

Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy 2009 Feedback Report Atlantic Provinces

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world not to bully other people, be nice to others, don't pick on people because you're mad or sad or angry, don't shake a baby, and other people have feelings. Roots of Empathy can teach kids a lot!"

Grade 4 Student, Torbay, Newfoundland

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



Atlantic Provinces Roots of Empathy Feedback 2008-09

This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout the Atlantic Provinces in the 2008-09 school year. Teachers were asked their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the program, and students were asked about specific information they learned in relation to the main goals of Roots of Empathy (ROE) and how their thoughts and attitudes had been influenced.

Goal #1: To Foster the Development of Empathy

Why is this important?

- The ability to take the perspective of the other (the cognitive aspect of empathy) plays a critical role in helping individuals resist aggressive behaviours by providing a buffer against antisocial and aggressive temptations.
- Empathy is regarded as one of the most desirable human traits due to its positive association with pro-social behaviours such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Finding #1: Increase in Empathy

- 87% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic (13% were not sure).
- 91% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view (9% were not sure).
- 87% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more inclusive or accepting of others who are different from themselves (including culture, race, special needs, gender etc.) (13% were not sure).

Goal #2: To Develop Emotional Literacy

Why is this important?

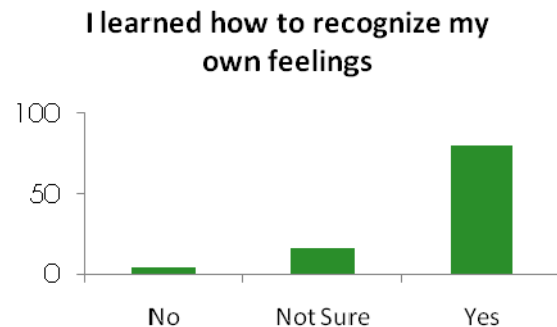
- Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL) includes developing the skills to recognize, express, and manage our feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate our emotions.
- Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological disorders including anxiety and depression.
- Research has also found that children with good SEL skills have better attitudes about themselves and others, show more pro-social behaviours, less aggression, have better attendance at school, and perform better academically.

Finding #2: Improved Emotional Literacy

- 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings (5% were not sure).
- 98% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel (2% were not sure).
- 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words (5% were not sure).

87% of students agreed that they learned how to understand how other people feel (10% were not sure).

96% of students agreed that they learned that everybody has feelings (2% were not sure).



Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying , Aggression and Violence, and Promote Children's Pro-social Behaviour

Why is this important?

- Pro-social behaviour (e.g. sharing, helping, co-operating) helps to promote positive development in children, improve the quality of their relationships, as well as the overall classroom atmosphere.
- Quality relationships and perceived social support greatly increases an individual's resilience as well as protects against negative and stressful experiences. Pro-social behaviour has also been linked to improved academic outcomes.
- Aggressive children often have fewer cognitive, social, and emotional skills available to them and are therefore more likely to be rejected by other children, have deviant friends, and are less likely to get along with teachers.
- Children that 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.

Finding #3: Decreased Aggression and Increased Pro-social Behaviour

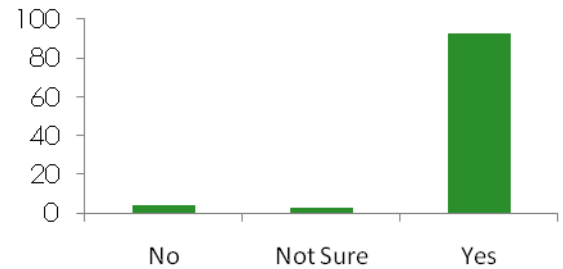
- 83% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates (25% were not sure).
- 92% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students showed more pro-social behaviour by the end of the school year (8% were not sure).

93% of students agreed that they learned it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied (5% were not sure).

81% of students agreed that they feel sad or upset when they see someone being picked on or treated meanly (13% were not sure).

90% of students agreed that they learned that it is not okay to hurt someone's feelings just because they're feeling angry, sad, or scared (7% were not sure).

I learned that it is not ok to bully someone



Goal #4: To Increase Knowledge of Human Development, Learning, and Infant Safety

Why is this important?

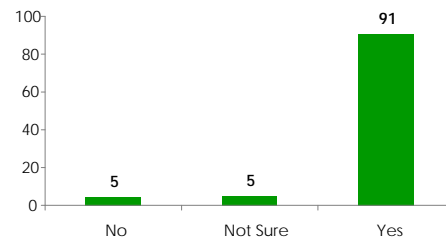
- Providing information about safe parenting can effectively increase parenting knowledge, increase an individual's confidence in their ability to parent, as well as prevent negative outcomes such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Finding #4: Improved knowledge of human development, learning and safety

89% of students learned that babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for (8% were not sure).

97% of students learned that it is dangerous to shake a baby (1% were not sure).

