Clues: Cause of emotional response:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Podcast Script
(use this script for each of your slides)

This picture shows the emotion of ________________.

We can tell that this person is _______________ because

they have ______________________________________.

This person is feeling _________________ because

______________________________________________
______________________________________________.

Podcast Script
(use this script for each of your slides)

This picture shows the emotion of ________________.

We can tell that this person is _______________ because

they have ______________________________________.

This person is feeling _________________ because

______________________________________________
______________________________________________.
Suggested Criteria for Emotion Podcast

* Create a title page for your podcast (what is the goal of this project?)
  - Remember your name!

* Include at least five different emotions in your podcast (each emotion should be on a new slide)

* For each slide include:
  * the name of the emotion in writing
  * a picture that shows the emotion
  * your voices to teach us the clues that let you know the emotion
  * your voices to tell us why the person is feeling that emotion
Emotion Podcast Reflection

Today we learned about ________________________________.

We learned:

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________

We can:

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

Next step:

1. ____________________________________________
**Lesson Title:** Perspectives through Art  
**Level:** Grades 2 - 4  
**Empathy Target:** Understanding that Individuals Experience Situations Differently (Perspective Taking)

**Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):**

- **Arts Education** - The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others.
- **English Language Arts** - Stories can be understood from different perspectives.

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**Curricular Competencies:**

**What students will DO**

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

* reflect on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences
* express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways
* experience, document and share creative works in a variety of ways
* exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding

**Concepts and Content:**

**What students will KNOW**

Students are expected to know the following:

* elements of design: line, shape, space, texture, colour, form
* principles of design: pattern, repetition, rhythm, contrast, emphasis
* personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing or sharing in a safe learning environment
* engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity and community

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**Materials and Technologies**

* clipboards (one per child)  
* drawing paper  
* thermabands/scarves - one per partner  
* reflection sheet  
* artist perspective cards

**Pre-Lesson Preparation**

* plan partners  
* organize how to share artist perspective cards, (suggested: projection)
**Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)**

- assign partners
- introduce lesson by asking students to use their thermabands to tie their ankles together. Practise walking together.
- share goal: “find a spot to sit outside to sketch side by side. When you have chosen your spot, you must sit tied together and may not show or discuss your sketch with your partner.”
- in partners, students walk (tied together) to their chosen spot and begin to sketch. Remind students of importance of silence throughout this activity.
- once sketches are completed, students remove thermaband and complete the first section of their reflection sheet.
- early finishers may add colour to their sketch
- As a group, share sketches and reflection sheets.
- share artist perspective cards. Guiding question: “Why do you think the pieces of art are so different even though the artist was looking at the same location?” (backgrounds, experiences, tools used)
- connect lesson to empathy. Guiding question: “what does this lesson teach us about understanding empathy?”
- introduce term “empathy”
- students (in their partners) complete the final section on their reflection sheets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Adaptations/Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* student reflections</td>
<td>* some students may need to complete activity sitting beside one another (not tied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* for students who have written output difficulties, use oral language to explain sketch and provide details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections**

*Extensions:*  
* use alternate techniques/tools when creating art piece (pastels, charcoal, paint)

*Career Education*  
* everything we learn helps us to develop skills  
* effective collaboration relies on clear, respectful communication

*Physical and Health Education*  
* having good communication skills and managing our emotions enables us to develop and maintain healthy relationships
Perspectives Through Art

Created by __________ and __________

What we noticed about our sketches.

Similarities:
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________

Differences
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________
* ______________________________________

Why do you think your pictures look different?

_______________________________________
What we learned today:

Core Competency Self Assessment

We chose ____________________.

This shows our thinking because:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

We want you to notice:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Lesson Title: *Seeing Situations with Different Eyes*
Level: Grade 1 - 3
Empathy Target: *Perspective Taking*

**Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):**

* **Arts Education -**
  creative experiences involve an interplay between exploration, inquiry, and purposeful choice

* **English Language Arts -**
  stories can be understood from different perspectives

**Curricular Competencies:**

What students will DO

* Students are expected to be able to do the following:
  * make connections between ideas from a variety of sources and prior knowledge to build understanding
  * use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and make meaning
  * exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding
  * select on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences

**Concepts and Content:**

What students will KNOW

* Students are expected to know the following:
  * oral language strategies
  * metacognitive strategies
  * drama: character, time, place, plot, tension
  * personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing or sharing in a safe learning environment

**Materials and Technologies**

* empathy scenario and perspective cards
* reflection sheet
* “Voices in the Park” by Anthony Browne

**Pre-Lesson Preparation**

* prepare empathy and perspective cards
* perspective chart paper recording sheet
* copy reflection sheets
* prepare groups ahead of time (suggested, a “reader” in each group)
Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)

* read, “Voices in the Park” (perspectives from a bossy woman, young girl, sad man and lonely boy) and discuss guiding question: “How are the perspectives of the characters different from each other?”, “Why do you think each of the characters have different perspectives?”
* share the first of the three empathy cards (project if possible)
* card one - sick child. Ask students for perspectives (what are each of these people thinking and what might they do?) from the child, parent, friend. “What would you do if you were friends with the child?”
* put class into groups, show card 2 - dragon burning down a house and hand out perspective cards. In groups, students discuss and come up with a group consensus looking at the situation through new eyes (perspectives). Group one - dragon, group two - people living in the house, group three - firefighters, group four - neighbour, group five - another dragon and group six - a pet
* share and record results on the chart paper. Ask “what do you notice about the viewpoints?”
* repeat the group work with card 3 - crazy classroom. Assign perspectives from; a child in the room, the teacher, the principal, the parents, the class next door and the custodian.
* guiding question; “why do people see situations differently?”
* students complete reflection sheet

Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections

Extension:
create a “what comes next” scene
Cross Curricular Connections:
English Language Arts - share Fractured Fairy Tales to discuss perspectives
Social Studies - share an image from a different culture, how do people from different cultures view a situation

Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptations/Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* students will be working in supportive groups pre-determined by teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| * teacher observation checklist |
| * student reflection |
Empathy Card #1
Empathy Card #2
Empathy Card #3
Dragon Perspectives

dragon

people living in the house

firefighters

neighbour

another dragon

a pet
Classroom Perspectives

child in the room

teacher

principal

parents

class next door

custodian
Name __________

Character Perspective 3-2-1

Today we learned about ________________________________.

We learned:

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

We can:

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________

Next step:

1. ____________________________________________
Lesson Title: Seeing Situations From a Different Perspective and Wearing New Shoes (continuation from New Eyes Lesson)

Level: Grades 2 - 4

Empathy Target: Perspective Taking

Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):

**Arts Education -**

Creative experiences involve an interplay between exploration, inquiry, and purposeful choice.

**English Language Arts -**

Stories can be understood from different perspectives.

### Curricular Competencies: What students will DO

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Make connections between ideas from a variety of sources and prior knowledge to build understanding.
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and make meaning.
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding.
- Select on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences.

### Concepts and Content: What students will KNOW

Students are expected to know the following:

- Oral language strategies
- Metacognitive strategies
- Drama: character, time, place, plot, tension
- Personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing or sharing in a safe learning environment

### Materials and Technologies

- Empathy perspective cards from last lesson
- Hey Little Ant picture book
- “in your shoes” cards
- Reflection sheet
- Literature response sheet

### Pre-Lesson Preparation

- Prepare “in your shoes” cards
- Copy reflection sheets and literature response sheet
- Prepare groups ahead of time (suggested, a “reader” in each group)
**Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)**

* begin lesson by reviewing last lesson. Show empathy cards again and ask “what do you remember from last time?”, “what would you do in this situation?”
* hand out literature response sheet for *Hey Little Ant* by Philip Hoose, Hannah House and Debbie Tilley
* “before reading” - look at the cover, “what do you think this book will be about? Remember to include your evidence of thinking?”
* as the story is read, stop half way through the book to complete the “during reading” phase, “what is the boy thinking? what is the ant thinking? what would you do?”
* “after reading” phase, complete thought bubble - “what would you do?”
* make the connection that people may think differently because experiences affect people in different ways. “It is important to put ourselves in the shoes of others to understand what someone else may be experiencing.”
* assign each group a “in someone else’s shoe” card to problem solve and prepare a short skit
* rotate cards and students repeat the process, problem solving in a different manner
* rotate cards a third time
* Students complete reflection sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Adaptations/Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* teacher observation checklist</td>
<td>* students will be working in supportive groups pre-determined by teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* student reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections**

*Extension:
create a “what comes next” scene

*Cross Curricular Connections:*
English Language Arts - share Fractured Fairy Tales to discuss perspectives
Social Studies - share an image from a different culture, how do people from different cultures view a situation
Empathy Card #1
Empathy Card #2
Empathy Card #3
Hey Little Ant!
by Phillip Hoose, Hannah Hoose and Debbie Tilley

Lesson Title: Empathy Comfort Quilt

Before Reading: Look at the cover. What do you think this book will be about?

During Reading:

What is the boy thinking?
What is the ant thinking?
What would you do?

After Reading:
What would you do? Remember to include your evidence. WHY would you do what you said?
You are on the playground and you see someone get pushed down on the ground. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?

A Classmate is being made fun of because of the way they look. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?

You see that a friend got a bad grade on a test and they seem really sad about it. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?
A friend forgot their lunch at home, and they don't have food to eat at lunch time. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?

At recess time, there is someone sitting out with no one to play with. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?

A classmate forgot their pencil case at home and they don't have anything to write with. *Put yourself in their shoes.* How would you feel? What could you do to help?
Put Yourself in Someone else’s shoes!
Lesson Title: Empathy Comfort Quilt
Level: Grades 2 - 4
Empathy Target: Identifying with Others

Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):

**Arts Education** - The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others.

**Arts Education** - Creative experiences involve an interplay between exploration, inquiry, and purposeful choice.

Curricular Competencies:

**What students will DO**

* Students are expected to be able to do the following:
  * choose elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments of the arts
  * explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences
  * refine ideas, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools and techniques
  * interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism in the arts

Concepts and Content:

**What students will KNOW**

* Students are expected to know the following:
  * elements of design: line, shape, space, texture, colour, form
  * principles of design: pattern, repetition, rhythm, contrast, emphasis
  * symbolism as ways of creating and representing meaning
  * engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity and community

Materials and Technologies

* The Patchwork Quilt by Valerie Flournoy
* paper for draft
* 12” x 12” fabric pieces
* heat and bond (or alternative)
* fabric scraps
* material/thread to finish quilt

Pre-Lesson Preparation

* cut fabric pieces
* ask for volunteers to help students with the heat and bond process
* ask for a volunteer to help sew the quilt (if there isn’t a parent or school volunteer a local quilting group is a great place to call)
Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)

