

# **I CARE BECAUSE YOU MATTER: EMPATHY, COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, AND PROXIMITY CONTROL FOR GRADE 11 LEARNERS IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES**

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**Abstract.** With financial, family, and personal problems faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, three Grade 11 learners in the class, English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) in a public Senior High School in the Philippines failed the subject. Hence, this action research was conducted to determine how acts of empathy, communication strategies, and proximity control affect the academic performance of these learners. The intervention, "We Care, Because You Matter," used acts of empathy through home visits for the teacher to understand their situation and listen to their stories. The teacher also demonstrated the communication strategy by using a higher ratio of positive statements and manifested proximity control through the teacher's physical and social presence. At the end of the quarter, all participants passed the subject. They expressed feeling significant and happy receiving the teacher's help amidst difficulties. The practice answered the school's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan, which directs teachers to exert all means to help learners under challenging circumstances. Support and enabling policies must be in place to sustain acts of empathy and expand this practice for the benefit of other learners.

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