

Chapter 4: Apply It to Your Practice

Working individually or in learning teams, reflect on these questions, and implement the commitments to your practice (for more information on engaging with these questions, please see the section titled Space for Reflective Practice on page 9 in the introduction). As always, strive to move your reflection to action.

React to the Chapter

What are your key takeaways from this chapter? What was surprising to read? What did you connect with?

Define Empathy

Jill Clingan asked other educators to define empathy and show how they develop it with their students. Discuss empathy with faculty and staff in your school community. How do they put it into words? Why is it important? How do they show empathy in their daily circles while online or in person?

Employ Empathetic Strategies

Review the strategies for building connection through empathy, the arts, and a positive classroom culture highlighted in this chapter. Which ones do you think you and your community already employ, and which ones would be good focus strategies for the next quarter or semester?

Amplify Student Stories

As a class activity, ask students to respond to this prompt: “Something that might surprise you to learn about me is. . . .” Some of the answers will make you laugh, and some will break your heart. After engaging in this activity, take your data and reactions back to your team. What did you learn? How will you use these lessons to expand equity, justice, and representation in your school community? Answer this last question with as many specifics and action words as possible. Then, discuss the specific steps you plan to take tomorrow, next week, and next semester to amplify student stories in your teaching practice.

Use Music and Poetry

Practitioners featured in this chapter used poetry and music to explain the power of connection with students. If you were to share a song or poem with students on the first day of school, what would it be and why? How about the last day of school? Invite students into this conversation about the power of poetry and connection. What theme songs might they choose to represent a concept they are working on this school year or in their class community?