

7 ways to respond to students with empathy

Responding to students with empathy can help you better understand their behavior and find strategies to support them. These seven tips can help you practice empathy in your classroom.

1 **Follow the “Platinum Rule,” not the “Golden Rule.”**

Treat students the way they want to be treated – not how you want to be treated.

2 **Ask open-ended questions.**

Don't assume you know how a student is feeling. Pose questions like, “Is there something about today that's been hard for you?”

3 **Set aside your own reaction.**

Instead, focus on understanding the student's experience.

4 **Use “I” statements (not “you” statements) to avoid blame.**

Start sentences with phrases like “I feel” and “I'm concerned.”

5 **Actively listen to what the student is saying.**

Give your full attention to the student. Then state in your own words what you think you have heard.

6 **Don't jump into “fix it” mode.**

Sometimes students don't want you to fix their problem; they just want to be heard.

7 **Validate students' feelings.**

Tell students they have the right to feel the way they feel. Their feelings aren't right or wrong.