

Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy 2009 Feedback Report British Columbia

"I think that ROE can change the world by more empathy in schools so there won't be any bullies. ROE is a great program to teach the world about feelings and how to treat others the same. Even though other people look different they are still the same like us. Also if the world knows about empathy there won't be many wars. That is why ROE can change the world."

Grade 5 Student, Port Moody

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



British Columbia Roots of Empathy Feedback 2008-09

This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout British Columbia 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

- 90% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic (10% were not sure).
- 86% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view (13% were not sure).
- 83% 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.) (15% were not sure).

Goal #2: To Develop Emotional Literacy

Why is this important?

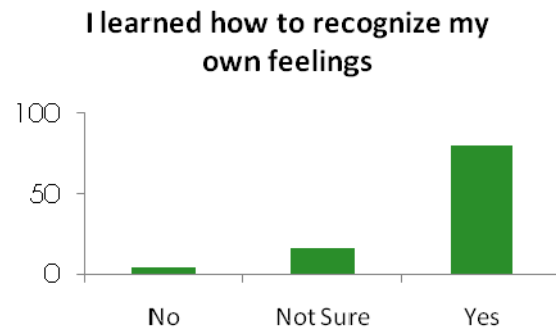
- Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL) includes developing the skills to recognize, express, and manage our feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate our emotions.
- Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological 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

- 88% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings (12% 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).
- 87% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words (13% were not sure).

86% of students agreed that they learned how to understand how other people feel (10% were not sure).

94% 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 (sharing, helping, cooperating) 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.

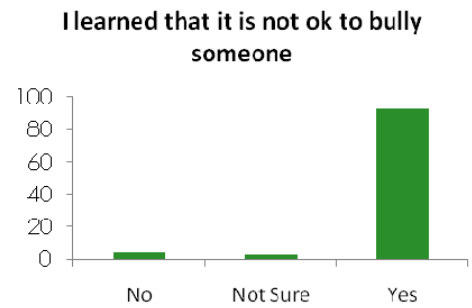
Finding #3: Decreased Aggression and Increased Pro-social Behaviour

- 68% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates (30% were not sure).
- 83% 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 (17% were not sure).

93% of students agreed that they learned it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied (4% were not sure).

79% of students agreed that they feel sad or upset when they see someone being picked on or treated meanly (14% were not sure).

89% 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 (6% were not sure).



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

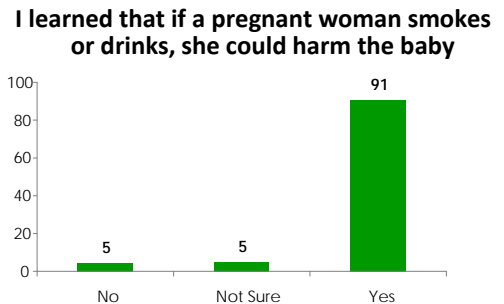
Why is this important?

- 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

94% of students learned that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she could harm the baby (3% were not sure).

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



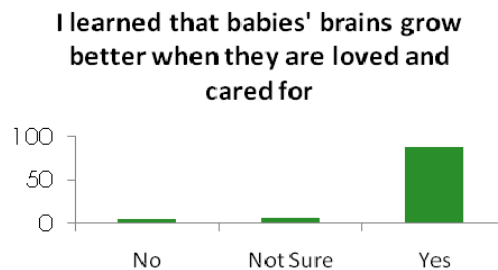
Goal #5: To Prepare Students for Responsible Citizenship and Responsive Parenting

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

93% of students agreed that they learned that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work (4% were not sure).



Additional Results

Curriculum Expectations – 98% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that ROE supports the school's curriculum.

Program Enjoyment – 83% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they would like to have ROE again next year.

Comments from Students, Teachers and Facilitators

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

Grade 4 Student, Port Moody

"I think Roots of Empathy teach the world about empathy. It teaches me that even if we are different, we are the same inside. They also teaches me how to feel other people feelings, body language, milestones, how to not be a bully and also about babies by a baby, and this makes me very excited. I love our baby and I think he is really cute and a R.O.E teacher and that I learned a lot from him. For me, R.O.E helped me a lot because when I grow up I already know how to take care of a baby, I won't drink or smoke so my baby won't get harm, I won't never shake a baby and also that being a parent is a lot of hard work. I think that other children would like to have R.O.E in their class. In my opinion, R.O.E can make the world a better place even if we know that everyone has their own feelings."

Grade 4 Student, Surrey

"That you should never shake a baby, and you should care for it and love it. I also learned that you should not hurt someone because you're angry, sad or maybe because you got bullied. And you should never get angry at the baby because it won't stop crying. I also know that you should never smoke if you are pregnant and you should also not drink alcohol because it could harm the baby. I also learned that it is a lot of work taking care of a baby. I learned that other people have feelings and don't like being bullied. I also learned how to understand how other people feel."

Grade 6 Student, Kamloops

"I think ROE can teach people that we are all important. I think it can show that were all human and we make mistakes. I think it will bring people together. It will teach people to care about others."

Grade 6 Student, Oliver

"Roots of Empathy could teach the world that everyone is different on the outside, but we're all the same inside. Everyone gets sad, mad, happy, scared, anxious etc. Everybody shares this world, so we should ALL learn to love, respect and try to understand each other."

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

Kindergarten Teacher, North Vancouver

"Let any teacher know that if you have not tried using the ROE program in your class, try it! It is a truly wonderful addition to the curriculum when it comes to positive attitudes and social responsibility!"

Grade 1 Teacher, Tumbler Ridge

"The students loved it and were totally captivated by "our" baby. They learned a lot and we were able to use what they learned in various other situations. Several times I heard comments like "how would baby Avery feel if that happened to her?" or "She needs love just like baby Avery." Even the most troubled kids in the class related to the baby in a positive way and simply melted when they got a smile or gurgle."

Grade 4 Teacher, North Vancouver

"I believe that ROE has effectively given students an appropriate and meaningful avenue for relating and/or discussing emotional experiences and feelings of others to their own emotional experiences and feelings. These ideas are then connected to future experiences at home and in the community, with the added benefit of appropriate vocabulary and strategies gained through ROE. Also the ROE parents and facilitator provide students with excellent, positive role models in family life."

Grade 4/5 Teacher, Maple Ridge

"ROE promotes what I consider to be a critical component of education; building relationships and having a sense of belonging. All students and adults need to have these components before any learning can take place. ROE helps to develop these components in an interesting and different way."

ROE Instructor, Powell River

"The children enjoy learning about the baby and learning that they are special, too. The children have opportunities to tell their stories about accidents in the safety theme, and the teacher gains some insights into home life for the children. The school gets to make a positive connection with a family in the neighborhood, and see the students in the class in a different light. The community benefits from students having knowledge about feelings and others' feelings."

ROE Instructor, Duncan

"This class was entirely made up of First Nation children. They were wonderful! The teacher worked amazingly hard with these children to help them understand and follow through with classroom appropriate behaviour. She was also constantly teaching the principles of the ROE program during her day. Therefore the students were absolutely ready to involve themselves in each and every lesson. They were very thoughtful during discussions and especially caring and observant when the baby was present. There were many challenging behaviour difficulties in this class (fetal alcohol syndrome and other special needs); I was amazed at how well the teacher created community with these children and therefore experienced a wonderful response from the students in the ROE classroom. There was an impact on the students on how they treated one another and on how they played on the play ground, as well as how much more aware they were of the diverse and special needs of a baby. I think if the program continues at this school, it will have a wonderful impact on the first Nations community."