Empathy Formative Questionnaire Technical Report

Overview

What This Questionnaire Measures

In the context of education, empathy is defined as the ability to relate to the perspective or feelings of another individual. Without empathy, individuals remain indifferent or dismissive towards others and may engage in antisocial behavior. Empathy provides a means for people to lead compassionate, and socially aware lives. In short, empathy can be defined as trying to understand others and then showing your understanding (Gaumer Erickson & Noonan, 2016).

The Empathy Formative Questionnaire is designed to measure a student's proficiency in the two essential components of empathy, which are:

1. Make efforts to understand others: their contexts, feelings, and behaviors.
2. Communicate your understanding of someone's personal situation.

How This Questionnaire Is Accessed

Teachers can launch questionnaires and view both individual and aggregate student results by visiting http://ResearchCollaborationSurveys.org, creating an account, and following the instructions provided on the website. This website is free and available to all educators. Once students have completed the questionnaires, teachers can see graphed results for individual students as well as in aggregate. Teachers can also download a raw data file in MS Excel.

The questionnaire can be cited as:

Gaumer Erickson, A.S., Soukup, J.H., Noonan, P.M., & McGurn, L. (2015). *Empathy formative questionnaire* [Measurement instrument]. Retrieved from http://www.researchcollaboration.org/uploads/EmpathyQuestionnaireInfo.pdf

This technical report can be cited as:

Gaumer Erickson, A.S., Soukup, J.H., Noonan, P.M., & McGurn, L. (2018). *Self-Regulation formative questionnaire technical report*. Retrieved from http://www.researchcollaboration.org/uploads/Self-RegulationQuestionnaireInfo.pdf

How This Questionnaire Is Completed

Teachers make the questionnaire available to students by providing the URL to the survey (http://is.gd/rcsurveys) and a survey code (specific code for each launched survey); both the URL and survey code are provided on the website when a survey is launched. Students enter the survey code and a student number assigned by the teacher. Students complete the questionnaire by self-rating items on a 5-point, Likert-type scale. This scale ranges from 1 (*Not very like me*) to 5 (*Very like me*). The results are automatically graphed for students and available to them once they complete the questionnaire. This enables them to immediately reflect on results.

The items on the questionnaire are written at a seventh-grade reading level, per the Flesch-Kincaid[1] readability score. Accommodations should be provided when appropriate and can include reading the items aloud, explaining the items, and having a scribe fill in the response option.

How to Use the Results

Empathy Formative Questionnaire results can be used by both teachers and students. To ease interpretation, results are displayed on a 100-point scale. These scores can be interpreted similar to grades (e.g., 70-79 is a C). Results by essential component support reflection on relative strengths and areas for improvement.

Students can use the questionnaire results to see how well they understand the contexts, feelings, and perspectives of others. They can use their individual results to strengthen that awareness and communicate their understanding to others.

Teachers can enhance their instructional practices by helping their students explore other roles and perspectives, and then reinforcing the importance of empathy. After combining this targeted instruction with guided and independent practice, teachers can continually re-administer the Empathy Formative Questionnaire and alter their instruction accordingly. This allows teachers to engage in a process of data-driven decision making in order to increase their students' fundamental ability to understand others and communicate that understanding. Resources for teaching empathy are available at http://CCCFramework.org/Resources.html.

Technical Information

The Empathy Formative Questionnaire was developed in 2015 by Research Collaboration (http://ResearchCollaboration.org). An extensive review of related research resulted in the identification of two components that are essential for successfully applying empathy. Following this literature review, it was determined that empathy requires individuals to understand the contexts, feelings, and perspectives of others, and then communicate that understanding.

The questionnaire was tested for reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alpha[2] with 3,147 4th through post-high school students during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. Of the 3,147 students that responded to demographic items, 1,596 (41%) were female, 1,414 (45%) were male, and 137 (4%) did not report gender. The dataset includes 98 students in fourth-grade, 236 in fifth-grade, 384 in sixth-grade, 451 in seventh-grade, 811 in eighth-grade, 372 in ninth-grade, 138 in tenth-grade, 289 in eleventh-grade, 264 in twelfth-grade, and 104 post-high school.

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[1] Kincaid, J.P., Fishburne, R.P., Rogers, R.L., & Chissom, B.S. (1975). Derivation of new readability formulas (automated readability index, fog count, and Flesch reading ease formula) for Navy enlisted personnel. Research Branch Report 8–75. Chief of Naval Technical Training: Naval Air Station Memphis.

[2] Cronbach, L.J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, *16*, 297–334.; Cronbach, L.J. (1988). Internal consistency of tests: Analyses old and new. *Psychometrika*, *53*, 63–70.

Overall, the Empathy Formative Questionnaire was found to be moderately reliable (15 items; α = .812). The *understand others* subscale consisted of 8 items (α = .728), and the *communicating understanding* subscale consisted of 7 items (α = .666). When converted to a 100-point scale, the bottom quartile ranged from 20 to 67 and the top quartile ranged from 83 to 100.

The questions that make up each component are listed below. Questions that are framed negatively and therefore reverse scored are designated with '(N).'

Understand Others
1. I try to see things from other people's points of view.
2. When I don't understand someone's point of view, I ask questions to learn more.
3. When I disagree with others, it's hard for me to understand their perspective. (N)
4. I consider people's circumstances when I'm talking with them.
5. I try to imagine how I would feel in someone else's situation.
6. When someone is upset, I try to remember a time when I felt the same way.
7. When I'm reading a book or watching a movie, I think about how I would react if I was one of the characters.
8. Sometimes I wonder what it would feel like to be in my parents' situation.

Communicate Understanding
9. When a friend is upset, I try to show them that I understand how they feel.
10. I say things like "I can see why you feel that way."
11. I've been known to say "You are wrong" when someone is sharing their opinion. (N)
12. When a friend or family member is sad, my actions let them know I understand (like a hug or a pat on the back).
13. I say things like "Something like that happened to me once, I understand how you feel."
14. I've told my friends things like, "You shouldn't be upset about that" or "Stop feeling that way." (N)
15. When I know one of my friends is upset, I try to talk to them about it.

Questionnaire

Empathy Formative Questionnaire

Please **CHECK ONE** response that best describes you. Be honest, since the information will be used to help you in school and also help you become more prepared for college and careers. There are no right or wrong answers!

Student ID _____   **Date** _____

	Not very like me				Very like me
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I try to see things from other people's points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. When I don't understand someone's point of view, I ask questions to learn more.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. When I disagree with others, it's hard for me to understand their perspective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I consider people's circumstances when I'm talking with them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I try to imagine how I would feel in someone else's situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. When someone is upset, I try to remember a time when I felt the same way.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. When I'm reading a book or watching a movie, I think about how I would react if I was one of the characters.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Sometimes I wonder what it would feel like to be in my parents' situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. When a friend is upset, I try to show them that I understand how they feel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I say things like "I can see why you feel that way."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I've been known to say "You are wrong" when someone is sharing their opinion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. When a friend or family member is sad, my actions let them know I understand (like a hug or a pat on the back).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I say things like "Something like that happened to me once, I understand how you feel."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I've told my friends things like, "You shouldn't be upset about that" or "Stop feeling that way."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. When I know one of my friends is upset, I try to talk to them about it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Gaumer Erickson, A. S., Soukup, J. H., Noonan, P. M., & McGurn, L. (2015). *Empathy formative questionnaire* [Measurement instrument]. Retrieved from http://www.researchcollaboration.org/uploads/EmpathyQuestionnaireInfo.pdf