



**For Immediate Release**

## **NIAGARA'S ROOTS OF EMPATHY BABY CELEBRATION HONOURS THE WORK OF ITS "TINIEST TEACHERS"**

**Niagara Region, Ontario, June 5, 2026** – For more than 25 years Roots of Empathy has been impacting the lives of Niagara students from Kindergarten to Grade Eight, through visits from "Tiny Teachers".

The District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) and Niagara Catholic District School Board (Niagara Catholic) came together on May 22, 2026, at the DSBN Board Office to celebrate the work of the DSBN Youth Counsellors and Niagara Catholic Child and Youth Workers who have dedicated time during the school year to facilitate the Roots of Empathy Program. This valuable program promotes empathy and emotional literacy in children at school through classroom visits from a local family and baby — known as the "Tiny Teacher" — and guided by a Roots of Empathy Instructor.

The Baby Celebration is an opportunity to recognize the school administrators, classroom teachers, mental health leads, local families, Tiny Teachers, and partners who contribute to the success of Roots of Empathy within our community. The celebration also welcomed Allison Wesley, Ontario Provincial Manager, Roots of Empathy, who brought greetings and highlighted the global impact of the program on behalf of Roots of Empathy Founder, President and CEO Mary Gordon.

This year, approximately 650 elementary students in 26 classrooms across the District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board participated in Roots of Empathy. During the program, children were guided to observe and recognize the baby's feelings and then reflect on times when they had experienced similar emotions. In doing so, they developed a deeper understanding of their own feelings and the language to express them.

Through this experiential learning, children gain the ability to recognize the emotional cues of their classmates, helping them better understand others. This growing emotional literacy helps them become more inclusive, build positive relationships, and create more caring classroom communities. Students also observe the loving relationship between a parent and baby, and the baby's developing physical, social, emotional, and cognitive milestones, and unique temperament traits. Along the way, they gain valuable lessons about infant safety and development, shaping their future roles as responsive parents, caregivers, and empathic citizens.

### **Quick facts:**

- Roots of Empathy is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2026 and is an award-winning registered charity and non-profit organization founded in 1996.
- Roots of Empathy is coordinated locally by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), in partnership with the District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- The families and babies visit the class nine times throughout the school year and is the heart of the age specific curriculum of 27 classroom visits that make up the Roots of Empathy program. Visits are coordinated by the Roots of Empathy Instructors.

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**High-resolution photos are available upon request. For more information, please visit [www.rootsofempathy.org](http://www.rootsofempathy.org) or [www.eccdc.org](http://www.eccdc.org). ECCDC Contact: **Lorrey Arial Bonilla**, Executive Director, Early Childhood Community Development Centre. P: 905.646.7311 ext. 321**