

Foreword by Michael Fullan

Professor Emeritus,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,
University of Toronto

To Mary Gordon's

Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child

To all those who claim that only academic subjects can be measured and improved, you are about to get your comeuppance. Mary Gordon's *Roots of Empathy* is a simple, brilliant, and powerful example of how developing children's empathy can be a priority and can be accomplished with amazing results.

Using science and motherhood, Mary Gordon has created a wonderful, heart-rending, and inspiring program that tugs at the heartstrings as it shows what can be done in the most difficult cases. Who would have thought that you could build a curriculum around a mother and her baby; and that a baby driven curriculum could meet neuroscience with such wonderful results.

Roots of Empathy is solidly based on scientific knowledge of the human condition. But more than that it takes us in to the pedagogy of how one can develop and foster attachment, emotional literacy, authentic communication, and social inclusion. It shows how one can take even the toughest kids and give them an experience which literally changes their lives by helping them get in touch with what it means to be human in a world of diversity—indeed in a very tough world.

The strategies are clear and powerful. And do they get results! In carefully controlled evaluations by external academics, we see that bullying decreases over the period of a year, as do other forms of aggression. And empathy to other children increases. So does reaching out to include others, especially those who are least likely to fit into the group. And of course the close link between academic learning in literacy and math and self esteem and general well being flourish in a mutually reinforcing dance of development.

In my own work, we have been focusing on achieving literacy and numeracy for all students—raise the bar and close the gap as we say. We are getting promising results on a large-scale across whole countries like England, and whole provinces like Ontario. But we can only get so far. The missing link is the third basic—the well being of children, not as a stand alone initiative but as integral to academic success and overall success in life. We will only be able to go the distance if we make academic and personal and social development a mutually reinforcing centerpiece of our policies and strategies.

Every country in the world should take *Roots of Empathy* seriously. Learn from it, and introduce it into your classrooms. Make the whole child the centre of development, not in an abstract philosophical way, but in a decidedly direct and concrete manner. Mary Gordon has opened the door to finally treating the whole child in a practical, yet no nonsense way. The heart is the way to the mind, but they have to be explicitly linked. *Roots of Empathy* is a model of social and academic inclusion. If you are an educator, a parent, a politician please read this book.