



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy
2010 Feedback Report
British Columbia

"We don't have to hurt other people, just because we're mad or sad, or because we want power, and if we just listen more to each other we don't have to have wars or hurt or even kill one another. I think if the whole world was taught Roots of Empathy we could all get along, and have fun. I wish everyone would get along and have peace."

- Grade 4 Student, Burnaby

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



British Columbia Feedback Summary Report: 2009-2010

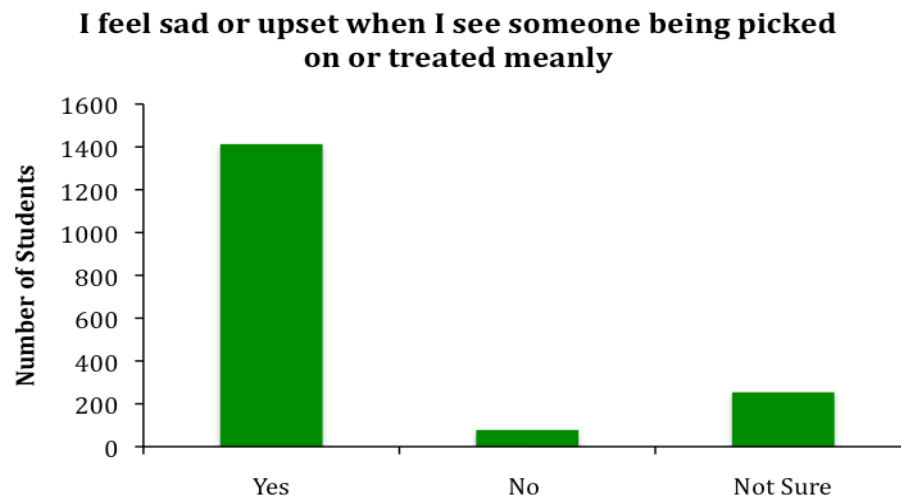
This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout British Columbia for the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. Unlike most school experiences, where students are asked to demonstrate what they know, Roots of Empathy invites metacognition. More specifically, students gained experience reflecting on what they learned in connection to the main goals of Roots of Empathy.

Goal #1: To Foster the Development of Empathy

The ability to take the perspective of another person (cognitive aspect of empathy) plays a key 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 of personality traits due to its positive association with prosocial behaviours such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Feedback Results: Students

- 81% of students reported feeling sad or upset when seeing someone being picked on or treated meanly



Feedback Results: Teachers

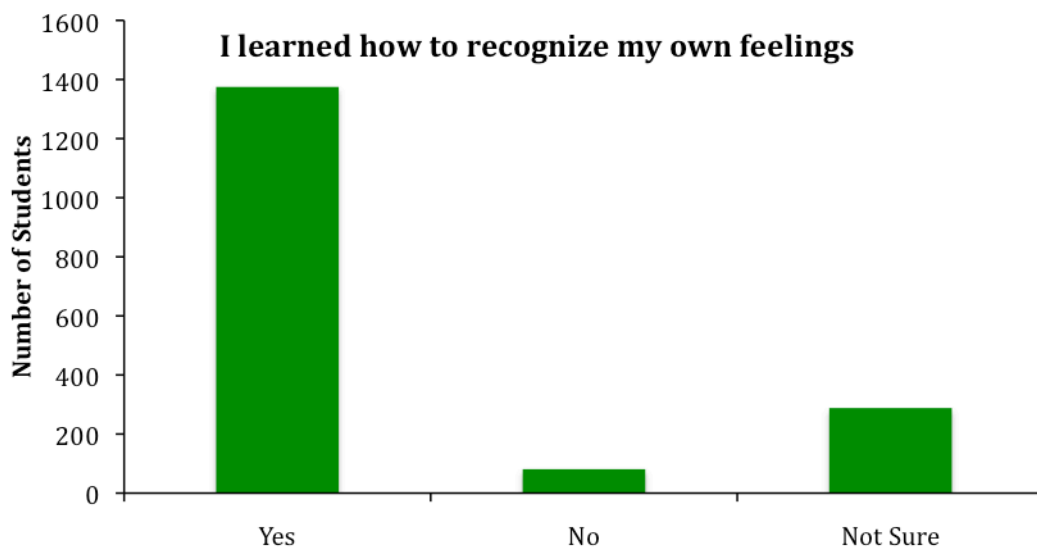
- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic
- 87% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view

Goal #2: To Develop Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL), includes developing the skills to recognize, manage, and express feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate emotions. Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological disorders, including anxiety and depression. Research also demonstrates that children with good SEL skills have better attitudes towards themselves and others, show more prosocial behaviours, and exhibit less aggression.

