



# Teacher Reflection and Action

## Social Awareness

### Teacher Reflection

*Social Awareness: The capacity to interact with others in ways that show respect for their ideas and behaviors, recognize our impact on them, and use cooperation and welcoming behaviors in social situations.*

At the heart of effective Social Awareness is empathy: the ability to connect with others by finding within ourselves the capacity for the same feelings they are experiencing. To be able to get along, be respectful, resolve conflicts, share, cooperate, and forgive, we must hold firm to the anchor of connection.

*View*

[Brene Brown's three-minute video](#) about empathy

*Record*

- Write in your journal or discuss with a trusted colleague(s):
- A time when you really craved empathy but received something else
- A time when you experienced receiving true empathy and what you remember about that

*View*

1. [ABC film segment "Children of the Plains"](#), (6 minutes)
2. ["We're More Than That"](#) (3 minute) video, which students made in response to ["Children of the Plains"](#)

*Record*

- Write in your journal or discuss with a trusted colleague(s):
- What feelings and thoughts came up for you as you watched each video?
- Which of the feelings you listed fall more into the category of sympathy?
- Which of the feelings you listed fall more into the category of empathy? Why?
- Reflect on the thoughts and feelings you experienced while watching the video. Consider the impact of your own filters, such as culture, race, class, gender, language, and/or sexual identity.
- Who are some of the students or colleagues in your building from whom you feel distanced? Consider what factors might contribute to that feeling of being "other," rather than connected.



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### *Take Action*

Choose one person from your list you'd like to feel more connected to. Spend a day or two noticing them in the school setting. Look for attitudes and behaviors that are similar to your own. Make an action plan for several ways in which you can begin building authentic connections with that person.

### *Consider*

Think about asking a trusted friend or colleague to check in with you at a specific time, to listen as you reflect on your progress with your action plan.



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### Teacher Action: *Seeking Disequilibrium and Promoting Inclusion*

*Social Awareness: The capacity to interact with others in ways that show respect for their ideas and behaviors, recognize our impact on them, and use cooperation and welcoming behaviors in social situations.*

In their book, *Creating Highly Motivating Classrooms for All Students*, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski assert that “Establishing Inclusion” is the first necessary condition for culturally responsive teaching.

As educators, we continually strive to build a classroom environment of inclusion that will engage diverse learners. Indeed, every individual falls into that category: “diverse.” We all have our own strengths and challenges, our own perspectives, perceptions, and histories. The drive to be fully human with one another is fulfilled when we regard no one as “other” and everyone is someone to be respected, understood, and valued.

We encourage and sometimes even demand that students interact with adults and peers in school environments that are often very different in a variety of ways from their home and social environments. We want them to be relaxed, comfortable, and confident in relationship to the school setting and the people they encounter, so they will be ready and able to learn.

Yet as adults, we often stay well within our comfort range, frequenting the same stores, restaurants, recreation venues, and doing so with the same circle of friends. To give ourselves the experience of being in new, and possibly uncomfortable situations, we can challenge ourselves to step out into unfamiliar areas of our community, quite possibly leading to experiencing some of the same sense of disequilibrium that our students are feeling.

#### **Step 1: Where have I not been?**

With colleagues or individually, use resources such as the Internet, Yellow Pages, community publications, and word of mouth to make as long and diverse a list as possible of places where people gather in your community.

Think about various geographic regions. Where do people significantly younger than you gather? Significantly older? Consider categories such as: parks, grocery stores, restaurants, spiritual centers, museums, music and art spaces, sports and entertainment arenas, cultural celebrations, and neighborhood community events.



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### Step 2: What do I notice?

Choose three locations from your list, and spend some time in each. After each experience, write your reflections, using these questions:

- What did I notice about myself during today's experience?
- What did I notice about other people?
- What connections can I make between this experience and my teaching practice?
- How will I use what I learned from my experiences to build a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment?



# REFERENCES

Below is a list of resources that were referenced within this strategy document. You will find links to research and additional information that may be helpful as you continue your understanding of the content in this strategy.

## Teacher Reflection and Action

- Brené Brown's three-minute video about empathy

[The RSA]. (2013, December 10). Brené Brown on Empathy [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

- ABC film segment "Children of the Plains", (6 minutes)

[ABC News]. (2011, October 14). Hidden America: Children of the Plains [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/video/hidden-america-children-plains-robert-crumbling-trailer-dreams-2020-14742304>

- "We're More Than That" (3 minute) video, which students made in response to "Children of the Plains"

[Falcondaily]. (2011, December 12). More Than That...[Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhribaNXr7A&feature=share>

- Creating Highly Motivating Classrooms for All Students, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski

Ginsberg, M. B. & Wlodkowski, R.J. (2000). Establishing Inclusion. In *Creating Highly Motivating Classrooms for All Students* (pp. 51-78). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass