



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2025 Annual Program Evaluation Report

Ontario

“For our students, Roots of Empathy helps build a foundation for lifelong emotional well-being and respectful relationships. It equips them with the tools to navigate social situations, resolve conflicts peacefully, and contribute positively to their communities. I am very grateful to be selected to host Roots of Empathy in my classroom.”

- Zahra, Grade 2/3 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Lord Elgin Public School, London

“... How to feel for others and spread way more kindness around the world! Roots of Empathy taught me how to react in bad situations and made a great impact. I hope Roots of Empathy keeps teaching.”

- Grade 4 Student, St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School, Oakville

“In a world where handheld technology and social media have chipped away at our personal relationships, attention spans, and self-confidence, this program offered something rare: a chance to be truly present. For the entire session, the students were focused on baby Pippa, and in doing so, they became grounded. The distractions faded away, and what remained was a sense of calm, connection, and reality. It was a powerful reminder of how meaningful it is to step away from our screens and simply be in the moment.”

- Hailey, Grade 6/7 ROE Volunteer Parent, East Ridge Community School, Owen Sound

Our mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.



Ontario Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2024-2025

Resilience is a concept which is on the lips of those who watch and worry about how children, youth, adults, and systems are responding to the world they are living in. Schools have heroically regrouped and responded to the changed post-pandemic landscape of childhood. Teachers say that their biggest concern is classroom behaviour and children’s mental health. Roots of Empathy is often brought into schools because of its ability to help students regulate their emotions so that they will be receptive to learning. Teachers feel enormous pressure to close the learning gap, which lingers post-pandemic and the new pandemic of absenteeism. We are honoured to be able to support them in helping students become ready to be mentally healthy and interested in learning again.

The Annual Program Evaluation (APE) is a way to track, year by year, how we are doing against our five program goals. Our goals are to:

1. foster the development of emotional literacy and empathy,
2. reduce levels of bullying and aggression and promote prosocial behaviours (e.g., helping, caring, sharing, including, etc.),
3. prepare students for responsive parenting
4. prepare students for responsible citizenship, and
5. promote mental health, resilience, and wellbeing among children

Roots of Empathy is a trauma-informed program endorsed by Dr. Bruce Perry who has been an advisor to Roots of Empathy for many years. Our APE lets us know how we are doing on each of our program goals from the perspective of all program participants. Every year, Roots of Empathy endeavours to learn what we are doing well and what we can improve on. As a learning organization, we consistently find that children respond the same way to the program regardless of where they live, but their reflections on the APE may differ. Overall, this APE informs our program curriculum, allows us to communicate how we are doing in different parts of the world, and helps us meet and respond to the needs of the children we work with.

We have asked students if they have noticed positive changes in their class since having Roots of Empathy, and 81% reported they had.

When asked what changes they observed (multiple responses allowed), the most common responses included:

- being more kind
- showing empathy
- being more inclusive
- less bullying or fighting
- being more patient

Students also mentioned they are “more happy”, “more giving”, and “willing to help people”. They shared that they now “listen more”, “stick up for people”, “make more friends”, are “not saying mean things”, “are a lot calmer”, and “show more love”.

This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from Roots of Empathy students, ROE host classroom teachers, ROE Instructors, and ROE volunteer parents in Ontario.



Goal #1: To Foster the Development of Emotional Literacy and Empathy

Emotional literacy includes developing the ability to recognize and express one's own feelings in addition to being able to read the emotional cues of others. Emotional literacy is essential to being able to regulate emotions. Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological disorders, including anxiety and depression (Compas et al., 2017). Research also demonstrates that children with effective perspective-taking skills and emotional literacy have better attitudes towards themselves and others, show more prosocial behaviours, and exhibit less aggression (Laible et al., 2004).

Empathy is regarded as the ultimate human trait. It has a positive association with prosocial behaviours such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and plays a crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (Laible et al., 2004). Interpersonal relationships which are recognized as friendships in childhood are essential for mental health and can help shield children from the negative effects of stress (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Bagwell et al., 1998). The ability to take the perspective of another person (cognitive aspect of empathy) also plays a key role in helping individuals resist aggressive behaviours by providing a buffer against antisocial and aggressive temptations (Noorden et al., 2015).

Feedback Results: Students

- 95% of students reported that Roots of Empathy helped them to learn that everybody has feelings.
- 86% of students reported that they are aware of their feelings (for example, when they are feeling happy, sad, mad, disappointed, worried, frustrated, or scared).

Feedback Results: Teachers

- 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more empathic to one another.
- 99% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words.