* **NOTE:** This lesson can be adapted to a paper quilt and used as a poster for the school rather than a fabric quilt
* Read *The Patchwork Quilt*. Discuss what is the purpose of a quilt? Why have they been around for so long? (inclusiveness)
* Explain learning intention: “to create an individual quilt square of our favourite things so that when others are not feeling well or happy, they can wrap themselves up in our quilt and our good thoughts will surround them”
* in partners, have a two minute chat discussing your favourite things
* accept brainstormed ideas and record
* tell students that we now need to decide on symbols to represent our favourite things as the most effective quilt squares (refer to *The Patchwork Quilt*) are simple squares
* discuss symbols. What symbols could be used to share an image of the favourite things?
* Draft a square

**DAY TWO**
* share squares in small groups. What works? What would work better? (could use Two Stars and a Wish frame)
* share scrap materials with students so they can see the variety of colours
* based on the feedback, create a new quilt square with colours

**DAY THREE**
* use the fabric scraps to create individual quilt squares
* * parents to help with the heat and bond process

**DAY FOUR (once squares are completed)**
* arrange squares on the floor and discuss where each square should be on the completed square
* quilt is now ready to be sewn together by an adult volunteer

**DAY FIVE (once quilt is completed)**
* students visit classrooms in the school with quilt to explain the purpose of the quilt
* donate quilt to a central location (i.e. learning commons) for all students to access

---

**Assessment**

* self reflection sheet
* this may be a great time to include a core competency reflection
* teacher assessment

**Adaptations/Modifications**

* some students may need help with cutting fabric and design. Adult help would be appreciated for these students.

---

**Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections**

* **English Language Arts**
Create a story of someone using the quilt and what happens when they surround themselves with it
Name ____________

Quilt Reflection

My quilt square is a ____________.

I chose this design because ____________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

I learned:

1. __________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________

I can:

1. __________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________

Next step:

1. __________________________________________________________________
**Lesson Title:** Putting Empathy into Practice - the Five Steps  
**Level:** Grades 2 - 4  
**Empathy Target:** Learning how to Demonstrate Empathy

**Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):**

**Career Education** - Everything we learn helps us to develop skills.  
**English Language Arts** - Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families and our communities.

**Curricular Competencies:** What students will **DO**  

Students are expected to be able to do the following:  
- recognize the importance of positive relationships in their lives  
- work respectfully and constructively with others to achieve common goals  
- use sources of information and prior knowledge to make meaning  
- make connections between ideas from a variety of sources and prior knowledge to build understanding  
- engage actively as listeners, viewers and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity, and community  
- exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding

**Concepts and Content:** What students will **KNOW**

Students are expected to know the following:  
- cultural and social awareness  
- text features (flow charts)  
- metacognitive strategies

**Materials and Technologies**

- *Giraffe Can’t Dance* by Giles Andreae  
- empathy step cards  
- empathy step graphic organizers

**Pre-Lesson Preparation**

- prepare empathy step cards  
- prepare groups  
- copy graphic organizers  
- label flowcharts for students who require this adaptation
**Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)**

- hand out empathy step cards (all five steps in one set) to each group. Ask each group to place the cards in an order that makes sense when showing empathic concern. Remind groups that they need to have an answer as to “why” they chose their particular order.
- share out . . . any similarities? differences?
- work towards an understanding of the five ordered steps (Step One - Watch and Listen (what is the other person saying, both in words and body); Step Two - Remember (when did you feel the same way?); Step Three - Imagine (how does the other person feel? how would you feel in that situation); Step Four - Ask (ask what the person is feeling) and Step Five - Show you care (let the person know you care through actions and words))
- Read: *Giraffe Can't Dance*. After first few pages (Gerald feeling sad because he can't dance), stop reading and ask students what would happen if they ran into Gerald (the giraffe) and noticed that he was feeling sad?
- using the empathy steps, complete the first flow chart on the graphic organizer together (guided release method)
- continue reading to the section where the animals are teasing Gerald and have students complete the second flow chart in partners
- continue reading until the cricket speaks and ask students to complete third flow chart on their own
- complete story and students complete “what I learned about empathy . . .” section of organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* student reflection on graphic organizer</td>
<td>* some students may need labels on flowcharts from the beginning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections**

*Extension:*
in addition to using flow charts, ask students to role play the steps

*English Language Arts:*
students write a creative writing story using the five empathy steps

*Social Studies:*
examine an issue (community, provincial, federal) and use the five empathy steps to frame a reaction.
Empathy Cards

Watch and Listen

Imagine

Remember

Ask

Show you Care
Name ____________
Steps To Show Empathy Graphic Organizer
Book Title: ______________________
Today I learned _______________

______________

______________

______________

I can ____________________.
Lesson Title: Putting Empathy into Practice Through Role Play

Empathy Target: Steps to Demonstrate Empathy

Lesson Seven

Level: Grades 2 - 4

Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):

Arts Education - The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others.

Arts Education - The mind and body work together when creating works of art.