I learned that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she could harm the baby



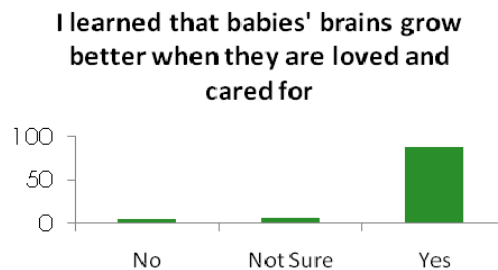
Goal #5: To prepare students for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting

Why is this important?

- Witnessing a caring parent-infant relationship as well as understanding how sensitive and responsive parenting in infancy and early childhood can protect against stress and negative influences will help to protect future generations and reduce vulnerability to future psychopathology.

Finding #5: Improved knowledge of parenting

92% of students agreed that they learned that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work (5% were not sure).



Additional Results

Curriculum Expectations – 100% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that ROE supports the school's curriculum.

Program Enjoyment – 91% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they would like to have ROE again next year.

Comments from Students, Teachers and Instructors

In addition to quantitative data, we also collected qualitative data from students on what they learned from ROE. When asked, "What ROE could teach the world?", students reported:

Grade 4 Student, Torbay, Newfoundland

"ROE can teach the world how to become responsible, how to take care of children and how to handle certain situations, like how to take care of a baby and to be calm when things go wrong and to remember that you can always do something about that problem. Also ROE can teach us about different emotions and how to recognize them. Also how to help someone if they're having a bad emotion like angry or sad and try to make them happier."

Grade 4 Student, Rexton, New Brunswick

"About babies and how they can get hurt easily. Also about how everybody has a life and not to judge them just by how they look or talk and everybody has feelings no matter what you couldn't live without them. Everybody is important in the world!"

Grade 4 Student, Torbay, Newfoundland

"Roots of Empathy could teach the world to be responsible with a baby and that everyone is different from each other in their own unique way. It doesn't matter what colour any baby is."

Grade 4 Student, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

"ROE can teach the world how to care for babies and it can teach empathy (how other people feel)."

Grade 5 Student, Fredericton, New Brunswick

"ROE can teach the world that babies need a lot more care than most people think when they decide to have a baby."

Grade 5 Student, Thorburn, Nova Scotia

"How to be kind and generous and nice to everyone no matter how different."

When asked what impact they felt the ROE program would have on the children, school and community, teachers reported:

Atlantic Provinces

Grade 1 Teacher, St. John's, Newfoundland

"I feel that it is very important that children learn at an early age the importance of feeling empathy for others. The children go home and share their positive experiences with their families and in turn this flows out into the community. I can truly see the benefit of this program and I want to be involved with this again next year."

Grade 2 Teacher, Port au Port East, Newfoundland

"I believe the ROE program has a great impact on the children, families and our community. The children learned a lot from the ROE program and have been using their knowledge in the classroom, even when the instructor or baby is not there. Children have learned the importance of treating others with respect. They think first about how they would feel if something was said or done to them before they do things to hurt their friends. Families of my students really appreciate the program and have made comments that show that the children see the importance of treating others as they would like to be treated."

Grade 2 Teacher, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia

"ROE is a unique program that complements our curriculum. It supports the ideas/concepts that we as teachers attempt to teach such as helpfulness, understanding, compassion for others and just being a nice person."

Grade 2 Teacher, Hampton, New Brunswick

"ROE raises awareness/acceptance of individual differences. Throughout the program, I have noticed that the children certainly become more empathetic towards each other and talk freely about their feelings. For me as a teacher, activities such as drawing and writing about what makes them cry and/or a time that they were bullied provides a valuable insight into their daily lives."

Grade 3 Teacher, Moncton, New Brunswick

"This program was a comfort to me because I was able to see my students, especially my boys, show empathy and compassion for our baby and hopefully in turn, for others including their own children some day. Just allowing them to "tap" into those feelings and emotions may deter them from being led down the wrong path. Our family and facilitator were excellent!!! I am hoping to have an opportunity to have this program in my class again in the fall. I am a fan for life!!! Thank you..."

ROE Instructor, Tabusintac, New Brunswick

"Roots of Empathy is a really unique program that fosters caring and empathy to all those involved, either directly or indirectly. Students gain firsthand experience on caring and compassion as they connect with their baby, a connection that they will hopefully carry throughout their lives. I feel that as individual students are faced with situations in life, they will think back and reflect on Baby "Whoever" and make thoughtful choices. The lessons learned in the Roots of Empathy classroom are not isolated to the environment that they have been taught in, those values will be reflected around the school and within the community it has been established."

ROE Instructor, Harbour Breton, Newfoundland

"The benefits of the ROE program are enormous for any school/community. Not only does the program promote an awareness of feelings among our children it also has many academic benefits.... there are not many programs out there today that teach grade 4 children about sudden infant death syndrome, effects of smoking on unborn babies, and their own feelings all the same time. The children involved in the program learned so much about feelings, bullying, and most importantly....LOVE GROWS BRAINS. This is a statement that the grade four students will never forget!!"