Feedback Results: Instructors

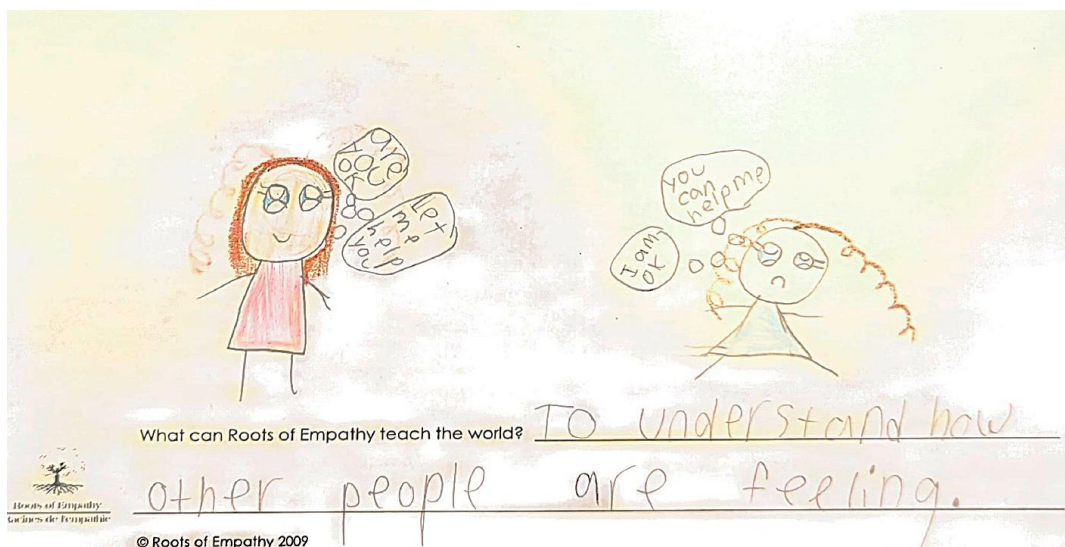
- 87% of Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that the children became more empathic because of Roots of Empathy.

Feedback Results: Volunteer Parents

- 98% of parents reported that they felt that along with their baby, they were helping children to develop empathy.



Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? "To understand how other people are feeling."

Speech Bubble: "Are you ok?" "I am Ok."

"Let me help you." "You can help me."

- Grade 2 Student, St. Bernard of Clairvaux School, Waterford

"Empathy is the ability to understand how another person feels and to feel with them. The Roots of Empathy theory of change is that through experiential learning with the baby, children learn to read emotional cues and recognize when a classmate is sad, lonely, or upset. This empathic capacity leads children to feel responsible for standing up and taking 'empathy action' to help. In schools, it is equally important that we help children learn to relate as it is to help them learn to read. Children's mental health and wellbeing are enhanced when they feel connected and supported at school."

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO

When asked, "What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World," students offered comments such as:

"... How to love, care and understand [babies'] feelings, [people's] feelings and our own feelings."

- Grade 7/8, Lumen Christi Catholic Elementary School, Milton

"... About empathy, for example help someone if they're [feeling] sad or lonely."

- Grade 5, Red Maple Public School, Richmond Hill

"That even if [you're] not a baby you still can have the same [thoughts] and feelings."

- Grade 5, Agincourt Road Public School, Ottawa

"... How to feel for others and spread way more kindness around the world! Roots of Empathy taught me how to react in bad situations and made a great impact. I hope Roots of Empathy keeps teaching."

- Grade 4, St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School, Oakville



“... To be more inclusive of others and understanding as we all have emotions but show them in different ways (like the baby).”

- Grade 8, St. Scholastica Catholic Elementary School, Milton

When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy adult participants offered comments such as:

“This experiential learning helps my vulnerable students understand and label their own feelings, as well as the feelings of others. The program fosters a sense of inclusion and connection. It reduces aggression, increases sharing and caring behaviors, and promotes resilience and positive mental health. The vulnerable students learn to build healthy relationships and understand the impact of their actions on others, which can be transformative for their social and emotional development.

“The presence of our baby and her parent in the classroom creates a tangible, real-life connection for the students. Observing our baby’s development and interactions with her parent helps students relate the concepts of empathy and emotional literacy to real-world situations. Also, babies naturally evoke feelings of care and curiosity. When students observe and interact with the baby, they become emotionally engaged, which enhances their willingness to participate and learn. This emotional connection makes the lessons more memorable and impactful.

“During a recess game, a student got tagged out. He initially clenched his fists, but then he paused. He remembered a recent discussion about how Baby Quinn cries when she feels frustrated, and how important it is to express feelings with words. Instead of hands on, he took a deep breath and shared his feelings. He then went to join another group, still upset but without physical aggression or exclusion. Another situation occurred when a student forgot her snack and looked sad. Another student noticed and approached the sad friend. Remembering a Roots of Empathy lesson about how Baby Quinn needs comfort when she's upset, the friend said something like, "Are you feeling sad because you forgot your snack? I have an extra apple, would you like half?" She offered her apple, genuinely concerned.”

“I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for our Roots of Empathy Instructor this year. Your guidance, and Baby Quinn, have truly opened my students' hearts and minds. We've seen such a wonderful increase in empathy and kindness in the classroom, and it's all thanks to you.”

- Jennifer, Grade 3/4 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Queensdale Elementary School, Hamilton

“We discussed the meaning of empathy often this year. I believe that having the ability to empathize helped my students understand each other's point of view. I like how they are able to use empathy as a way to problem solve on their own. I have heard students say, "How would you feel?" or "We all make mistakes." And that is music to my ears!”

- Mary, Grade 2 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Barrhaven Public School, Ottawa

“Students become more self reflecting and aware of their own emotions. They accept that all feelings are valid but how we respond to our feelings is important. They apply strategies to help themselves and also to help support fellow classmates. Roots of Empathy has become an integral part of my classroom. It helps assist in establishing an inclusive environment where students can self reflect and learn strategies. They learn to understand others feelings, along with their own. This is a fantastic program and I look forward to continuing it in the classroom.”

- Jennifer, Grade 1 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Hamilton



Goal #2: To Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours and Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression

The presence of prosocial behaviours helps to promote positive development in children, by improving the quality of their relationships, and through fostering positive and safe classroom and home atmospheres. Quality relationships and perceived social support greatly increase an individual's resilience and protect against negative and stressful experiences (Lee et al., 2001). Prosocial behaviour has also been linked to improved academic outcomes (Caprara et al., 2000).

Aggressive children often have fewer social, cognitive, and emotional regulation skills available to them and are therefore more likely to be rejected by other children, and are less likely to get along with teachers (Schick & Cierpka, 2016; Mulvey et al., 2017; Decker et al., 2007; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). Children who 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 (Tremblay, 2004).

Feedback Results: Students

- 92% of students reported that they would try to help someone who feels sad, scared, or lonely.
- 91% of students reported that if they saw a student or friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them.

Feedback Results: Teachers

- 88% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that Roots of Empathy helped to reduce levels of hurtful behaviours or aggression in the classroom.
- 94% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students show more prosocial behaviours (e.g., sharing, helping, including, cooperating, kindness).

When asked, "What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World," students offered comments such as:

"Treat people with kindness like you would treat a baby."

- Grade 6, École Catholique Cathédrale, Kingston

"... That if someone is getting bullied and you see them getting bullied you should stand up for them."

- Grade 3/4, Cardinal Leger Catholic School, Toronto

"To be kind. To help people if [they] are mad, sad, [lonely]."

- Grade 2/3, Elora Public School, Elora

"To bully [and] fight less, to make everyone more inclusive and to show empathy."

- Grade 6, Lakeview Public School, Ottawa



“... To treat people with respect and to be kind because you never know what someone is going through.”

- Grade 8, Seaway District High School, Iroquois

“To be nice, learn emotions of other people, and [include] anyone even if [they’re] different [than] you.”

- Grade 2/3, W. Earle Miller Public School, Timmins



When someone is being bullied or being hurt I
can help by standing up for them and telling the bully
to stop and go away.

“When someone’s being bullied or being hurt I can help by standing up for them and telling the bully to stop and go away.”

Speech Bubble: [On the field] “Please stop.”

“Haha, no! (Continuing bullying) Red and blue is for boys. Haha! Baby! Go cry to your mom. Haha!”

Me: “Hey, she said stop! You bully! Go away.”

- Grade 3/4 Student, Cardinal Leger Catholic School, West Hill

“The Roots of Empathy Program helped children articulate their experience of bullying and to be reassured that it was unjust and that they have every right to be upset. Having open discussion about what bullying feels like allows students to appreciate that what hurts my feelings is likely to hurt yours. Roots of Empathy draws the curtain on cruelty, whether it be formal bullying or garden-variety meanness – it has no place in the Roots of Empathy classroom. Students become supporters of one another, rather than feeling worried that they will be the next ones to be picked on. Research from three continents has shown that Roots of Empathy reduces bullying and aggression, and this frees children up to learn and to relate.”

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO



When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy adult participants offered comments such as:

“Prosocial behaviours significantly increased. I saw more examples of children showing care for one another—offering help without being asked, including peers in play, and comforting others when upset. Sharing materials and taking turns became more natural parts of their daily routine. Overall, the program helped foster a more empathetic, respectful, and connected classroom environment ... The Roots of Empathy program has been incredibly valuable for my students, as it helps build emotional literacy at a young age. Through regular interactions with the baby and guided lessons, students learn to recognize and understand emotions—not just in themselves, but in others. This fosters empathy, kindness, and a deeper sense of connection within the classroom. It also supports the development of prosocial behaviours like sharing, helping, and including others, which are essential for healthy relationships and a positive learning environment.

“Thank you for the opportunity to be a Roots of Empathy Host Classroom Teacher. It has been a truly meaningful experience—for both myself and my students. Watching the children grow in empathy, emotional understanding, and kindness has been incredibly rewarding. The program creates such a special and memorable connection between the students, the baby, and the family. Thank you for the important work you do in helping to shape more [empathic] and caring communities.”

- Coral, JK/SK ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Robert Moore School, Fort Frances

“The Roots of Empathy program is incredibly important for my students because it offers a unique and deeply impactful approach to fostering crucial social and emotional skills that are often difficult to teach through traditional methods. At its core, the program cultivates empathy by allowing students to connect with a real baby and parent. This direct, experiential learning helps students understand and identify feelings in others, which then allows them to reflect on and better understand their own emotions. This "emotional literacy" is a cornerstone for healthy relationships and overall well-being ... In essence, Roots of Empathy provides my students with the tools to be more kind, understanding, and resilient individuals, creating a more peaceful and positive learning environment for everyone.”