Curricular Competencies: What students will DO

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

* create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation and purposeful play
* reflect on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences
* connect knowledge and skills from other areas of learning in planning, creating, and interpreting works for art
* apply learned skills, understandings, and processes in new contexts

Concepts and Content: What students will KNOW

Students are expected to know the following:

* drama: character, time, place, plot, tension
* a variety of dramatic forms
* personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or sharing in a safe learning environment

Materials and Technologies

* steps of empathy flow chart and skit checklist graphic organizer
* group reflection sheets

Pre-Lesson Preparation

* plan groups
* copy flow charts kit checklist graphic organizers and reflection sheets
* prepare chart paper for recording empathy observations following skits
### Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)

* review “steps of empathy” flow charts from last lesson  
* share learning intention “to demonstrate the steps of empathy in a fairy tale skit”  
* review criteria/checklist together and ask for clarification  
* place students in groups to develop skits. Allow at least twenty minutes (probably longer) for group development  
* groups present skits to class  
* as each group completes skit, add notes to class organizer (chart paper) - what was done to show empathy? what was the result?  
* closure: review chart paper and ask, “what do you notice?”  
* groups complete reflection sheets

### Assessment

* group process reflection sheets  
* teacher assessment

### Adaptations/Modifications

* iPads with iMovie available for those groups who may not feel comfortable performing in front of the class

### Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections

Extensions:  
* groups write own skits with original ideas  
* include a “what happens next?” scene
Demonstrating Empathy in Fairy Tales

Group Members: ____________________  

________________________________  

We chose the Fairy Tale:  

________________________________  

Character needing empathy:  

______________________________ because  

________________________________  

Character(s) demonstrating empathy:  

______________________________ by  

________________________________  

Other characters:  

________________________________  

________________________________
Group Reflection - Demonstrating Empathy in Fairy Tales

Today we learned about______________________________.

We learned:

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

We can:

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________

Next step:

1. ____________________________________________
**Lesson Title:** Putting Empathy into Practice - TOP SECRET  
**Level:** Grades 2 - 4  
**Empathy Target:** Making Connections

### Big Ideas (What Students Will UNDERSTAND):

1. **Career Education** - strong communities are the result of being connected to family and community and working together toward common goals.
2. **Career Education** - learning is a lifelong enterprise

### Curricular Competencies: What students will DO

- Students are expected to be able to do the following:
  - recognize the importance of positive relationships in their lives
  - identify and appreciate the roles and responsibilities of people in their schools, families and communities

### Concepts and Content: What students will KNOW

- Students are expected to know the following:
  - goal setting strategies
  - risk taking and its role in self-exploration

### Materials and Technologies

- top secret envelopes with secret mission inside (names on envelopes)
- chart paper
- *The Invisible Boy* by Patrice Barton

### Pre-Lesson Preparation

- prepare envelopes
- ask someone (the school secretary) to deliver the envelopes at a specific time
# Lesson (Teacher/Student Action)

* Read *The Invisible Boy*. Discuss with A/B partner, the guiding questions “why was the boy feeling invisible? how would you feel if you were the boy? what would you do if you were in this situation? what could you do to help?”
* as the discussion is happening, top secret envelopes are delivered and handed out to students
* students read “top secret mission”
* bring group back together as a whole to discuss contents - “what are you being asked to do?”, “why do you think this is an important project?”
* in A/B partners, students brainstorm a situation that they may see around the school (or at home) and what they could do to demonstrate empathy. Students may need guidance through this section but once the first ideas are given, it becomes easier for partners to develop own ideas.
* as students are sharing ideas, ask “what are some possible ways to show empathy in this situation?”

**THROUGHOUT THE TWO WEEKS OF THE PROJECT**
* continually check in with the students. “What have you done?”, “What have you noticed?”

**AFTER THE PROJECT**
* share empathic acts as a class
* students complete self reflection

---

## Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* student reflection sheet</td>
<td>* if necessary, some students may need direct suggestions (i.e. “when you are outside at recess today and you see someone on their own, what can you do?”, “Try it!”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Extensions/Possible Cross Curricular Connections

**Extension**
continue the program for a longer amount of time

**English Language Arts**
writing topics (creative) using these prompts - “what happened because of your involvement?” OR “what could have happened if you did not become involved?”
SECRET AGENT: _____________

Your mission if you choose to accept it is to perform Random Acts of Empathy.

During the next two weeks you will be required to perform at least two empathic acts without the recipients knowing about this project.

First, secretly watch the people you come in contact with closely. What do you notice? Once you notice someone in need, decide on an empathic response. How can you help? Perform your deed and record the result.
SUSPECT #1

What did you notice? __________________________

What did you decide to do? _____________________

What was the result? __________________________

SUSPECT #2

What did you notice? __________________________

What did you decide to do? _____________________

What was the result? __________________________
TOP SECRET

EMPATHY MISSION

The empathy mission I would like to share is when I noticed _____

When I _______________

I noticed _______________

I learned _______________

Next time _____________________________________________
THINKING

I developed my Core Competencies of...

when...

I want you to notice...

Next time I will...

Self-assessment of Core Competencies

Name:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want you to notice...</th>
<th>Next time I will...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>when I...</td>
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</table>

I developed my Core Competency of

**Self-Assessment of Core Competences**

Name:
# COMMUNICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I developed my Core Competency of</th>
<th>when I...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next time I will...</td>
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Name: ____________________________
Empathy in the School

Section Four
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Buddy Activities

“Teachers report that participation in buddy programs enhances children’s cooperative learning behaviors such as taking turns, listening, sharing knowledge, praising another’s effort, helping one another, and completing a task... As the older students assume the role of the teacher, they are motivated to do their best. They also experience pride in their ability to be helpful.” Leah Davies

Providing opportunities for students to work in multi-age groups, either as buddy classes or during school-wide activities, encourages students to practise empathy in a real, authentic manner. Even the most difficult students we teach, rise to the challenge when working with younger students. A great way to practise empathy!

Tips to be Successful:

* take time to establish expectations with both groups. Creating anchor charts titled, “As a big buddy, I...” and “As a little buddy, I...” are successful ways to set expectations in a collaborative manner.