Feedback Results: Students

- 79% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 89% of students reported understanding how other people feel
- 95% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings
- 93% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel
- 89% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

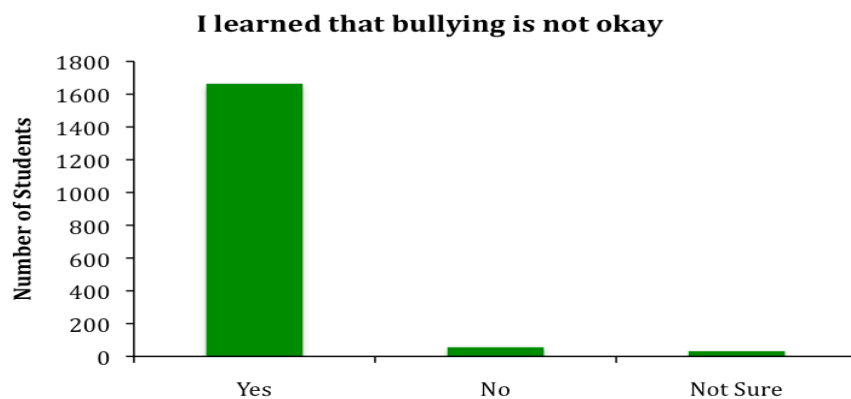
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

The presence of prosocial behaviours 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 increase an individual's resilience and protect against negative and stressful experiences. Prosocial 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.

Feedback Results: Students

- 94% of students reported learning that it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied
- 95% of students reported learning that bullying is not okay
- 89% of students reported learning that it is not okay to hurt someone's feelings just because they're feeling angry, sad, or scared



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 72% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates
- 83% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students showed more prosocial behaviour (e.g. sharing, helping, cooperating) by the end of the school year
- 80% of teachers strongly agreed or 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...)

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

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, and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Feedback Results: Students

- 95% of students reported learning that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she can harm her baby
- 97% of students reported learning that it is dangerous to shake a baby

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

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.

Feedback Results: Students

- 87% of students reported learning babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for
- 92% of students reported learning that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work

Additional Findings:

Curriculum Expectations

- 98% of teachers feel that the ROE program supports the school's curriculum

Program Enjoyment

- 80% of students reported thinking that other children would like to have ROE in their class
- 87% of teachers would like to have ROE in their class next year (11% were not sure)

When asked, “What can ROE teach the world?” students reported:

“ROE can teach the world to cooperate more often than create conflict.”
– *Grade 6, Vancouver*

“I learned to be comfortable and stand up for myself when I’m bullied. This program helped me a lot. Please keep it forever.”
– *Grade 4, Delta*

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world that it is not fair to bully or harass anybody no matter what culture or colour.”
– *Grade 6, Smithers*

“I learned soooooo so much from Roots of Empathy and something I would like the world to know is that you should always be kind to anyone even if they’re mean or nice!”
– *Grade 3, Coquitlam*

When asked about the impact of the program, teachers offered comments such as:

“I have participated in ROE for five years. During this time, I have seen the benefit that the ROE program has had on the children as they advance through the grades. I have been able to watch the children as they mature and grow. I believe that the children demonstrate more empathy for their peers and the younger children in the school as a result of ROE. My ROE Instructor is one of the most dedicated and compassionate people that I have had the privilege of working with. She is an excellent role model for the children.”
– *Grade 1/2, Burnaby*

“I feel some of the impacts of the ROE program on the students is their learning of acceptance of others, their learning that it is ok to talk about feelings in a group situation, their increased understanding of social thinking, their learning that everybody has feelings and we all need to express and be proactive about them. The biggest impact on the students is learning about the need to think of others, which for some, has been quite a learning curve, especially at the egocentric Grade 1 age level. Keep up the great work! I feel that the need for empathy in our world is more pressing than ever!”
– *Grade 1, Cumberland*

“Talking about their feelings, others feelings is not something we naturally build into our school curriculum. But it is very needed because these are areas not talked about at home anymore. It is important so students get a clear message as a whole class. Therefore there are no misconceptions or misunderstandings amongst peers.”
– *Grade 5, Castlegar*

When asked about the impact of the program, Instructors offered comments such as:

"The children became more aware of bullying in their classroom and in the schoolyard. They shared with me how they would solve bullying scenarios in the school and community playgrounds. They also expressed how they include everyone in their playgroups. They have indicated many times that we all belong, no matter how different we may look, act, or speak. It was a pleasure to deliver ROE. "

- Kindergarten, Okanagan Falls

"I believe the children are more aware of each other's feelings and the impact their behaviour (both positive and negative) has on others. The ROE classes gave the students an opportunity to express their own feelings and tell their stories, which opened the door to building new friendships with their classmates. The school benefits by having students who are able to stand up to bullies and defend others who are victims of bullying. The program helps the school become more connected to the community."

- Grade 2, 150 Mile House

"I feel the program has a positive impact on the children and the community. Roots of Empathy supports positive values and a feeling of belonging to all involved in the program. Research validates the need to teach and encourage Empathy to promote healthy, happy and non-violent communities."

- Grade 7, Burns Lake