- Holly, Grade 4-6 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Metcalfe Public School, Winchester

Goal #3: To Prepare Students for Responsive Parenting

The Roots of Empathy program focuses on the baby-parent relationship because it is the most powerful example of empathy in the world. The parent’s attunement to their baby’s emotional state and physical needs helps the baby learn to regulate their emotions, explore the world with confidence, and develop healthy relationships with others. In turn, the baby’s ability to develop a secure attachment to the parent is dependent on this attunement (Rees, 2007).

If everybody understood that babies are like everybody else with a full range of emotions, there would be less child abuse and a higher level of parenting satisfaction. Babies may feel lonely, frightened, anxious, confused, frustrated, and children in Roots of Empathy can list dozens of feelings babies might have. This leads them to respect the humanity of the baby and it is a protective factor when the students are adults. It could be a brake against harming a baby through ignorance. Roots of Empathy reframes the period of infancy so that there is an understanding that babies have both physical states and emotional states and it is the job of the parent to attune to the baby’s state in order to meet their needs.



Feedback Results: Students

- 92% of students reported that they are able to imagine how the baby is feeling by the expression on their face, the sounds they make, or their body language.
- 95% of students reported learning that babies do better when they are loved and cared for.

Feedback Results: Teachers

- 99% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students understand more about the responsibilities of being a parent.
- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students were able to recognize how the baby was feeling.

Feedback Results: Volunteer Parents

- 99% of parents reported that they felt that the students learned about their baby's emotions and reactions to situations.

When asked, "What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World," students offered comments such as:

"... How to treat a baby properly, take care of a baby, how to know what a baby is feeling, what to do in certain situations when [handling] a baby and how a baby develops. Not only does Roots of [Empathy] teach us about babies, it teaches us to be kind to each other, understand our feelings, not to judge other people and helps us gain more knowledge about babies and about our relationship with others."

- Grade 7/8, St. David Catholic School, Dorchester

"How to take care of a baby and keep [them] safe."

- Grade 3, Avondale Public School, Toronto

"That babies can feel what we feel."

- Grade 4, Wilton Grove Public School, London

"... How babies [develop], and that it takes time to [develop]. You can connect this to yourself when you're trying to learn a new life skill. It takes time."

- Grade 8, Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, Burlington

"... That babies are all [different] but every [baby deserves] love."

- Grade 3, Brown Junior Public School, Toronto

"... To be [gentle] with the babies. It can also teach the world [to] be [gentle]."

- Grade 2, Bayview Glen Public School, Thornhill



“That [babies] [do] better when they are loved and cared for and every baby deserves love.”

- Grade 6, École Catholique Cathédrale, Kingston

“... How feelings develop while growing and how [even] without [words] you can know [people’s] feelings through body language.”

- Grade 8, Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, Burlington

“How to truly care for a baby and understand how a baby functions. It's also more than just about treating a baby but also how to treat others and yourself.”

- Grade 7/8, St. Michael Catholic School, Brights Grove



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “Be gentle with babies.”

- Grade 2 Student, Walter Perry Public School, Scarborough

“Building parenting capacity is most readily achieved in an experiential and celebratory environment where the rights and individual development of a baby are honoured. Through Roots of Empathy with their Tiny Teacher, children get the message that babies are vulnerable and although tiny, they are people with rights. Feeling collectively for a vulnerable person like their Tiny Teacher gives young children an opportunity to be part of something where they all care together and celebrate the development of their Roots of Empathy baby. Throughout the school year, students see the power of the loving relationship between the parent and infant and witness how babies thrive in this relationship. This message is indelible and carries subtly throughout the lifespan.”

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO

When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy adult participants offered comments such as:

“One day, [the ROE baby] Hunter—who is typically cheerful, energetic, and full of excitement—was noticeably off. He began crying and acting unusually fussy. What stood out most was how the other children responded. They instinctively became quieter and less active. It was clear they were attuned to Hunter's emotional state and responded with empathy, adjusting their behavior in a way that showed care and concern for how he was feeling. Their natural, unprompted reaction demonstrated the strong sense of emotional awareness and [empathy] developing within the group.”

- Tara-Lynn, Kindergarten ROE Volunteer Parent, St. Peters Catholic School, Trenton

“Our more vulnerable students often became more engaged and expressive as they observe the baby's development and their parent's responsiveness. It gives them a model of secure attachment and emotional safety, which can be especially powerful if they haven't consistently experienced that in their own lives. We noticed increased empathy, improved self-awareness, and a greater ability to express their feelings.

“After each visit from our Roots of Empathy family, the students appeared noticeably calmer and more settled. This created a smoother transition into learning, making it easier to introduce new lessons and allowing students to work independently with minimal disruptions. I've observed that students became increasingly confident in identifying their emotions and using effective strategies to manage them, which helps set them up for a successful day. They're also showing greater kindness toward one another and making more intentional efforts to include their classmates and others throughout the school community.

“For our students, Roots of Empathy helps build a foundation for lifelong emotional well-being and respectful relationships. It equips them with the tools to navigate social situations, resolve conflicts peacefully, and contribute positively to their communities. I am very grateful to be selected to host Roots of Empathy in my classroom. I truly appreciate Stephanie Skrypyk and our Roots of Empathy family that took the time to come into my classroom each month to help my students fosters empathy, reduces aggression and bullying, and enhances prosocial behaviors such as kindness, cooperation, and inclusion. It was a positive experience for all of us.”