* provide training in subject areas/activities prior to meeting (i.e. reading/math strategies)

* provide varied opportunities to keep things fresh and to allow buddies to get to know each other as people, and not just in one subject area (i.e. reading buddies).

* take time to carefully make good matches in consultation with all involved.

* give time to allow relationships to grow, both in length of meeting times and throughout the year (we change our buddies only twice throughout the year... unless special circumstances arise).
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Class Buddy Ideas

* Get to know you Buddy Glyph (see following page)
  - great to use when first meeting together
* Interview each other
  - this could be done using technology and video
* Scavenger Hunts (see following page)
  - the picture book “Step Gently Out” by Helen Frost is a good introduction for this activity
* STEM challenges (see following pages for ideas)
* Buddy Reading
  - to make this more meaningful, add in an accountability/ follow up piece (see following pages). Remember to keep this simple as connections are the most important during these meetings!
* Math Games to practice basic skills
  - card and dice games are always hits!
* Write a collaborative story
* Create an art project together
* Technology mentors. Ask big buddies to teach little buddies a new app or program.
* Develop coding skills together
  * Writing/Art activities - one person draws an object (such as a robot) and then gives instructions of how to replicate the drawing to their buddy.
BUDDY GLYPH

1. Provide each person with a blank buddy outline

2. Buddies take turns completing glyphs. Each child asks and completes the glyph for their buddy (to encourage them getting to know one another).

3. What is your buddies favourite colour of ice cream?  
   CHOCOLATE  STRAWBERRY  BUBBLEGUM  OTHER

4. What is your buddies favourite type of fruit?  
   STRAWBERRIES  ORANGES  BANANAS  APPLES  OTHER

5. How many brothers and sisters does your buddy have?  
   0  -  1    2 - 3    4 +

6. What is your buddies favourite thing to do at school?  
   MATH  READING  WRITING  SCIENCE  PE  OTHER

7. Use your buddies favourite colour for their hair.

8. At the bottom of your glyphs, write a sentence about something that you and your buddy have in common.
STEM Challenge Examples

Save Fred!

**Problem:** How can you and your partner save Fred using only 4 paper clips? You may not touch Fred, the boat, or the life preserver directly with your hands!

**Materials:** Gummy Worm, Gummy life preserver, 1 plastic cup and 4 paper clips.

**Instructions:**
1. Set Up the challenge as shown in the picture.
2. Follow the rules. Fred and the life preserver can only be touched with the paper clips. NO HANDS!
3. Discuss what worked and what would you do differently if presented with the same challenge again.
4. Complete the relationship check in!

Build A Tower

**Problem:** Build the tallest (or strongest, or most intricate, or . . . ) structure using the given materials.

**Materials:** toothpicks and plastience OR newspapers and tape OR cups OR pipe cleaners OR whatever else you can think of!

**Instructions:**
1. Hand out materials.
2. Assign a specific amount of time to construct.
3. Discuss what worked and what would you do differently if presented with the same challenge again.
4. Complete the relationship check in!
**STEP GENTLY OUT AND RECONNECT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Something that makes us happy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Something we could give that would make someone smile</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someplace we like to be</td>
<td>Something we enjoy looking at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that is our favourite colour(s)</td>
<td>Something in nature we are thankful for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something with an interesting texture</td>
<td>Something that looks different up close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEM BUDDY CHECK IN!

Our problem today was to ______________________________.

This is what we did to solve our problem:

Remember to label your picture!

We would like you to notice that ______________________________

__________________________________________________________.

Next time, we would ________________________________.

We learned that when working together, we __________________________

__________________________________________________________.
Buddy Reading Follow Ups

Create reading cubes to guide discussions as groups are reading. On each of the cube faces, write a different question. During or after reading, buddies roll the cube and answer the question in reading logs.

This activity promotes listening to one another, working and creating together.

Sample Fiction Cube Questions:

Does this book remind you of another book?
Who was your favourite character? Why?
What is the message in this book?
What was your favourite part of the story?
How would you change the ending of the story?
What character would you like to be? Why?
What is the problem in the story? How was it resolved?
Did you like this book? Why or why not?

Sample Non-Fiction Cube Questions:

What are two things you learned from this book?
Did you like this book? Why or why not?
How was the book organized? Did it help you?
What was the most interesting part of this book?
Do you have questions that were not answered in this book?
Would you want to learn more about this subject? Why or why not?
Which fact did you find the most interesting?
What was something that you already knew that you read?
Creating an Empathic School Environment

School Multi-Age Togetherness Ideas

* Ensure that staff members are making an effort to greet and connect with all who enter the building.

* Spirit Days
  - "traditional" ideas to build togetherness
  - alternative ideas to build relationships such as "idiom day" (students and staff dress as an idiom and then walk around the school identifying as many staff idioms as they can), "career day" (students dress as a specific career and teachers wander the school identifying as many as possible), "book character dress up" (same format as idiom day).

* Celebration day multi-age activities for Earth Day, Chinese New Year (or other special dates), school anniversary/birthday, rainy days . . .
  - multiage groupings travel to different classrooms to experience activities around the theme.

* Book Fairs
  - each student celebrates a book of his/her choice in a Science Fair format. Displays are set up throughout the school.

* Celebrate a hero
  - each class focuses on a community member (past/present) that has impacted the community. This project culminates with a school sharing either through an assembly or wander and learn experience (depending on size of school).
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Service Learning

“Children should be able to use their academic skills toward authentic experiences beyond the classroom, thereby seeing the purposefulness of their learning. In this way, children’s sense of caring for others is both developed and maintained.”

Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform

Service learning allows students to learn about a cause and then have an impact. Empathy is developed as students learn about others, connect to issues and make a difference in an authentic manner.

Things to be Mindful of:

* choose opportunities that are meaningful for the students. If possible, incorporate their suggestions into action plans.
* be careful of too many “one offs.” The projects that have the most impact for the students, are the projects where students can delve deeply and really learn about the cause and how their actions have impact.
* provide the time needed to really learn about the cause
* provide resources and, if possible, guest speakers to immerse students in the learning experience
* think locally, as well as globally. There are many ways to provide service at a school and community level.

Service Learning empowers students and encourages them to question the status quo.
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Service Learning ‘Plan’

Effective service learning incorporates these steps:

It begins with a DRIVING QUESTION. The driving question ties to the curriculum and anchors the project.

Once the DRIVING QUESTION is established, there is an ENTRY EVENT. The ENTRY EVENT opens the project in an engaging manner. This could include taking a field trip, listening to an expert or simply reading a story together.

Following the ENTRY EVENT, students spend time RESEARCHING on their own. This is where a lot of the deep learning happens and influences the “action” part of the project.

Throughout the RESEARCH, continual REFLECTION needs to happen. REFLECTIONS could be done in a variety of ways such as journaling, artwork or simply verbally sharing discoveries.

Following the RESEARCH and REFLECTIONS, the final stage is the CULMINATING EVENT. The CULMINATING EVENT involves sharing of the learning and often includes action. Some examples may include fundraising, public presentations, videos or events.

Adapted from Service Learning 101: Making Learning Real and Relevant
Creating an Empathic School Environment

School Service Learning Ideas

* environment/recycling clubs
* older students organize games during play times for younger students
* create thank you cards for school volunteers
* beautify the school
  * gardening?
  * painting?
  * artwork?
* school decorating club
  * students create decorations for school events
* mentoring programs
  * both academic and social
* create a “New Student” guide to the school
  * assign school “hosts” to welcome new students.
* hold bike-ride and walk to school days to reduce traffic and pollution
* create wildlife sanctuaries on the school grounds
  * butterflies, bees, birds . . .
* have your students keep gratitude journals
* invite students to write complimentary notes to fellow students
* teach students how to write thank-you notes

Remember, for service learning to be effective, students must identify a problem, research, act and reflect.
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Community Service Learning Ideas

* make connections with the local elderly homes
  * make Valentine’s/Christmas cards
  * visit to record stories
  * play board games
* volunteer at a local SOS or food shelter
* deliver treats to the local fire or police station
* Terry Fox Run/Tour de Rock (for Vancouver Island schools)
* food drives
* establish a “make a difference” club (or do as a class?)
  * students research and implement ways to make a difference in the community
* volunteer at a local animal shelter
* trash/ocean clean up
* learn about local watersheds and teach others how to protect it
* host a garage sale for your favourite cause
* write letters to elected officials about ways to make the community better
* make some no-sew dog toys for animals in shelters using fleece or fabric remnants
* have students interview someone who has made a difference in the community
* write letters to children in the hospital

Remember, for service learning to be effective, students must identify a problem, research, act and reflect.
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Global Service Learning Ideas

* write letters to veterans
* study the art/culture of an impoverished nation. Students then create artwork in the same style, auction it off and donate the proceeds to a charity in the country.
* connect with others through the Global Read Aloud
  * [https://theglobalreadaloud.com](https://theglobalreadaloud.com)
* connect with others across the country through the Canadian Post Card exchange (through Facebook) [https://www.facebook.com/canadianpostcardproject/](https://www.facebook.com/canadianpostcardproject/)
* study individuals who have made a positive difference to humanity
* pack backpacks of school supplies for those in need
* create shoebox projects for local woman living in need
  * [http://www.shoeboxproject.com](http://www.shoeboxproject.com)
* check with your local service clubs to see if there is a way to involve students. They are often a wealth of information.

Remember, for service learning to be effective, students must identify a problem, research, act and reflect.
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Roots of Empathy

“When children develop empathy, they help more and hurt less. The leaders of tomorrow are sitting in the classrooms of today and they need imagination and empathy to be able to identify and solve society’s problems.” Mary Gordon, Founder of Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy is a Canadian program started by Mary Gordon in 1996. The program is now available in 12 countries and in every province in Canada.

The premise of Roots of Empathy is simple. Babies and their caregivers are matched to a class or group of students throughout a specific time period (ideally 6 - 10 months) and visit every three weeks. Trained Roots of Empathy Instructors coach students as they observe the relationship between the baby and their caregiver. In doing so, students learn to label the baby’s feelings and to react to his/her needs. These interactions help students to identify on their own feelings and the feelings of others.

To learn more about Roots of Empathy, visit http://rootsofempathy.org
Creating an Empathic School Environment

Random Acts of Kindness Week/Month

In 1994, Dr. Chuck Wall coined the phrase “Random Acts of Kindness and a program began at Our Lady Of Lourdes School in Mobile, Alabama.

“Random Acts of Kindness was started with the sole intention of instilling in children, values of caring, giving, and sharing of themselves, without compensating the children with any rewards outside of a good feeling. Students at this school are learning that they can make a difference in the quality of life of another person through the RAK program.” C.S. Dupree

Ideally, our students would always be performing Random Acts of Kindness however, we know that students often need awareness, direct teaching and practise when creating new habits.

