

## PARTICIPANTS/ SPEAKERS

For more  
information

□ 25 babies: the “teachers” of the Roots of Empathy program, and their dedicated parents who volunteer their time

□ Mary Gordon, Founder/President Roots of Empathy

□ **Niagara Catholic District School Board**

**427 Rice Road, Welland ON**

**10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Friday May 30, 2025**

**Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration**

□ District School Board of Niagara

□ Early Childhood Community Development Centre

Patricia Couroux

905-646-7311 ext. 300

Backgrounder on Roots of Empathy follows.

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## **Roots of Empathy - Backgrounder**

### **Our Mission**

Roots of Empathy’s mission is to build caring, peaceful and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.

### **Our Program**

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based classroom program which has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression and violence among schoolchildren while raising social emotional competence and increasing empathy. The program focuses on raising levels of empathy, resulting in more respectful and caring relationships and reduced levels of bullying and aggression.

At the heart of the program is a neighbourhood infant and parent who visit the classroom nine times over the school year. A trained ROE Instructor coaches students to observe the baby’s development and to label the baby’s feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the “teacher” and a lever that the Instructor uses to help children to identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others.

### **Our History**

Roots of Empathy began in two Toronto schools in 1996 and became a charitable not-for-profit

organization in 2000. Roots of Empathy is offered across Canada, in English and French, in rural, urban, and remote communities and in Aboriginal communities. It is also being delivered in New Zealand, the United States and the Isle of Man. **This year Roots of Empathy reached 700 children in 27 classrooms across Niagara.**

### **Research on the Program**

Several national and international research studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Roots of Empathy program. Research has shown that children who have Roots of Empathy know more about emotions and feelings, are kinder to their friends, are less aggressive and bully other children less compared to those who do not participate in the program.

**Studies at the University of British Columbia, the University of Western Australia, and by the Government of Manitoba** have also shown positive changes in Roots of Empathy children, including a significant decrease in aggression and bullying, and an increase in pro-social behaviour among children who participated in the program compared to children who did not. Studies have also shown an increase in students' feelings of peer acceptance and classroom belonging.

In a follow-up study, researchers not only found a significant reduction in aggression and increase in prosocial behaviour in Roots of Empathy children immediately after the program, but also that improvements were maintained three years later.