

Title

A Day in Someone Else's Life: Empathy

Content Area:

Healthful Living, Language Arts

NC SCOS or Common Core Objective(s):

5 LA 4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Rationale/Relationship to Text:

*Rules* is a sensitive story about about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance. Children are likely to respond empathetically to David, Jason and Catherine. As students will easily identify with these fictional characters, we can give them the task of imagining that they are "walking in the shoes" of a person with a handicap or differences. Or, they may find themselves in Catherine's shoes, struggling to be patient and to do the right thing, yet frustrated.

Instructions/Procedures:

- The student will know the meaning of empathy. Understanding of the concept will be enhanced by relating to characters in *Rules*. Present the two words, *empathy* and *sympathy*. After discerning what students already know about these words, make clear the difference. Recall how Jason wanted his feelings to be understood; however, he did not want Catherine to draw him without his wheelchair. He wanted empathy and understanding, but he did not want her to feel sorry for him. He wanted her to accept him for who he was. (Ask for comments about this.) David, like other children with autism, doesn't understand feelings of others. One way that Catherine shows empathy for him is sharing the words of the Frog and Toad stories which are so calming to him when he feels distressed. Did you notice that the Speech Therapist lacked empathy? What is the evidence in the text which makes you believe that?
- Students will understand other disabilities and differences. Distribute cards which assign children various disabilities. If time allows you might do a **simulation**, having the student do a designated activity or spend perhaps 20 minutes of class time while "being" the disabled person.
- After the simulation, ask students to do a quick write about how it felt to have a disability.

- An alternative is **guided imagery**. Instruct students to be totally silent. In a guided imagery ask them to picture themselves “in the shoes” of a person with a disability.. See guided imagery chart for suggestions. For this activity, the card is read to the students who are asked to close their eyes and imagine, then to sit quietly until asked to write or draw or talk about the experience.

Materials: Simulations Cards/ Guided Imagery Cards

References:

Lord, C. (2006). *Rules*. New York: Scholastic.

<b>Simulation Cards</b>	
You were burned in an accident while camping. Your left hand was amputated and you have a prosthesis.	You are color blind.
You were born without sight.	Your right eye was lost when you were a accidentally shot in the eye with a BB.
<p>You have spina bifida. You are in a wheelchair. You cannot sit up straight, and you cannot lift yourself up.</p> <p>You have cerebral palsy. You have had many surgeries on your legs. You walk with crutches. You move slowly.</p>	<p>You cannot hear. You can read lips, but you know sign language.</p> <p>You are very small, the smallest student in the class, and you rarely get chosen for teams because you are not very strong. Sometimes you are called names.</p>

<p>Guided Imagery Cards.  Students imagine with eyes closed. No talking. Then they are asked to tell the story of what they imagined in first person, present tense.</p>	
<p>You are at a soccer game. Your sister is playing. Your family is there. You are the only person at the game who is in a wheelchair. How do you feel? How do you want to be treated?</p>	<p>You are visiting your grandparents. Your grandfather has lost his sight. He used to be able to drive, to go on walks, to shoot basketball. He was fun to be around. Now his vision is almost gone. He cannot get out to visit, he can't drive, he can't read any more. He spends most of his time sitting in his chair. How do you feel? How do you think he feels? What might you do?</p>
<p>You volunteer to be a helper at a camp for low vision people. Some campers are children, some are teenagers, some are adults. Your job is to wait tables tonight. You don't know for sure if the people at your assigned table can see their food. How do you feel? What might you do? How do you think the campers feel?</p>	<p>Your friend has a little brother. You know that he has been burned in an accident. You offer to go to the hospital to visit him. When you first see him it is a shock. You see that his neck is very red badly scarred. He has only a little tissue on each side of his head where his ears were. What do you think? How do you feel? What do you do?</p>