Ideas to Highlight Kindness Throughout the School

* hold a “Kindness” assembly in which all things kind are highlighted, or to kick off a kindness week
* declare a Random Acts of Kindness week
* create a “Kindness” bulletin board to display kind acts
* challenge students to participate in Random Acts of Kindness
* set up a “thank you note” station for students/staff to show their appreciation to others
* have each class research a person in history who has demonstrated extreme kindness. Hold a school “museum” to visit and learn from each other. NOTE: this could also be done as a class project.
**Random Acts of Kindness Challenge**

The Challenge: How many squares can you complete?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read a book to a younger child.</th>
<th>Do a good deed for a neighbour.</th>
<th>Pick up five pieces of litter.</th>
<th>Hold the door open for others.</th>
<th>Give a compliment to someone in your class.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let someone in your family know how much you appreciate them.</td>
<td>Ask someone new to you to play at recess.</td>
<td>Give a compliment to someone not in your class.</td>
<td>Be a helper in the classroom.</td>
<td>Make a card or note for someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate food/clothes or toys to an organization that supports those in need.</td>
<td>Say “good morning” to at least three different people.</td>
<td>Volunteer to do something that makes the community a better place.</td>
<td>Help someone who is struggling.</td>
<td>Help to clean up, even if you didn’t make the mess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to someone who looks sad or upset.</td>
<td>Tell a joke that makes someone laugh.</td>
<td>Help prepare a meal.</td>
<td>Encourage someone.</td>
<td>Be a helper at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn off the lights when others are not in the room.</td>
<td>Let someone go before you in line.</td>
<td>Give a secret gift to someone.</td>
<td>Volunteer to do something that makes the school a better place.</td>
<td>SMILE!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kindness Museum Visits

As you visit the displays, record what you learned about each KIND individual.

Room # ____

I learned:

________________________

________________________

________________________

Who?

Room # ____

I learned:

________________________

________________________

________________________

Who?

Room # ____

I learned:

________________________

________________________

________________________

Who?
Creating an Empathic School Environment
Compassion/Therapy Dogs

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- increase in school attendance
- gains in confidence
- decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels
- positive changes towards learning and improved motivation, and
- enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional love from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

Christine Grove and Linda Henderson

If your school is able to have a therapy dog as part of your school community - you are lucky! The benefits of having a therapy dog are numerous, however it takes a lot of commitment and dedication. If you are not able to have your very own therapy dog within the school, asking those who train the dogs or have the dogs as their own partners can be very effective for students.

For more information, check out:

Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs - https://vicompassiondogs.ca/#!event-list
PADS - https://pads.ca
St. John Ambulance Therapy Dogs - https://www.sja.ca/English/Community-Services/Pages/Therapy%20Dog%20Services/default.aspx
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate why it is important to teach empathy to age 7 - 9 students and to provide a toolkit that details practical strategies for teachers to use. The toolkit was structured to provide ideas for implementing empathy strategies on a daily basis, direct classroom lessons, as well as ideas to create an empathic school environment.

Key Learnings

This project has demonstrated to me how important it is that we, as educators, deliberately teach the skill of empathy. In field testing the lessons, I learned how discussing and teaching empathic themes made a difference to how my students reacted to one another. When unexpected incidences occurred, students now knew how to react and respond. There was a greater understanding and acceptance of unique personalities. This understanding led to an atmosphere of mutual respect and my class became a true community.

In addition, I have learned that empathy is at the heart of many of the skills that our students will need in the future. As Pink (2006) writes, “empathy is much more than a vocational skill necessary for surviving twenty first century labor markets. It is an ethic for living. It is a means of understanding other human beings – as Darwin and Ekman found, a universal language that connects us beyond country or culture” (p. 165). I now recognize that this understanding is crucial as our world becomes more accessible through the use of technology. We are no longer living in a world where holding knowledge is enough, but, I have come to believe, being able to act with heart on the basis of such knowledge is essential. As Zhao has suggested in the article, “Needed: Global Villagers” (2009), although we now have the
technology to connect to one another, we don’t yet know each other very well. Getting to know one another, with an empathic mindset, will enable people around the world to connect in an authentic manner. This connection is really important as we are confronted with a variety of cultures, beliefs and global issues. As Zhau suggests:

For the global village to be a happy and prosperous place for all its residents, all people must accept the fact that their well-being is intricately interconnected with and dependent on others. They must understand and be willing to tackle common problems facing the village. They must treat one another as equals. They must try to understand and appreciate one another's beliefs, values, behaviours, and customs. Finally, they must be able to talk to one another, using a common language (p. 5).

I have learned that the common language of empathy is essential in our world today.

Noddings (1992) supports this view and further identifies that, “knowledge alone is unlikely to establish caring relations” (p. 113). If we want our children to live in a more kind and gentle world, I have learned that we need to teach them how to be kind and gentle. Through my research, I have come to agree with Noddings that, “the primary aim of every teacher must be to promote the growth of students as competent, caring, loving and lovable people” (p. 154). In addition, I have learned that not everything we teach is visible, like math and reading. Sometimes, the important things that really matter are invisible to the eye.

I have also learned that it is indeed possible to teach empathy. As Rifkin shows in his TedTalk (2009), age 8 is developmentally when most children recognize that there is more to the world than just themselves and that there are many people in the world facing challenges. Thus, creating an empathy toolkit for this age group made sense. In researching how to teach empathy,
I realized how important it is to teach self regulation and self reflection skills. In order to be truly empathic, children must have an understanding of their own emotions and how to relate to others based on this understanding. Because of this learning, adding self reflection pieces into each of the lessons was integral to the lesson objectives.

