

# Office of E-Learning, Innovation, and Teaching Excellence (ELITE)

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Understanding Empathy and Its  
Correlation to Student Success

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Bonner

Date: August 26, 2021



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# Session Outcomes

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By the end of this class, participants will be able to ...

- explain why instructor empathy is a necessary component of the classroom community.
- describe techniques for engaging with students more empathetically.

# Poll Question # 1

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To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

***Empathy is a necessary trait in an educator.***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Poll Question # 2

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Complete the following statement using the poll:

**I am an empathetic instructor ...**

- All of the time.
- Most of the time.
- Some of the time.
- Rarely if ever.

# Why Empathy in the College Classroom?

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In short, empathy leads to better student outcomes.

- Students cite instructor empathy as a factor in their success.
- A meta-analysis of student-teacher relationships showed that teacher empathy was an excellent predictor of “positive student outcomes.”

(Meyers et al., 2019, p. 162)

# Why Empathy in the College Classroom?

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But it's not just about promoting good student outcomes. It's also about being a positive influence in someone's life.

[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]

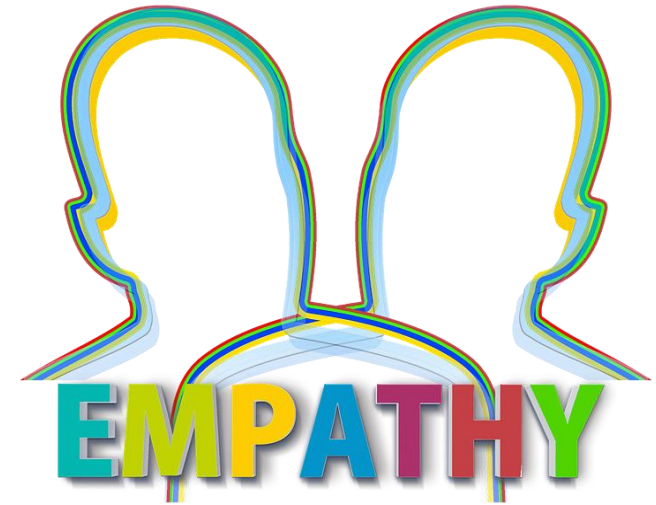


# Why Empathy in the College Classroom?

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“Empathy is an emotional state essential to forming healthy relationships and communities. When community members have high levels of empathy for one another, there is less hurt, people regulate their own behavior, and there is more forgiveness, acceptance, and kindness (Aguilar, 2018, p. 121-122).”

[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]



# Empathy Especially Important in Online Classes

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Flower Darby and James Lang (2019) stress the importance of empathy in online classes. They emphasize that building a classroom community based on care and understanding contributes significantly to student success.



[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]

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# What is Teacher Empathy?

According to Meyers et al. (2019),  
*“Teacher empathy is not empathy experienced by people who happen to be teachers; it is an integral part of the role of teaching (p. 161).”*

[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]



# Three Components of Teacher Empathy

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- **Cognitive** – understanding your students' personal and social situations
- **Affective** – feeling similar, though not necessarily the same, emotions
- **Behavioral** – encouraging and supporting students; showing compassion when students are suffering or struggling

(Meyers et al., 2019)

# Empathy vs. Sympathy

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Empathy is not the same as sympathy. Sympathy has been defined as “a pity-based response to a distressing situation that is characterized by a lack of relational understanding and the self-preservation of the observer (Sinclair et al., as cited in Meyers et al., 2019, p. 162).

[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]



# How To Become A More Empathetic Teacher: Three Recommendations

(Meyers et al., 2019)

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1. Develop a deep understanding of your students' social contexts
2. Take the time to learn about your students' personal contexts
3. Design course policies that reflect a deep understanding of the aforementioned contexts



[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]

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# Seven Ways to Respond to Students with Empathy

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1. Following the “Platinum Rule” (rather than the “Golden Rule”)
2. Asking open-ended questions
3. Setting aside your own reaction
4. Using “I” statements (rather than “you” statements)
5. Actively listening to what the student is saying
6. Not jumping into “fix it” mode
7. Validating feelings

(Morin, n.d.)

# Five Ways to Bake Empathy into Your Course

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1. Dropping the Lowest Grade
2. Oops Tokens (Darby and Lang, 2019)
3. Nudges (Darby and Lang, 2019)
4. Formative Assessments
5. Alternative Assessments

