

Guidance Corner

By Beth Dolley

EMPATHY: What is it, anyway??

We've been practicing empathy here at Skillin School. Well, I'd like to think that we always practice empathy here but lately, we've been REALLY concentrating on it.

The first graders have been practicing using the tone and volume of voice that shows empathy to others. In third grade, we've been practicing avoiding teasing or ignoring a lack of empathy.

In second grade, we've been working on the actual definition of empathy. We've tried to figure out what "living and breathing" empathy would look like, sound like and feel like.

Now, think about this challenge for a second. How does one explain to a seven year old what empathy is?

After many discussions and a lot of hands-on practice, the children were asked to explain empathy. Here are some of our empathetic definitions written by the second grade. (Some of the spelling may have been changed for translation purposes.)

- Empathy is noticing other people's feelings. Like if you noticed someone who was sad, mad or glad that would be empathy.
- When I saw my friend fall, I saw that she felt sad and I helped her up and went with her to the nurse.
- When you help friends when they're feeling "frohshgratid" (frustrated)
- Me and my little sister is seeing empathy to the cat.
- I think showing empathy means feelings. Cause I think I've heard you talking a little bit about it and that's what I think . . .
- Empathy means to care.
- Empathy means that you care about what someone is doing or saying kind of like respect. Saying empathy means "I care". That's what empathy means.
- My mom had empathy. She was mad cause she could not read a book.
- Empathy is when you're not mean to people. You need to be nice. If you're nice to people, they will be nice back to you. And empathy means to listen.
- Empathy is when people care about what you have to say. Like when I was trying to talk to my sister but when I talked, she kept on saying "Blah, blah." So I told her to be nice and she did.
- If somebody is having a bad day, they could be spreading a circle that's the opposite of empathy. And they wouldn't even know it. But what empathy is is that someone stops the circle. Here's how: if someone wants to have a good day and they don't care [*about the bad feelings*] then they will have a great day.
- When it was my little brother's first day, I checked out of the classroom and I went to my brother's classroom to check on him.
- Empathy is when someone frowns. And you go up to them and say I'll help you find your classroom or say I'm sorry for having a bad day for you. If you see someone sad you should go see them and cheer them up.
- My friend got hurt and I went over to him and told him "Want to play with me?"
- When someone sees what you are feeling.
- It means when one person helps them feel good.
- To treat people the way you want to be treated.
- Empathy is being respectful, helping others when they get hurt, a kind face and kind words, sticks up for their friends and will be honest and truthful.

To all the children, families and community members of Skillin Elementary, I hope you have an empathetic, compassionate, peaceful and safe holiday season.