



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

**Roots of Empathy
2009 Feedback Report
Ontario**

Goal #1: To Foster the Development of Empathy

Why is this important?

- The ability to take the perspective of the other (the cognitive aspect of empathy) plays a critical role in helping individuals resist aggressive behaviours by providing a buffer against antisocial and aggressive temptations.
- Empathy is regarded as one of the most desirable human traits due to its positive association with pro-social behaviours such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Finding #1: Increase in Empathy

- 86% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic (11% were not sure).
- 88% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view (10% were not sure).
- 84% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more inclusive or accepting of others who are different from themselves (including culture, race, special needs, gender etc.) (11% were not sure).

Goal #2: To Develop Emotional Literacy

Why is this important?

- Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL) includes developing the skills to recognize, express, and manage our feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate our emotions.
- Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological disorders including anxiety and depression.
- Research has also found that children with good SEL skills have better attitudes about themselves and others, show more pro-social behaviours, less aggression, have better attendance at school, and perform better academically.

Finding #2: Improved Emotional Literacy

- 90% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings (6% were not sure).
- 92% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel (5% were not sure).
- 90% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words (8% were not sure).

Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying , Aggression and Violence, and Promote Children's Pro-Social Behaviour

Why is this important?

- Pro-social behaviour (e.g. sharing, helping, cooperating) helps to promote positive development in children, improve the quality of their relationships, as well as the overall classroom atmosphere.
- Quality relationships and perceived social support greatly increases an individual's resilience as well as protects against negative and stressful experiences. Pro-social behaviour has also been linked to improved academic outcomes.
- Aggressive children often have fewer cognitive, social, and emotional skills available to them and are therefore more likely to be rejected by other children, have deviant friends and are less likely to get along with teachers.
- Children that display early aggressive behaviour are at highest risk for many negative outcomes including depression, suicide attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, violent crimes and neglectful and abusive parenting.

Finding #3: Decreased Aggression and Increased Pro-social Behaviour

- 76% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates (19% were not sure).
- 84% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students showed more pro-social behaviour by the end of the school year (11% were not sure).

Goal #4: To Increase Knowledge of Human Development, Learning, and Infant Safety

Why is this important?

■ Providing information about safe parenting can effectively increase parenting knowledge, increase an individual's confidence in their ability to parent, as well as prevent negative outcomes such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Finding #4: Improved Knowledge of Human Development, Learning and Safety

■ 95% of students learned that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she could harm the baby (3% were not sure).

■ 97% of students learned that it is dangerous to shake a baby (2% were not sure).

Goal #5: To Prepare Students for Responsible Citizenship and Responsive Parenting

Why is this important?

- Witnessing a caring parent-infant relationship as well as understanding how sensitive and responsive parenting in infancy and early childhood can protect against stress and negative influences will help to protect future generations and reduce vulnerability to future psychopathology.

Finding #5: Improved Knowledge of Parenting

- 91% of students agreed that they learned that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work (6% were not sure).

Additional Results

Curriculum Expectations 92% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that ROE supports the school's curriculum.

Program Enjoyment 88% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they would like to have ROE again next year.





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Are you interested in volunteering your time in a local school?

You could be a Roots of Empathy Instructor!

Roots of Empathy is a program for children in kindergarten to grade 8. The program's aim is to increase empathy - the ability to understand another person's feelings. The heart of the program is a parent and infant who visit the classroom once a month for the full school year. Children learn to care and respect each other resulting in less bullying and aggression.