



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2010 Feedback Report

New Brunswick

“ROE teaches 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, Rexton

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



New Brunswick Feedback Summary Report: 2009-2010

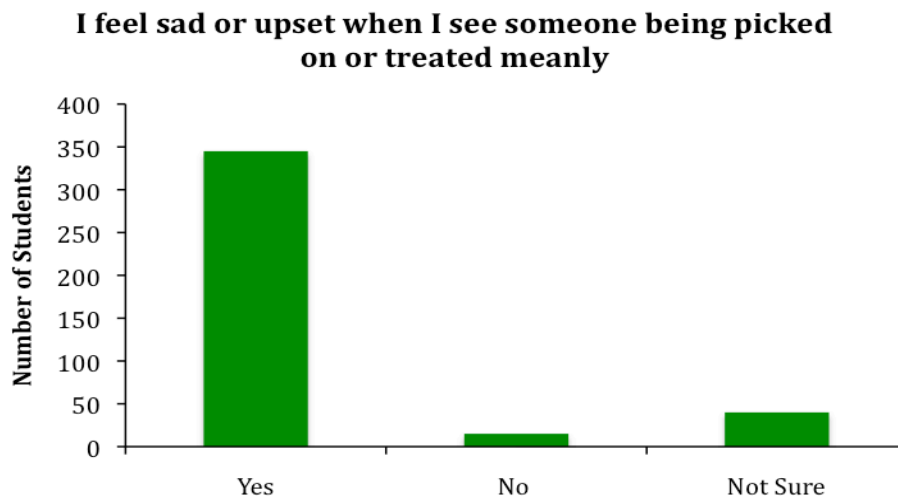
This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout New Brunswick for the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. Unlike most school experiences, 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

- 84% of students reported feeling sad or upset when seeing someone being picked on or treated meanly



Feedback Results: Teachers

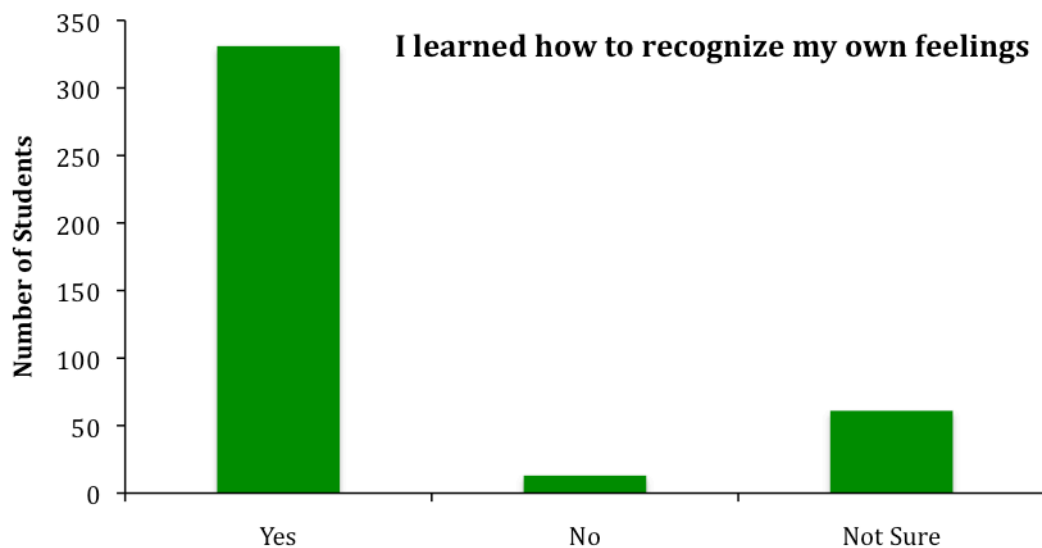
- 89% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic
- 92% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view

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

- 81% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 86% of students reported understanding how other people feel
- 93% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 95% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings
- 95% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel
- 97% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

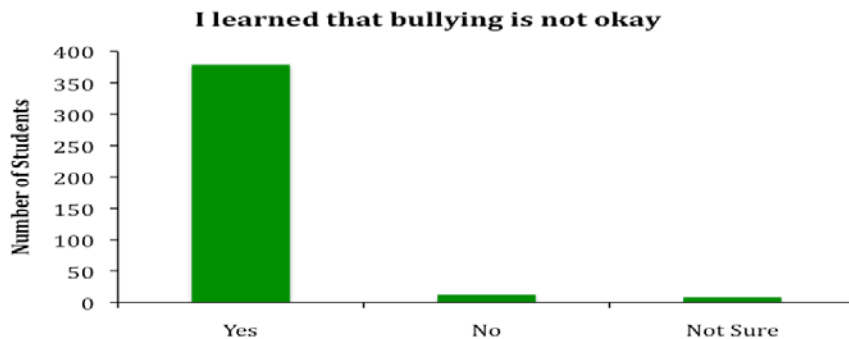
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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

- 92% of students reported learning that it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied
- 92% of students reported learning that bullying is not okay
- 86% 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

- 76% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates
- 81% 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
- 84% 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
- 95% 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

- 82% 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

- 97% of teachers feel that the ROE program supports the school's curriculum

Program Enjoyment

- 82% of students reported thinking that other children would like to have ROE in their class
- 89% 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:

“How to be kind and never mean.”
– Grade 3, *Rothsay*

“ROE can teach the world about how to use your feelings nicely and how to care for everyone.”
– Grade 5, *Fredericton*

“To care for everybody even if they are different.”
– Grade 4, *St. Stephen*

“To stop bullying and not to hurt other people! Not to be afraid to tell your feelings! To help each other! To be a friend! To love and care! To appreciate each other! To give! To have fun!”
– Grade 3, *Riverside*

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

“ROE is a program in which we see immediate results. In our classroom, we developed a saying to help resolve conflict and also to encourage students to stop and think before acting. We would simply say, “Would you do that to Baby Christian?” The students could never imagine kicking or saying mean words to Baby Christian. We used this to illustrate that we should never treat anyone with disrespect. This [program] helped kids see their fellow students as unique individuals. Also, I believe that there is a life-long impact on these students who have been part of the ROE program. I trust that the lessons they have learned will manifest in their lives as they grow. I am proud that our district is involved with ROE.”
– Grade 3, *Sussex*

“ROE raises awareness and 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. The children also learn a great deal about a baby's development and care. These are definitely life-long skills. Of course the favorite part for everyone will always be their baby's monthly visits. I have been fortunate in that I have been able to participate in Roots of Empathy since it was first introduced to our district. Over the years I have correlated the program with the *You and Your World* curriculum, as well as, with the Math and Language Arts curriculums. Each year I see new ways to incorporate the themes into my teaching. I can't imagine my year without this valuable program.”
– Grade 2, *Hampton*

“A lot of the families in our area now have only one child. Most of these children grow up with only adults around. The majority of these children do not understand empathy, or they do not think of someone else's point of view. Empathy is a hard concept to teach children, without a baby who is vulnerable to its surroundings. Children need to learn to be empathic towards others, so that we may become a caring community as a whole. A wonderful program!”
– Kindergarten, *Miramichi*

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

“The Kindergarten children have received this program now for three years. I have noticed that I have a lasting connection with these children. We still acknowledge each other in the hall; the children still chat with me about important things long after I taught the program in their class. Many parents have spoken to me about how much they value this program being delivered at our school.”

– *Grade 3, Rothesay*

“Roots of Empathy is a wonderful program to be a part of. It allows children to express their feelings in a comfortable setting with no judgment. Everyone is not judged and everyone is encouraged to express their feelings. I can see how this program is having a positive impact in the classroom.”

– *Grade 2, Napan*

“I feel that the program has a profound impact on offering children the opportunity to learn about their own feelings through the lessons taught by an infant. By observing the interaction between the mom and baby, the kids were able to get a first-hand look at positive connections and relationships between parents and children. It also gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own relationships and their own feelings — not that they necessarily realized it! This year I had the unique opportunity of being pregnant throughout the school year which gave the children in my classroom even more insight into relationships and feelings from the perspective of a mom-to-be! They had great questions about my own feelings about becoming a mom and about my feelings in general. I feel that it was a really positive experience for everyone involved.”

– *Kindergarten, Canterbury*