



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy 2009 Feedback Report Greater Seattle Area, WA

"I think ROE can teach the world many things. If everyone could experience a Roots of Empathy class, the world would become much more peaceful. I think babies can help you understand many things. If I could, I would make sure every person could take this program."

Grade 5 Student, Seattle

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



Seattle Roots of Empathy Feedback 2008-09

This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout Seattle 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 behaviors 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 prosocial behaviors such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Finding #1: Increase in Empathy

- 93% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic (7% were not sure).
- 78% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view (21% were not sure).
- 75% 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.) (25% were not sure).

Goal #2: Develop Emotional Literacy

Why is this important?

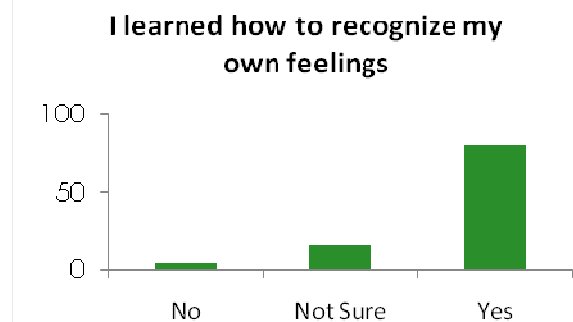
- Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL) includes developing the skills to recognize, express, and manage our feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate our emotions.
- Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological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

- 92% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings (7% were not sure).
- 93% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel (7% were not sure).
- 86% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words (14% were not sure).

89% of students agreed that they learned how to understand how other people feel.

91% of students agreed that they learned that everybody has feelings.



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, 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

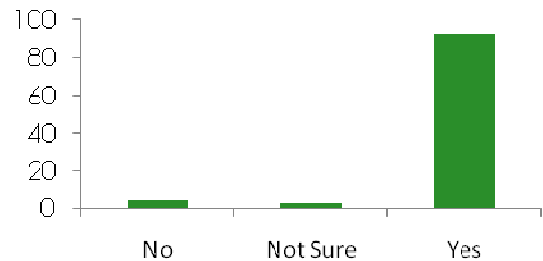
- 78% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates (14% were not sure).
- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of ROE, students showed more pro-social behaviour (e.g. sharing, helping, cooperating) by the end of the school year.

92% agreed that they learned it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied (3% were not sure).

85% of students agreed that they feel sad or upset when they see someone being picked on or treated meanly (8% 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 (5% 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?

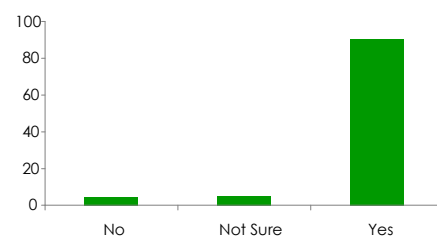
- Providing information about safe parenting can effectively increase parenting knowledge, increase an individual's confidence in their ability to parent, as well as prevent negative outcomes such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Finding #4: Improved Knowledge of Human Development, Learning and Safety

93% learned that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she could harm the baby (1% were not sure).

98% 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



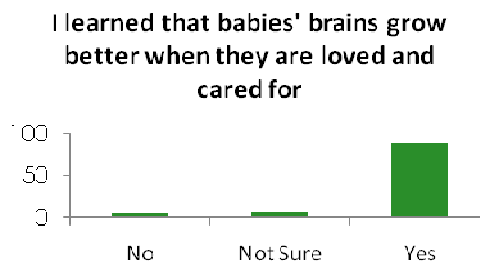
Goal #5: To Prepare Students for Responsible Citizenship and Responsive Parenting

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

95% of students agreed that they learned that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work (2% were not sure).



Additional Results

Curriculum Expectations – 79% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that ROE supports the school's curriculum.

Program Enjoyment – 85% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they would like to have ROE again next year.

Comments from Students, Teachers and Instructors in Greater Seattle Area

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

Grade 5 Student

ROE can teach the world that babies are like adults and kids. This program makes people realize that if you know it's not ok to do something to a baby, then why do it to adults and kids?

Grade 5 Student

ROE can teach the world to be kind and caring

Grade 5 Student

It makes you think about others before you act mean or angry at them.

Grade 4 Student

ROE can teach the world to care about other people, not just yourself.

Grade 5 Student

How to understand other people's feelings. How to keep a baby safe.

Grade 5 Student

That everyone has feelings and to treat others how you want to be treated.

Grade 5 Student

ROE can teach people how to care for others while respecting their feelings. It can help many people learn to safely and confidently care for a baby, and with ROE I feel good about turning into an adult and caring for a baby.

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

Grade 5-6 Teacher, Highline School District

I see my students interacting more positively within their families and with their younger siblings. They are very caring and supportive of each other and are the first to volunteer within our school community to support our kinder and 1st grade students when they need help.

Grade 5 Teacher, Seattle Public Schools District

Students are more curious, gentle, and understanding of child development and physical growth. Students are able to relate to differences and changes that people have. Students will be able to transfer empathy in the classroom and community for years to come.

ROE Instructor, Seattle Public Schools District

The students seem to open up and feel comfortable talking about sensitive issues or highly emotional issues for their age. I think the teacher has appreciated the program as both a social-emotional learning and a foundation for branching writing and reflective projects. The students are learning about emotions, that it is okay to talk about emotions and that it is actually beneficial to talk about emotions. In addition, the students learned a lot about the care of infants and young children and how caring for them can impact or alter one's life.

ROE Instructor, Private School in Seattle

It was an absolute pleasure to watch as the various layers of this program unfolded throughout the year. As the children gained more trust in our space and the program, they began to open themselves up in the group in ways I had not anticipated. It seemed that even the quietest or most 'intrusive' personalities exposed an energetically empathetic side when given the opportunity to speak in a non-judgmental space about feelings. Sometimes it was happy and oftentimes not so happy, but they felt safe sharing. The greatest joy, however, was the impact that our infant had on the students. They grew such a deep and caring love for the baby, every one of them. It was beautiful to see them interact and it seemed as if Gabriel held the magic of the whole program in his tiny little body without even knowing it. By the time the program was finished, it felt as though they were beginning to understand that everyone was once a Gabriel, and everyone deserves to be loved.

ROE Instructor, Private School in Seattle

I believe that the program gave the students the language and permission to explore their feelings. The program also gave them the safe space necessary for children to feel comfortable sharing their feelings. This allowed the students the opportunity to get to know each other better and see their classmates in a different light. The children also talked a lot about the responsibilities of taking care of a baby - reflecting on what serious business it really is! I know that having the Roots of Empathy program at this school has really made the school stand out.

ROE Parent, Richland School District

I think the ROE program will have a lasting impact on the children by having fostered a safe environment for the children to witness bonding, honesty, love, and stories...all while learning to care and empathize with this tender baby August. A very powerful combination when children at this age are tender and observant themselves.