



For Immediate Release

NIAGARA'S YOUNGEST TEACHERS HONOURED

Niagara Region, Ontario, May 22, 2026 – A group of babies, also known as Tiny Teachers, who are only marking their first birthdays are being celebrated as classroom heroes on May 22nd at the District School Board of Niagara Education Centre Atrium, 191 Carlton Street, St. Catharines, for their contribution in helping children develop empathy over a school year. These babies, alongside their loving parents and with the guidance of a Roots of Empathy Instructor, nurture emotional literacy and social competence in children, lasting skills that help children make friends and improve their mental health.

The internationally recognized and award-winning Roots of Empathy Program developed by social entrepreneur, educator, and author Mary Gordon, has been offered within Niagara's classrooms since 2001. Twenty-seven (27) classrooms are participating this year within District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) and Niagara Catholic District School Board (Niagara Catholic), impacting over 600 students. Research shows the Roots of Empathy program helps children understand and express feelings, reduce aggression and bullying, increase empathy and prosocial behaviours that foster inclusion and respect for others, and deepen their understanding of infant development and safety – all important for mental health, future parenting and responsible citizenship.

The heart of the program is a neighborhood infant and parent who visit the classroom each month throughout the school year. The program is facilitated through a certified ROE instructor who coaches the students to observe the baby's development, celebrate milestones, interact with the baby, and learn about an infant's needs and unique temperament. The ROE Instructor visits the participating kindergarten and elementary classrooms before and after each baby visit to prepare and reinforce teaching using a specialized curriculum for specific age ranges. If you would like to see a family visit, please click [here](#) for a recent story by Cogeco YourTV Niagara.

The Baby Celebration is an opportunity to recognize the many community partners who contribute to the success of Roots of Empathy in Niagara. The Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), a local charitable organization offering a pedagogical resource library, mentoring supports, and professional learning opportunities is honoured to have the opportunity to work alongside the International Roots of Empathy Team and partners within Niagara Catholic and DSBN as a Key Point Agency, supporting the coordination of the program in classrooms across Niagara.

Roots of Empathy is a registered charity and non-profit organization with award-winning national and international programs. Founded in 1996, celebrating 30 years, the program is delivered within 58 Ontario school boards – 76% of all boards in Ontario and continues to grow as more trainers receive training, more programs can be offered. For more information on the 2025 Ontario Annual Program Evaluation please click [here](#).

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For more information, please visit www.rootsofempathy.org or www.eccdc.org or contact:

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