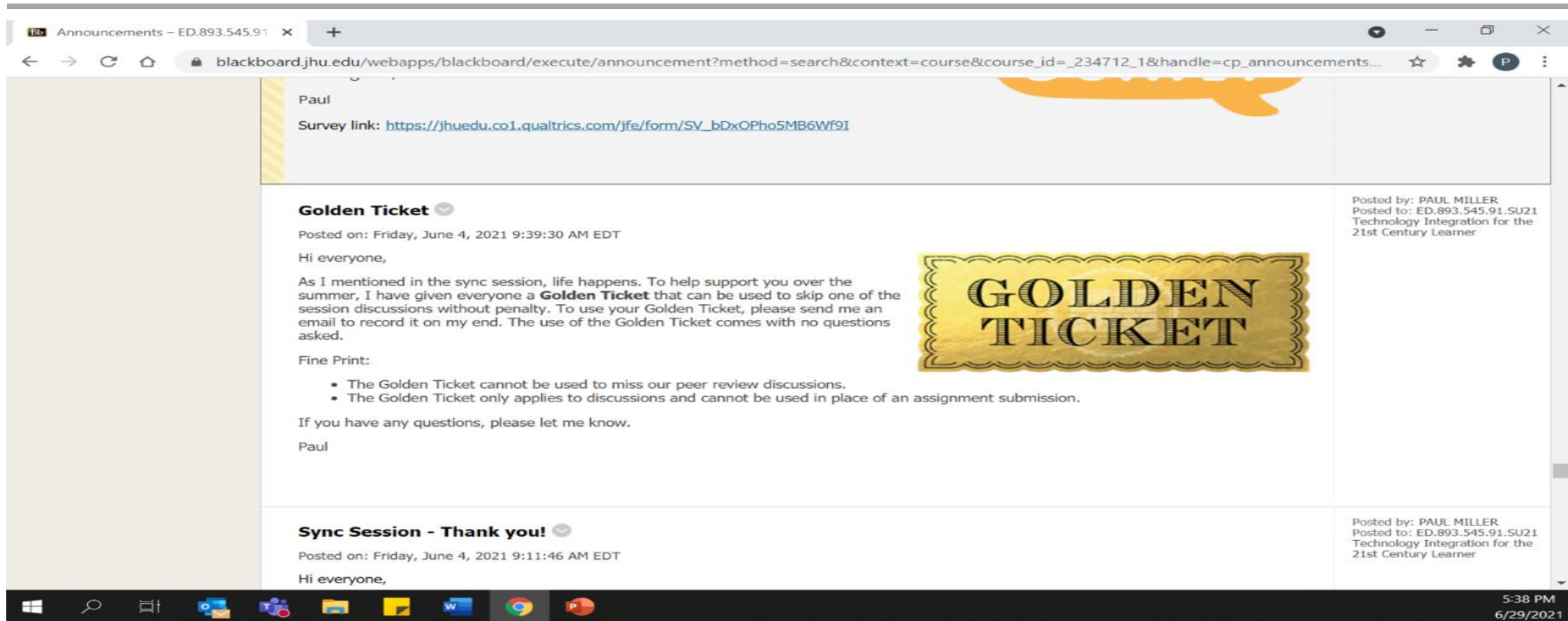
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# An Example of Baked-in Empathy



Announcements – ED.893.545.91

blackboard.jhu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/announcement?method=search&context=course&course\_id=\_234712\_1&handle=cp\_announcements...

Paul

Survey link: [https://jhuedu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bDxOPho5MB6Wf9I](https://jhuedu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bDxOPho5MB6Wf9I)

**Golden Ticket** 📩

Posted on: Friday, June 4, 2021 9:39:30 AM EDT

Hi everyone,

As I mentioned in the sync session, life happens. To help support you over the summer, I have given everyone a **Golden Ticket** that can be used to skip one of the session discussions without penalty. To use your Golden Ticket, please send me an email to record it on my end. The use of the Golden Ticket comes with no questions asked.

Fine Print:

- The Golden Ticket cannot be used to miss our peer review discussions.
- The Golden Ticket only applies to discussions and cannot be used in place of an assignment submission.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Paul

**Sync Session - Thank you!** 📩

Posted on: Friday, June 4, 2021 9:11:46 AM EDT

Hi everyone,

Posted by: PAUL MILLER  
Posted to: ED.893.545.91.SU21  
Technology Integration for the 21st Century Learner

Posted by: PAUL MILLER  
Posted to: ED.893.545.91.SU21  
Technology Integration for the 21st Century Learner

5:38 PM  
6/29/2021

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# Three Ways to Demonstrate Your Empathy

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1. Build Community
2. Share Stories
3. Admit Mistakes

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# What If?

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*Elena Aguilar (2018) writes, “Perhaps it would be hard to measure with standardized assessments, but imagine what might be possible if we spent a year prioritizing, strategizing, and striving to build empathy in our schools – empathy among teachers and students, among students and their peers, among teachers and administrators, and among staff, parents, guardians, and the community at large (p. 122).”*

## And Now ...

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Please take a brief moment to remember a time when someone was an empathetic ear for you. We all have had this experience, and I hope this was a restorative exchange for you. And I will start the ball rolling.



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## Poll Question # 3

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1. I will definitely incorporate more empathy into my future courses.
2. I may incorporate more empathy into my future courses.
3. I am already very empathetic, so I don't need to incorporate any more empathy into my courses.
4. I am not a terribly empathetic teacher, and I like it this way.

# Comment Time

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Please post a comment or a question in the Chat Box at this time if your last name begins with A through M.

And now, N through Z.



[Image found at Pixabay; no attribution required]

## Session Survey

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Please give us feedback using the QR code or the link in the chat box.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WQHJF7K>



# References

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Aguilar, E. (2018). *Onward*. Jossey-Bass.

Darby, F. and Lang, J. (2019). *Small Teaching Online*. Jossey-Bass.

Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., and Smith, B.C. (2019). Teacher empathy: A model of empathy for teaching for student success. *College Teaching*, 67(3), 160-168.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2019.1579699>

Morin, A. (n.d.). *7 Ways to respond to students with empathy*. Understood.

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/empathy/7-ways-to-respond-to-students-with-empathy>