- Zahra, Grade 2/3 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Lord Elgin Public School, London

“For Kindergarten age students Roots of Empathy makes concepts of the learning process more concrete and easily understandable. They begin to understand that they all have milestones and they are more aware of these and receptive to the processes involved in reaching those milestones at home and school. General decrease in all [aggressive and bullying] behaviours over the course of the program as students become more aware of needs, feelings, perspective's, etc. of others. These behaviours also decrease as students become more aware of their own feelings, needs, communication types, etc. as they build self regulation skills and build strong relationships with others and the skills to appropriately communicate feelings, needs, wants, etc. to meet their needs.

“Roots of Empathy is a beautiful program that fits very well with the Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum. It not only creates a rich learning experience but it supports community connections and relationships in our small rural community. I have loved that my Teacher Partner has brought this to our program as it has further enriched our classroom program and also our school community as a whole the more years we have it! I am so grateful for this program!”

- Amanda, Kindergarten ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Perth Road Public School, Perth Road



Goal #4: To Prepare Students for Responsible Citizenship

Students learn to build consensus and to respect different views of their classmates while having experience in presenting their own views. Every child has a voice but sometimes they can't find it because of other powerful disincentives, like people making fun of them. In a Roots of Empathy classroom, students do not laugh at other students because they know how they would feel. Roots of Empathy is a brake against cruelty but not a guarantee. When children understand that their actions, like excluding another person, affect others' wellbeing, they are more likely to operate with a lens of empathy. Being a responsible citizen in adulthood starts in childhood. Roots of Empathy classrooms operate on the principle of a participatory democracy.

Feedback Results: Students

- 89% of students reported that they try to respect other people's ideas, even if they are different from their own.
- 92% of students reported that they try to be kind to everyone, even if they are different from them.
- 90% of students reported that it is wrong that some people get excluded because they are different.

Feedback Results: Teachers

- 96% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more inclusive or accepting of others who are different from themselves.
- 94% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more aware of how their actions impact others.

Feedback Results: Volunteer Parents

- 91% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that seeing the children interact with their baby gave them more hope for the next generation of citizens.

When asked, "What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World," students offered comments such as:

"To love everyone and treat everyone the same because Roots of Empathy shows that everyone has feelings."

- Grade 6, St. Mark Catholic Elementary School, Burlington

"... To have empathy which can help prevent many world problems."

- Grade 8, St. Scholastica Catholic Elementary School, Milton



“That no matter what age, skin tone, or religion, everyone should be loved and cared for!”

- Grade 3, Frankland Community School, Toronto

“... That everyone is equal and deserves respect.”

- Grade 6-8, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Elementary School, Mississauga



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?

“To be kind to everybody [and] that can [change] the world!”

- Grade 2/3 Student, Knoxdale Public School, Nepean

“The future citizens, leaders and parents of tomorrow are sitting in the classrooms today. When children are collectively exposed to social responsibility, it changes not just how they see things but also how they behave. Children are having experiences through Roots of Empathy which allow them to contribute to the general wellbeing of other students in their classroom. When children as young as eight years of age take an active interest in the wellbeing of others we are on our way to having a civil society.”

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO

“That everybody has feelings and, by not judging people or being mean because [they’re] different from us can make a big change even when you may not think it can.”

“No matter your skin colour, hair colour, size, if you have a disability, to treat all people with the same [amount] of respect.”

- Grade 7/8 Students, St. Michael Catholic School, Brights Grove



“To be more patient and listen to others ideas. I also think that Roots of Empathy can teach others to stand up for each other.”

- Grade 7, Lumen Christi Catholic Elementary School, Milton

“That everyone matters and everyone is important no matter of race, [beliefs, etc.]”

“To care more about people, understand more about people, and accept more people for how they are.”

- Grade 6 Students, Stoneybrook Public School, London

“To bully or fight less, be more patient, kind and inclusive, show more empathy, and make the world a better place.”

- Grade 4/5, St. Luke Catholic Elementary School, Oakville

When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy adult participants offered comments such as:

“Students who previously felt bullied have learned how to speak up, express their feelings, and use their voice. The class as a whole has developed a stronger sense of empathy, learning to recognize when others are sad, upset, or hurt. They are now more willing to stand up for their peers when they see someone being treated unfairly. Roots of Empathy taught students important lessons about kindness, emotions, and the shared experience of having feelings. They also learned about parental responsibilities and infant development. The visits were always something students looked forward to, helping create an inclusive and safe environment where they felt encouraged to learn and share. Roots of Empathy is a wonderful program for students at this age, as it helps them learn about empathy, compassion, and the importance of recognizing and celebrating their uniqueness. It also teaches them to appreciate both the similarities and differences among their peers. Thank you for a great program!”

