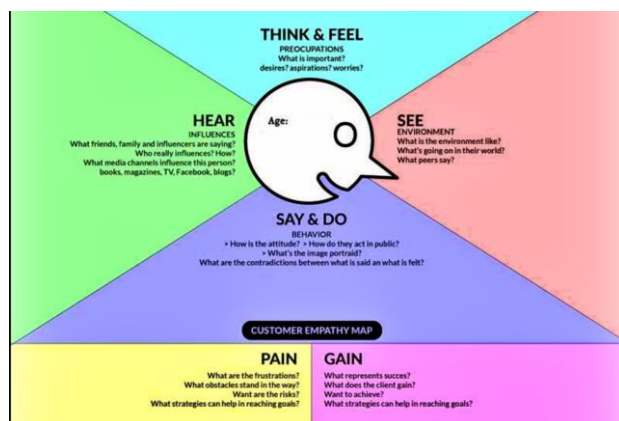


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USING AN EMPATHY MAP IN ESL FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



CENTRUL JUDEȚEAN DE RESURSE ȘI DE ASISTENȚĂ EDUCAȚIONALĂ OLT

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USING AN EMPATHY MAP FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Students can spend about **half of their waking hours at school**. For some, it can be the best seven and a half hours of their day: where they feel safe, where they get a warm meal, and where they feel accepted and loved. However, for some who face **peer pressure** or bullying, it can be a place they want to avoid or a place where they feel distant and rejected. It is up to educators to become familiar with students and build relationships.

Why is Relationship Building so Important for Students?

Teachers have the daunting task of teaching numerous skills and concepts to students throughout the school year. The overarching objective is to help students grow academically and become productive citizens. People tend to work more productively if they feel a connection to those in authority, and this is no different for the classroom setting.

It is very important that teachers take time to **build relationships** with their students so that those students feel respected and can in turn trust the teacher is there to offer support, both socially and academically. One way teachers can become more attuned to their students and build stronger relationships is through the use of empathy maps.

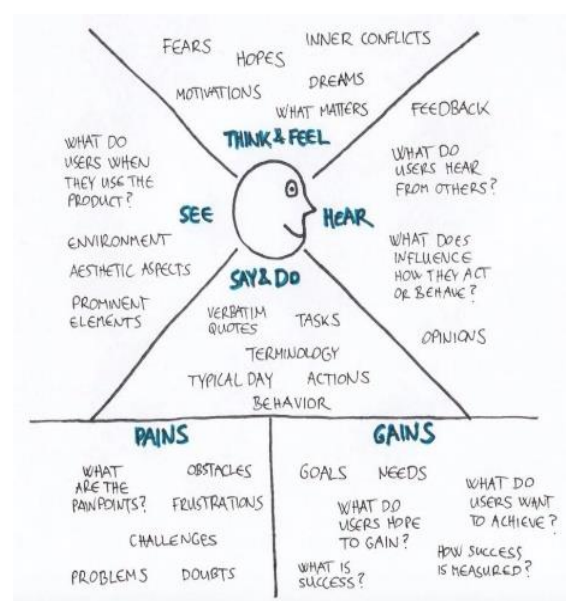
What is an Empathy Map?

Often used in collaborative teams to strengthen insights into each member, an empathy map is a tool originally developed by Dave Gray (Bland) for corporate use. Easily adapted for the school setting, the empathy map can be used by teachers to gain a better understanding of their students' needs both in and out of the classroom.

An **empathy map** can be as simple as the original four-section graphic organizer or can be modified for the needs of the classroom users.

- **Original Four Section Organizer**

This **four-block design** helps the users to see what another **says, thinks, does, and feels**. This format is used to empathetically *see what other people think about their own and others' reactions to themselves*. By capturing how a student perceives these thoughts, it *can help the teacher pinpoint how to best help the student respond to situations that may seem out of his or her control*. It can also help a student come to the realization that others' thoughts are not as different from their own as they might have once thought, aiding in **social-emotional learning**.



- **Classroom-Specific Organizer**

The original organizer can be adapted for more specific classroom use. *Each quadrant can be used to help the teacher find areas to connect with students and make better instructional or collective decisions based on student support.* Categories might include: **interests, goals, areas of strength, academic needs, career choice**, etc. Although a teacher would not want to have more than **six areas** on the empathy map, responses can be used to help students see *similarities with others and develop empathetic ideas that help build student-to-student relationships.*

- **Pains and Gains**

By adding these **two areas**, a teacher is able to see **the strengths and weaknesses of students**. **Pains** would consist of areas that impede learning. It could be as simple as not being able to complete homework because there is no internet at home, or as complex as a student feeling they have no friends and others are making fun of them for their inabilities. **Gains** would be the positive components of a child's life. This could be an area of success such as "I passed my last math test" or "I earned a role in the upcoming school play." Pains help the teacher see areas where they can support the student(s) by listening and providing resources necessary for the need. Gains can be used as celebrations, to help a child see that there are good things happening when they were focused only on the bad.

Using an Empathy Map for Relationship Building

- **One-on-One**

For some students, *an empathy map may need to be created individually with the teacher to focus on a specific need.* It is a way for a student to see the teacher cares and wants to help. By listening to the student and creating the map with the child, a relationship begins. As the teacher provides the support and finds the necessary resources, the relationship grows, and a student may become more willing to open up and share thoughts and concerns with the teacher.

- **Group**

Used in *a whole group, members can write their answers on a sticky note and place it in each quadrant.* Other forms of data collection in a group empathy map would include *taking surveys based on each quadrant, classroom discussion, or even looking at student work and getting feedback from students.* The teacher can then find generalizations that the group has in common, find outlier thoughts of students who may need special attention, and also benefit **classroom management**. By posting the map and keeping answers anonymous, students will be more likely to provide truthful answers. It will also allow students the chance to see that others have similar struggles and they are not alone in their difficulties.

The important thing to note is that *an empathy map is only effective if it is used strategically.* When applied appropriately, **the teacher can utilize the map to open discussion, either one-on-one**

or whole group. The map can provide an avenue for getting the appropriate resources to support a child either socially or academically. Most importantly, it allows the teacher and students the chance to build relationships and see others care for them.