



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

USING ART TO BUILD BRIDGES

"Each person does see the world in a different way. There is not a single, unifying, objective truth. We're all limited by our perspective."

—Siri Hustvedt

OVERVIEW

Students identify, reflect, and create art that depicts a time when they settled a disagreement with someone else, practicing perspective-giving and taking skills.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To support healthy dialogue among students during disagreements
- To encourage greater empathy and understanding among students
- Any time throughout the school year

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤30 minutes

LEVEL

- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- Writing Materials
- Art supplies (e.g., markers, color pencils, construction paper)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Learn about and practice perspective-giving and perspective-taking
- Reflect on a time when they had a disagreement with someone else and use the reflection process to practice their perspective-taking skills
- Consider ways in which they could practice these skills in the future

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Empathy
- Perspective

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Focused Attention
- Open Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Take a moment to consider a time when you argued with someone else, such as a relative, friend, or coworker, and you were able to settle the disagreement. Start by focusing on what you were feeling, sensing, and thinking during the disagreement and in relation to the way the disagreement was settled.
- Then consider the same for the other person. Really try to place yourself in their shoes.
- What did you learn from imagining another person's perspective? What do you think might be incomplete about what you imagined? What else would you need to know to help you understand what being the other person is like? Can you ever really know exactly what another person's perspective is?

- How might you and those around you benefit from you being more mindful about taking others' perspectives and giving your own perspective to others? What are some ways in which you could practice these skills in your day-to-day life?

INSTRUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce perspective-giving and taking to students. You might ask:
 - *What does it mean to take someone else's perspective, or to share with them your own perspective?*
 - *When we try to see the world through someone else's eyes, how does that help us understand them better?*
 - *Why could that be helpful when you're meeting someone you don't know very well?*
- Have a few students share their thoughts out loud to the whole class.

REFLECTION

This can be done in pairs or as a short journal reflection.

- Ask students to consider a time when they argued with someone else, such as a sibling, friend, or classmate, and they were able to settle the disagreement. Be trauma-sensitive with students by having them choose a disagreement that wasn't too challenging or upsetting. You might ask:
 - *What were you feeling during the disagreement?*
 - *What were you thinking during the disagreement?*
 - *Did you notice any sensations in your body during the disagreement?*
- Now, ask students to take a moment to imagine being the other person. You might say:
 - *Imagine stepping into their shoes and seeing the world through their eyes. What do you think they were feeling during the disagreement?*
 - *What do you think they were thinking during the disagreement?*
 - *How do you think their body felt during the disagreement?*
- Similarly, continue by asking students to reflect on how they felt, what they thought, and what were the sensations connected to *settling* the disagreement? Then, have them imagine how the other person was feeling, what they were sensing, and thinking when *settling* the disagreement.

ART AND REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Now, encourage students to explore the other person's perspective through art.

- Start by asking them to set the scene and depict where they were. Explain to students that they will be drawing two versions of this scene.
- Version 1 should be a drawing from their own perspective, focused on how they saw things and felt when settling the argument.
- Version 2 should be drawn from the other person's perspective. Ask students to try to place themselves in the other person's shoes and use the other person's perspective to draw how the other person might have seen things and felt when settling the argument.

- Once they have finished, ask students to write a short reflection on their two drawings. You might ask:
 - *What was similar and different between the perspectives?*
 - *What did you learn from imagining another person's perspective?*
 - *What was hard about it?*
 - *What do you think might be incomplete about what you imagined?*
 - *What was it like to remember a time when you settled an argument with another person?*
 - *What else would you need to know to help you understand what being the other person is like?*
 - *Can you ever really know exactly what another person's perspective is? Why not?*
- Have a few students share their reflection out loud to the whole class. Then ask students to share a few thoughts about why it might be helpful to share their own perspective during a disagreement, but also to be willing to listen to the other person's perspectives.
- Finish by having students write a short list or paragraph on how they might practice these skills in the future (e.g., when, where, how might they set cues in place to remind themselves to use these skills).

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Did students report feeling more empathy towards the other person after engaging in this practice?
- Did you notice any changes in the ways in which students interacted with each other either during or after the lesson (e.g., were they more attuned to each other, more willing to collaborate, more friendly)?
- How might you support students in practicing perspective-taking and giving in their day- to-day life?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A [study](#) with 21 South Korean five-year olds showed that engaging in reflection, role-playing, and discussion around bullying increased children's perspective-taking and empathy towards the victims.

In a [series of five studies](#) with diverse groups of undergraduate students, researchers found that participants who engaged in perspective-taking (in comparison to participants who did not) were rated more highly by people with whom they interacted. Furthermore, perspective-takers showed more approach-oriented behaviors towards outgroup members and displayed greater awareness of racial inequalities.

Finally, a [study](#) of mainly white freshmen from a high school in the northeastern United States found that students who participated in a visual arts and music-based social-emotional learning program (in comparison to those who didn't) increased their levels of perspective-taking and empathic concern.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As teachers, we can help our students cultivate empathy for others through the encouragement of perspective-taking and giving skills. By doing so, not only can we strengthen our students' relationship with others, but we can also help improve intergroup interactions, which is so important as divides continue to grow in the U.S. and elsewhere around various group identities.

Furthermore, some scholars suggest that empathy is the mechanism that drives [altruistic behavior](#). By supporting our students' perspective taking and giving skills, we can create more prosocial communities in our classrooms and beyond.

SOURCE

[Empatico](#): Empatico is a social-emotional learning platform, connecting students with themselves, each other, and the world through interactive and globally collaborative classroom tools.