- Julie, Grade 1 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, St. Basil Catholic Elementary School, Sault Ste. Marie

“Over the course of the program, we have observed meaningful growth in our students’ prosocial behaviours. They have become more consistent in sharing, helping, and including others, with a noticeable shift in how they navigate social dynamics. Students are now more likely to speak up against unfair behaviour, choosing to act as upstanders rather than bystanders. They advocate not only for themselves but also for their peers, demonstrating increased emotional awareness and a commitment to addressing injustice with empathy. Students use emotional vocabulary more confidently and are quicker to recognize when someone needs support - whether emotional or social. The program has played a vital role in fostering a classroom culture rooted in kindness, empathy, and mutual respect, where emotional understanding is part of everyday interactions.

“Roots of Empathy has truly been the highlight of the year for our students. The program has offered meaningful opportunities for children to develop perspective-taking, recognize the value of listening and responding with care, and deepened their understanding of the core values we strive to uphold in our classroom. It has fostered a strong sense of connection, helping to strengthen peer relationships and create a safe, supportive environment where students feel confident expressing themselves and comfortable learning from mistakes. For many, empathy - once an abstract and challenging concept - has become something real, relatable, and practiced daily. Beyond its social and emotional benefits, the program has increased student engagement. It has given many students an added sense of purpose



and motivation to attend school, knowing they are part of something meaningful where they are seen, heard, and valued.

“Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity - it has brought immense joy to both the students and staff in our classroom. This experience has helped shape me into a stronger educator, a more empathetic person, and a more engaged citizen ... Our students are now empowered to apply the knowledge and emotional skills they have gained through this program both in and beyond the classroom. We are incredibly grateful for the lasting impact this experience has had on all of us and sincerely hope to have the opportunity to host the program again. It has been an honour.”

- Taylor, Kindergarten ROE Host Classroom Teacher, Kitchener

Goal #5: To Promote Students' Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Resilience

In future years, sociologists will likely define the pandemic period by its impact on children of various stages of development as well as its impact on adults, the economy, polarization, marginalization, and particular challenges to how we view one another in the world. Children have become more anxious everywhere. This growing anxiety is not just the result of the pandemic, which certainly fueled it, but social media is also considered a significant factor in increasing children's anxiety. Roots of Empathy supports children in learning to regulate their emotions, freeing them up to connect and to learn. Roots of Empathy fosters resilience in children. [Dr. Bruce Perry](#), a world expert on trauma and childhood, stated, “Roots of Empathy is critically important as a resiliency building program. It teaches children how to develop a comfort level with creating relational opportunities.” [Dr. Michael Ungar](#), a world-renowned resilience expert, noted, “Roots of Empathy is seeding the foundational stones for a more resilient community.”

Roots of Empathy fosters the development of empathy and prosocial behaviours, both of which are associated with the ability to make friends and with positive mental health/emotional wellbeing. Empathy is necessary to build healthy relationships and resilience (Mehrabian, 2000; Jones et al., 2015).

Feedback Results: Students

- 89% of students reported that their Roots of Empathy Baby helped them to understand that we all learn things when we're ready.
- 97% of students reported that their Roots of Empathy Baby helped them to understand that every baby has the right to be loved.
- 92% of students reported that their Roots of Empathy Baby helped them to understand that they have the right to be loved.

Feedback Results: Teachers

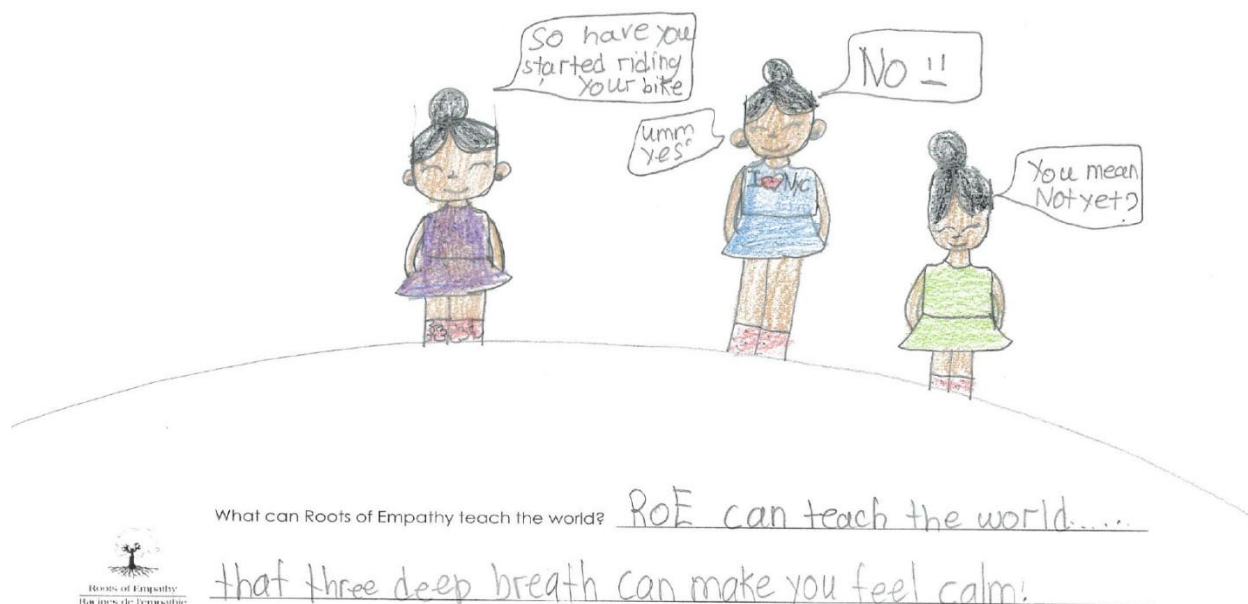
- 99% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Roots of Empathy program supported students' mental health and wellbeing.
- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have an opportunity to talk about their feelings.



- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students understand that all feelings are okay.

Feedback Results: Volunteer Parents

- 85% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that participating in a Roots of Empathy program made them feel more valued as a parent.



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “ROE can teach the world that three deep breath can make you feel calm.”

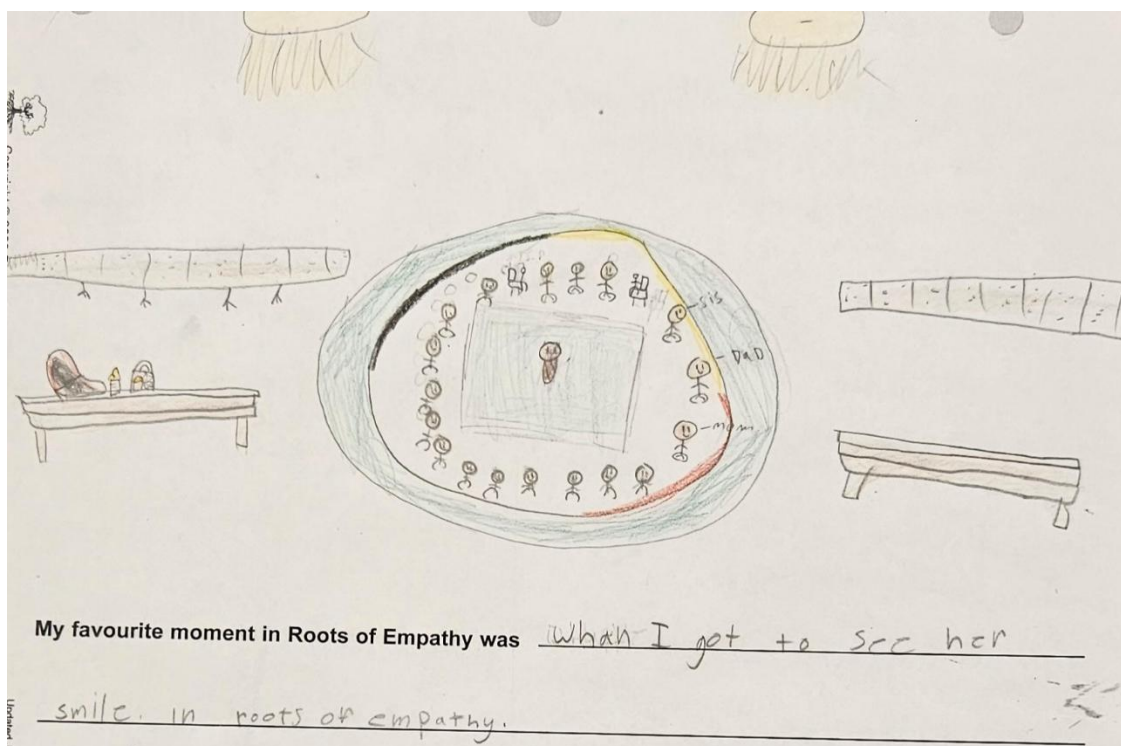
Speech Bubble: “So, have you started riding your bike?” “No :(?”
“You mean, not yet?” “Umm, yes.”

- Grade 2 Student, St. Patrick Elementary School, Niagara Falls

“Roots of Empathy is a trauma-informed program and Dr. Bruce Perry and Dr. Dan Siegel, two heroes in this field, champion Roots of Empathy for its innovative way of supporting children in becoming more resilient. Through the program, children have discussed at length what they think the baby is trying to do or achieve. Introducing the concept of ‘not yet’ to their Baby’s growth and development allows the students to appreciate the stage the baby is at. This discussion opened the door for student to take the baby’s perspective and relate it to their own lives, such as when they were ‘not yet’ ready to ride their bike without training wheels. Embracing the ‘not yet’ concept allows students to accept themselves for trying their best, even if they are ‘not yet’ ready to reach the same skill level as others. This child might only be seven years old, but she is able to identify and manage her own feelings and use her breath to feel calm. Another benefit of the ‘not yet’ concept is that students help one another rather than compete. Knowing that it is okay not to be able to do something ‘yet’ bolsters children’s confidence and mental health.”

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO





My favourite moment in Roots of Empathy was
“When I got to see her smile in Roots of Empathy.”
The child included a Medicine Wheel, an Indigenous symbol often shown with
four colours: yellow, red, black, and white, on the Green Blanket.

