

The early years  
matter!



Voices from the Field  
*By Brookes Publishing Co.*

### Activities for Building Student Empathy

Empathy is one of the most critical social skills young learners can develop. Not only is empathy a primary ingredient of bully-free schools and harmonious inclusive classrooms, it's also a skill students will use for the rest of their lives as they grow into caring, compassionate adults and good citizens of the world.

Empathy is a complex skill, but just like anything else, it can be taught. Today's post brings you three simple activities you can use to help build empathy in your students. Adapted from two effective programs on social skills development (see the end of this post for details), these activities will help kids identify and model emotions, important foundational skills for building empathy.



#### Activity 1: Identifying and Modeling Emotions

Print out [this list of emotions](#) and review it with your students. Then try this:

- Call on students and ask them to point to the face that shows happiness, sadness, etc. Continue until all students who had their hands raised have had a chance, even if it involves repeating emotions.
- Ask all students who want to demonstrate an emotion to put their hand up. In

rapid succession, instruct students to display physical actions that illustrate each emotion. Jump in and assist with your own modeling as needed.

- Now it's your turn - model one of the emotions that your students haven't modeled yet, and see if your students can identify what emotion you're feeling. Ask them what could have happened to you to make you feel that way.
- Discuss potential scenarios that may elicit emotions. Say to your students, "Show me what you would look like if you experienced this," and then present them with the below examples (or come up with your own):
  - You reached out to hug someone who turned away.
  - You won a prize that you weren't expecting.
  - Your goldfish died.
  - You saw yourself on TV.
  - Your friend just pointed out that you have something stuck in your teeth and it's been there since breakfast!
  - You found ants all over a treat you had left for later.
  - A person in your class got a toy that you have really wanted for a long time.

### Activity 2: Guessing Emotions

Ask individual students to choose an emotion from the list we linked to above. Instruct them not to tell their classmates which emotion they've chosen. Have students, one by one, model the body language that reflects that emotion.

While students are modeling emotions, ask their classmates to look for clues to help them guess the emotion that's being modeled. Remind students that it's not always easy to figure out people's feelings, and reiterate that not everyone experiences or shows emotions the same way.

Here's a sample script you can use:

*"Now, I need two volunteers to show a couple more emotions. You can show us an emotion from this list or you can show us a completely different emotion. Don't tell us what the emotion is right away. We're going to guess. We may not get it right, but that's okay. That's why we practice thinking about other people's feelings whenever we can. After we've had a few tries, I'd like you to tell us the make-believe reason why you are feeling that emotion."*

### Activity 3: Feelings Collage

This is a fun activity to try in any classroom, especially if some of your students are especially shy and might have difficulty acting out emotions in front of the class. Bring a big stack of magazines to class and give each of your students art supplies: posterboard or construction paper, scissors, glue sticks. Invite your students to cut pictures from the magazines of people expressing any kind of feeling, and instruct them to use these images to build a "feelings collage." Hand out markers and ask students to label each picture in their collage with a feeling word; then, have them take turns explaining their collages and feeling labels to the group. Encourage your students to elaborate on the details of what they noted regarding the person's facial expression, their body language, or the context of the photo or illustration. When the activity is over, let your students take the collages home. Recommend that they keep their collages and post them in a prominent place at home for use in practicing identifying and labeling their own feelings.

*This article was adapted from a longer post on the Brookes Inclusion Lab. For the full text visit the blog [here](#).*

The empathy exercises were adapted from [Merrell's Strong Kids, Grades 3-5](#) (activities 1 and 2) and Mary Cook's [Transforming Behavior](#) (activity 3)

## Registration is Closing on May 3rd!



Make sure to register for our School Readiness Symposium "*Supporting The Whole Child: Social And Emotional Learning*" on May 17, 2018 at the BWI Airport Marriott. The symposium will feature Stephanie Jones, Council of Distinguished Scientists, National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development at the Aspen Institute. She is the Marie and Max Kargman Associate Professor in Human Development and Urban Education. Her research, anchored in prevention science, focuses on the effects of poverty and exposure to violence on children and youth's social, emotional, and behavioral development. Over the last ten years her work has focused on both evaluation research addressing the impact of preschool and elementary focused social-emotional learning interventions on behavioral and academic outcomes and classroom practices; as well as new curriculum development, implementation, and testing. Jones is a recipient of the Grawemeyer Award in Education for her work with Zigler and Walter Gilliam on *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) and a recipient of the Joseph E. Zins Early-Career Distinguished Contribution Award for Action Research in Social and Emotional Learning. Following a lunchtime discussion, participants will have their choice of five afternoon workshops. [Click Here](#) to register!



## Celebrating April as the Month of the Young Child!

Ready At Five's Deputy Director Robin Hopkins enjoyed reading a story and handing out gift bags with books to the children at Kindred Learning Center during the Week of the Young Child (April 16-20, 2018). Please [help us](#) continue our work to ensure that all children in Maryland are ready for school, career and life!

## Ready At Five Seeks New Executive Director!

Ready At Five has a long history of high quality work helping to make Maryland's early childhood system more effective for all. Join us in shaping the future of this dynamic organization because the Early Years Matter and School Readiness Matters! Please [click here](#) for the job description for Ready At Five's Executive Director.



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## Check Out Our Little Free Library!

Many families have fewer than 10 books at home, yet research shows that home library size has a very substantial effect on educational achievement. To meet the need for more books in homes for both children and adults, Ready At Five is a Little Free Library Ambassador in a program sponsored by the [Baltimore Campaign for Grade Level Reading](#).

Ready At Five will bring books and parent resources to the Little Free Library of the Fred B. Ledig Recreation Center. If you'd like to contribute any new or gently-used books for children and adults, you can send them to: Fred B. Ledig Recreation Center, 301 S Beechfield Ave, Baltimore, MD 21229 or drop them by the center and add them to the library!



### Ready At Five has what you're looking for - SCHOOL READINESS - publications

Provide families with information and tools they need to support their child's learning and development. Distribute them at your program, kindergarten roundup, family engagement events, summer learning and more. Ready At Five has the resources you need to help your families succeed.



Resources available in English & Spanish

Visit our website [www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org) to download or order our publications. For more information and special orders contact [monique@readyatfive.org](mailto:monique@readyatfive.org) or 410/788-5725.

## Featured Resources

### Ready At Five has what you're looking for - School Readiness Publications!

Please [click here](#) for the order form or visit our [website](#) to find out about the [programs](#) we offer and for our Family Engagement Resources and our Parents Matter publication (available in English and Spanish).

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Help us as we work to ensure that all children in Maryland have the foundational skills needed for future success in school, career and life.



Ready At Five is a self-sustaining program of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education (MBRT), and does not receive funding from the MBRT.

**One-time or monthly donations of \$100 or more are sought and gratefully accepted to expand Ready At Five's impact.** To contribute this; or any, amount [click here](#)

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