**Limits**

I recognize that when adding anything new into an already demanding school day it can be very difficult for educators to do. Time is always a factor and teachers are often wondering what must be given up in order to accommodate something new. Thus, teachers must see value in what they are being asked to add. Through the toolkit, I am hopeful that when teachers read “why” it is important to teach students empathy, they will find the time to do so as it is such a valuable skill. However, if teachers are not able to find the time to teach the direct lessons, I have tried to demonstrate how empathy can still be taught in an integrated format throughout each day. In addition, each of the direct lessons link to curriculum competencies so that teachers are easily able to justify the teaching of empathy. It is my hope that teachers will see teaching empathy as something that adds to the school day and the development of their students, rather than something that takes away.

Interestingly, another limit of teaching empathy that I have discovered has surprised me. Although there has been some work on developing empathy in a classroom, much of the work around empathy in schools has been completed by counsellors. Up to this point, empathy has often been seen as something that only a few children need to develop and thus can be done through counselling sessions. Changing the mindset that it is the counsellor’s job to teach empathy may be challenging. Hopefully, when teachers read the first section of the toolkit (why
it is important to teach), and explore the engaging lessons they will recognize that the direct
teaching has benefits for all, not simply a few.

Implications

I believe that teaching empathy has tremendous implications to the work that we are
currently doing. As already stated, empathy is a keystone to each of the core competencies that
we are expected to weave into each curricular competency. When empathy is taught we are
helping our students be able to:

- connect and communicate their feelings clearly, passionately and in a caring manner
- think creatively as they are open to new suggestions and able to generate ideas
- recognize their own personal and cultural identities, including their own personal values
- be personally aware and responsible through using self-regulation strategies
- think critically; analyze, question and design with heart
- be socially responsible and want to make a difference to our world

Teaching empathy would have a huge impact on the students that we are teaching. Not only
would our students, and classroom communities, benefit right away from the direct teaching of
empathy, the lessons they learn would last a lifetime.

Action Plan

In order to share my learnings, I am hoping to provide a workshop for those in my
district. As I recognize that “one off” workshops do not always have impact for teachers, I
would like to offer the workshop using an observation/discussion format. Ideally, I would love
for teachers to arrive at the school and spend time together discussing why it is important to
teach empathy. Following a pre-meeting, teachers would then observe as I taught an empathy
lesson and then we would have time to debrief and share the toolkit. I believe that this would be
more valuable than simply sharing the material on a Professional Development Day.

However, I also know that this format does not work for all educators. In order to get the
material out there, I have already started sharing it with critical friends and colleagues. These
colleagues are from different schools and have started to teach using some of the strategies that
have been identified as being important when teaching empathy. My hope is that they will then
start to share what is happening in their classrooms and with their students, and more educators
will jump on board. Lasting change often begins in this organic manner. I believe that teaching
empathy is not a fad subject to teach, but as society progresses, it will become more and more
important. Thus, lasting change is crucial.

In addition, I often find ideas on line and know that this is an important way to learn and
gather ideas for many teachers. I would like to begin sharing what I have learned through blogs,
tweets and social media teaching groups that I belong to. Getting the message out there is a first
step to meaningful sharing.

**Future Learnings**

The empathy toolkit is simply a starting point for teaching the skill. My plan is to
continue to add to the toolkit as more ideas are developed and refined. Ideally, I would like to
add more integration ideas so as not to overwhelm teachers with “something new again” but to
add value to what they are currently doing. For example, adding more literature response ideas
would allow teachers to focus on empathy in an organic manner.

I also hope that once I start tweeting and sharing ideas, a learning community can be
formed and educators can learn from one another. I believe that a learning community
(especially if it is bigger than our small district) has the potential for great learning. From researching, I know that there are many great educators already implementing empathy strategies to their programs. I would like to continue to learn from and with them.

Throughout the research for this project, I was introduced to many new researchers and I was reminded how important it is to read and research to learn and validate ideas. I plan to continue this journey and continue to read. In particular, I would like to read more from Dr. Michele Borba, Daniel Pink, Tony Wagner and Homa Tavangar.

Conclusion

When I began my empathy journey, I was unsure that the subject was the right one for my thesis. I wondered whether I would feel passionately about the topic, whether I could find enough research to support my hunches, and whether what I would create would be meaningful to not only the students I teach, but to all students? What began as a question into what was happening for my students morphed into a deep rooted belief that not only is empathy important to teach, it must be taught. This belief is now grounded in solid research.

Following the teaching of the final, direct empathy lesson in my classroom (Empathy in Art), I asked my students why they thought that their drawing looked different than their partners, although they were drawing the same thing. A student responded that, “even though we are looking at the same thing, we experience things differently and use our own eyes.” At that point, I knew that teaching empathy was the right (and necessary) thing to do in order to prepare my students for the world Zhao described.

Last year, when I first began our empathy journey, my students knew that individual differences made us unique. When we finished our journey, they realized that understanding and
relating to these differences make us empathic. In meeting my new class this year, I know that empathy training will be an important part of our time together, as I have many students who have challenges when relating to one another. I am now confident that as we begin to work through the empathy lessons together, my students will begin to experience more success. It is my hope that as teachers start on this journey, they too will discover the multitude of benefits that comes when one teaches empathy.
References:


Lopez, G. R. (2013). *Undocumented immigration: Using the visual arts as a tool to teach elementary and students understanding and empathy*. (Masters Dissertation)


Pemberton, Kim. (2001). Babies brought to classroom in bid to forestall bullying [roots of empathy program]. The Vancouver Sun (Index-Only)


EMPATHY TOOLKIT
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