

# ▶ Empathy Mapping

## FOCUS

*To explore how seeing things through various perspectives is an asset to leaders.*

---

## LESSON COMPONENTS

Observation | Discussion | Collaboration

## MATERIALS

- Optional presentation supplies
- Student handout

**Empathy Mapping: What do others think, feel, say and do?**

## PROCESS

Optional pre-lesson assignment: Ask the students to keep a journal regarding what a specific group of people are doing, thinking, feeling and saying during a typical week of school. Students can be assigned a single group to observe, or all students can focus on observing people from the entire school community. Possible groups to observe include:

- Parents at school events and away from school
- Custodial and/or kitchen staff
- Office support staff
- Administrators
- Teachers (can also be broken down by content areas)
- Students by grade level
- Students with special needs
- Specific defined student demographic group at your school
- Specific student activity group at your school (choir, AP students, football team, etc.)

Explain that it is relatively easy to record what people say and do; it is more complicated and subjective to record what people are thinking and feeling. If students have a good rapport with particular

individuals, they might ask them what they were thinking or feeling in a specific situation. The students could also ask an open ended question such as: "When you think about our school, what do you think and feel?"

① Provide students with a copy of the student handout, **Empathy Mapping: What do others think, feel, say and do?** Read the introduction with the students. Explain that businesses often use the process of empathy mapping to understand and serve their customers better. Walt Disney was known to visit a Disneyland attraction under construction and make detailed observations while on his knees. He wanted to understand the perspective of the children, his customers, regarding how they would be viewing and interacting with the future ride.

② Lead a conversation based on student observations of the school year so far. Questions could include:

- Who in our school could benefit from getting more academic or social support?
- What negative aspect of our current school culture gets in the way of academic or social success?
- What positive aspect of our current school culture could be amplified to increase academic and social success?
- How can student leaders change what they do, think, say and feel to improve academic and social success?

③ Divide students into teams of 5-8 and have them complete the task, which is to create an empathy map based on a specific group at the school. (See pre-lesson assignment for possible groups.) You can have each small group create an empathy map based on a different group at your school, or you can have the empathy maps all represent one specific group at your school. The empathy map will provide insight into what others think, feel, say and do.

④ Using the handout, **Empathy Mapping: What do others think, feel, say and do?** have students reflect and record responses individually based on the specific group their team is analyzing.

⑤ After individual reflection, have teams compare their responses and build a composite Empathy Map to present to the class. This could take the form of the quadrant or could be expanded into a creative presentation.

⑥ Have each small group present their Empathy Map and their reflections.

⑦ In a class discussion compare and contrast the observations made by each group based on the subject of the empathy map they created.

- Are there similarities across all groups?
- Are there feelings, actions or attitudes that seem to be unique to a group?
- What concerns should we focus on to make the biggest impact in our school?

# Empathy Mapping: What do others think, feel, say and do?

*"The great gift of human beings is that we have the power of empathy, we can all sense a mysterious connection to each other." –Meryl Streep*

A student leader is like a wildlife biologist. Biologists observe animals to understand how they live and how humans can help them, not endanger them. In order to serve our school, you need to similarly understand the people who make up the school. A student leader must be a keen observer. When you take the time to watch, listen and decide how you can help, our school becomes more successful.

## Empathy Mapping

Individually reflect on the group you are analyzing and provide answers in the following quadrants for the group you are analyzing. When finished with individual reflection, work as a group to create a composite Empathy Map to present to the class. This could take the form of the quadrant below or could be expanded into a creative presentation.

**Think:** What do \_\_\_\_\_ think about school?

**Think:** What do \_\_\_\_\_ say at school?

**Think:** How do \_\_\_\_\_ feel at school?

**Think:** What do \_\_\_\_\_ do at school?

## Reflection

To better understand and serve this group at our school, we as student leaders could...