- Grade 2/3 Student, St. Vincent Elementary School, Thunder Bay

“Understanding that the baby is our Tiny Teacher, this eight-year-old appreciates that the baby is sharing their feelings so that we can understand them and that will help us understand ourselves, and one another. In Roots of Empathy, we believe that the birth of a baby is the birth of hope. In many of the Indigenous communities where we share our program, there is a consensus that a baby is a gift of the creator—we agree. Helping young children see the vulnerability and humanity in a baby allows them to appreciate the uniqueness of each baby and to realize that they too are unique and also vulnerable, like their baby.”

- Mary Gordon, Founder/President/CEO

When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:

“... To love more. Everybody needs love in their life and my hope is that Roots of Empathy will continue spreading the love everyone [deserves].”

- Grade 7/8, St. Michael Catholic School, Brights Grove

“... That everyone deserves to be loved and respected. Also, that everyone has feelings and we have to respect them. Everyone will go through good and bad times and that we all have to be kind to one another. We also learned how to take care of babies and others.”

- Grade 7/8, St. David Catholic School, Dorchester

“... That it is okay to have [feelings] and that [babies] and [adults] and kids have a right to be loved.”
- Grade 3, Dovercourt Public School, Toronto

“Kindness, love, and help teach how to be more kind and love yourself.”
- Grade 5/6, King Edward Public School, Kitchener

“... Empathy, how to be kind. Also [self-confidence] and that [everyone] matters.”
- Grade 6/7, East Ridge Community School, Owen Sound

“... [It’s] ok to feel things and [it’s] ok to not be at the same level as everyone else.”
“That everyone has a voice, everyone should be inclusive and everyone [experiences] feelings so don’t be afraid to express yourself.”
- Grade 8 Students, Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, Burlington

When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy adult participants offered comments such as:

“At the beginning of the program, there was a student with selective mutism who was very closed off, reluctant to participate, disengaged, and withdrawn. But toward the end of the program, something beautiful happened. Baby Pippa, just beginning to crawl, made her way over to this student and began playing with her colourful bracelet. In that simple, sweet moment, the student began to blossom. She started volunteering to help, answering questions, smiling, participating. Truly coming out of her shell. When the class presented us with a final gift, a time capsule, that very bracelet was lovingly taped to a page for baby Pippa. It made my heart melt.

“Watching my baby connect with the students in such a natural, honest way reminded me of how powerful simple, human interactions can be. It gave me a deep sense of pride to see how Pippa, just by being herself, could spark kindness, curiosity, and emotional growth in others. For Pippa, it was a chance to be surrounded by warmth, smiles, and gentle attention. She was embraced by a community that saw her not just as a baby, but as a teacher in her own right. We both came away from the experience feeling more connected, valued, and grounded.

“In a world where handheld technology and social media have chipped away at our personal relationships, attention spans, and self-confidence, this program offered something rare: a chance to be truly present. For the entire session, the students were focused on baby Pippa, and in doing so, they became grounded. The distractions faded away, and what remained was a sense of calm, connection, and reality. It was a powerful reminder of how meaningful it is to step away from our screens and simply be in the moment.”

- Hailey, Grade 6/7 ROE Volunteer Parent, East Ridge Community School, Owen Sound

“I’ve found that children are noticeably more engaged and emotionally settled after the Roots of Empathy family visits. These sessions create a calm, reflective atmosphere that helps students become more open and ready to learn. Over the course of the program, I observed a noticeable decrease in aggressive and bullying behaviours, with students showing greater self-regulation and empathy toward their peers. At the same time, prosocial behaviours such as helping, sharing, and including others became more frequent and genuine, creating a more positive classroom environment. The connection and empathy of others and with others is not only with a baby but with everyone they encounter.”

- Sonia, Grade 4/5 ROE Host Classroom Teacher, St. Luke Catholic Elementary School, Oakville



“As a first-time mom, it really helped me focus on her development and milestones as well as seeing her growth from one week to the next. It made me think of the things she was doing from one session to the next and really reflect on how far she’s come since the first visit. It’s a special bond we created too. Roots of empathy is such an important experience that all students should get the opportunity to participate in. Sharing and talking about feelings and understanding how and why we feel that way is so important and valuable in life. It was really neat to see the way the children interacted with her and how excited they got when we walked in the room.”

- Michelle, Grade 3/4 ROE Volunteer Parent, Queensdale Elementary school, Hamilton

Global Additional Findings

Roots of Empathy offers programs on three continents in multiple languages. We compile a Global Annual Program Evaluation report. Below are the findings from Roots of Empathy’s **global feedback** from Volunteer Parents, ROE Instructors, and Host Classroom Teachers. This shows the impact of the program on participants all around the world.

Curriculum Expectations

- 98% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the ROE program supports the school’s curriculum.

Volunteer Parent Experiences

- 99% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that by volunteering Roots of Empathy, they felt connected to the school.
- 98% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were giving back to the community by volunteering with Roots of Empathy.
- 84% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they became more aware of their baby’s developmental milestones.
- 99% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported by their ROE Instructor.
- 99% of parents said that they would recommend the ROE program to other parents.

Instructor Experiences

- 94% of Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering with Roots of Empathy built on other areas of their job/life.

Host Classroom Teacher Experiences

- 95% of Host Classroom Teachers reported that they would be interested in having Roots of Empathy in their classroom again.



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