



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2010 Feedback Report

Newfoundland and Labrador

“Roots of empathy can change the world because then, people would be kinder and know how to treat each other. Then you wouldn't hear on the news and on talk shows about people fighting and getting hurt.”

- Grade 4 Student, Whitbourne

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



Newfoundland and Labrador Feedback Summary Report: 2009-2010

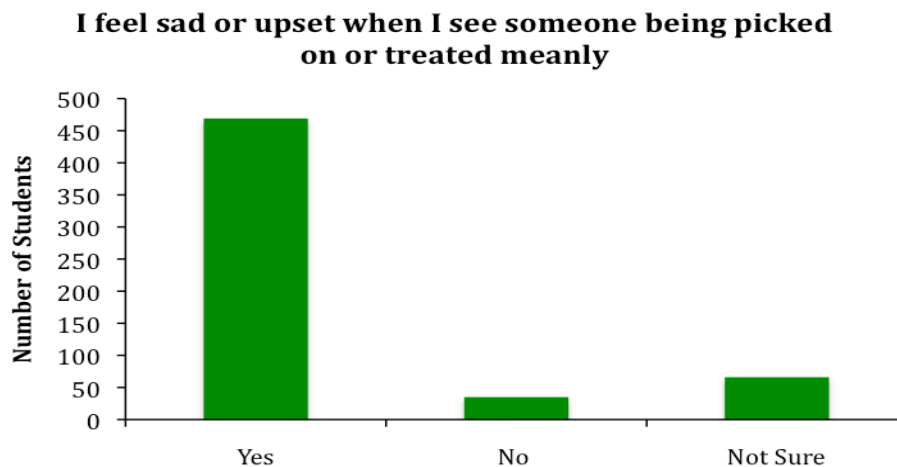
This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. Unlike most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

- 82% of students reported feeling sad or upset when seeing someone being picked on or treated meanly



Feedback Results: Teachers

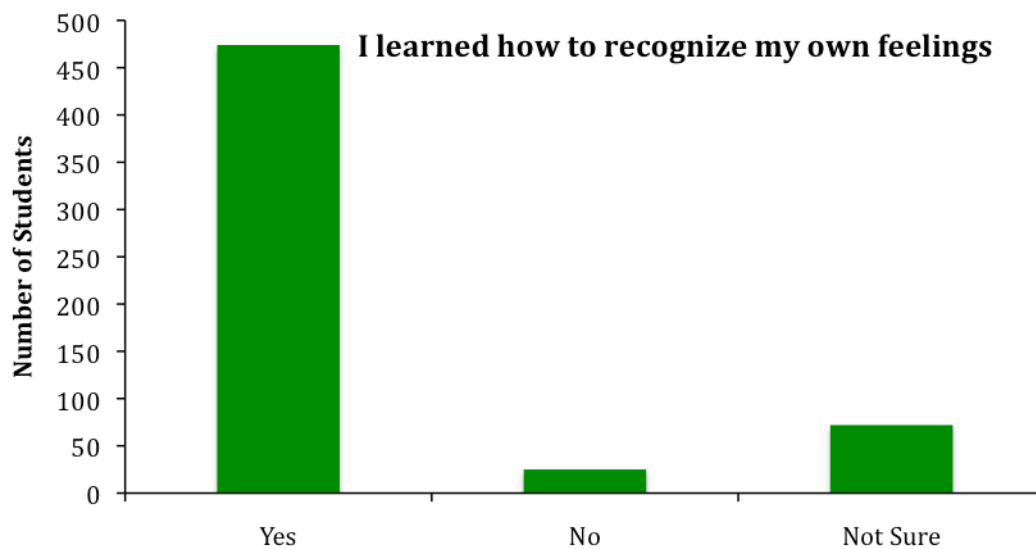
- 90% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic
- 95% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view

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

- 83% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 91% of students reported understanding how other people feel
- 97% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 100% 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
- 93% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

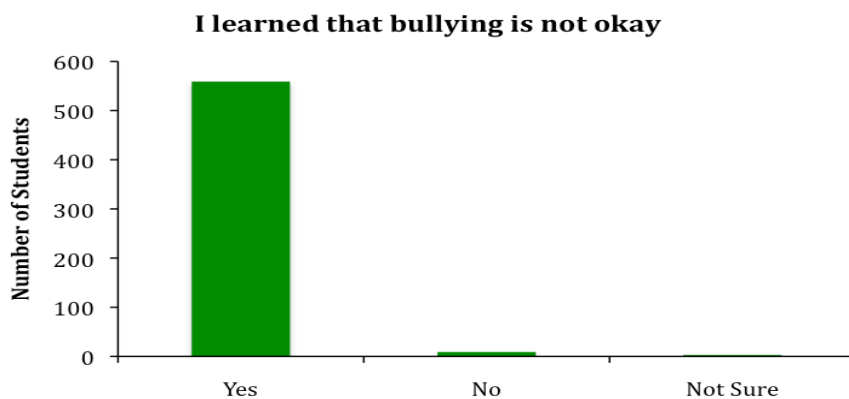
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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

- 95% of students reported learning that it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied
- 98% of students reported learning that bullying is not okay
- 92% 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

- 85% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates
- 88% 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
- 90% 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

- 97% of students reported learning that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she can harm her baby
- 99% 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

- 92% of students reported learning babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for
- 96% 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

- 93% of students reported thinking that other children would like to have ROE in their class
- 98% of teachers would like to have ROE in their class next year (2% were not sure)

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

"ROE can teach the world because the ROE program teaches us about our feelings and other peoples' feelings and it is important to respect and not hurt peoples' feelings."

-Grade 8, Port Aux Basques

"Everyone is different but everyone belongs."

-Grade 3, St. John's

"Roots of empathy can teach the world how to care for others, loving, sharing, treat a baby nicely, and most importantly to not bully others!"

-Grade 4, Torbay

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to love and care for each other, and teach that other people have feelings and also need care and love."

-Grade 5, St. John's

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

"ROE creates a culture where everyone is more cognizant of how their actions impact other members of society. It creates a better understanding of how others may be feeling and it provides examples of coping mechanisms in stressful situations. All of these things help ensure a better society for all. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of ROE. It helped me get to know my students better and provided an opportunity to see how they interact and show such love for a little baby."

-Grade 4, Torbay

"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. For example, one quote that the children use a lot is, "It's not nice to say that something is 'easy' because just because you know how to do something it doesn't mean that everyone does". They have learned that people reach different developmental stages and different times. I do not hear that something is easy very often anymore and if I do, there is always someone to make the correction that it's not nice to say that. The children have also 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, which show that the children see the importance of treating others, as they would like to be treated. I learned some new information along with the students and it was something that we all looked forward to. The students were so well behaved when [the baby] was there with Mom and they always had great questions to ask. Our Instructor was wonderful as well! She was right at the kids' level, which the children enjoyed. They would be very attentive for her when she was explaining something or telling a story. I would definitely take part in the program again if I had the chance!"

-Grade 2, Port Au Port

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

"I delivered ROE in a classroom with a large number of high-needs learners. Classroom teacher, two aides and myself were excited to hear the students thinking out loud about how to be a friend to others, and how to keep self safe. We were especially thrilled to observe the gentle way one boy used to get the baby's attention and to interact with her in a gentle, reciprocal way. I love this program. It is the best way to teach respect for self and others [and I] really believe this program is very effective in reducing bullying and nurturing a caring community."

-Grade 8, Nain

"The children in both of my Grade 2 classes have opened up and shared their feelings and surprisingly all have listened respectfully to their classmates and encouraged each other. I was expecting to deal with some teasing, taunting, and such but found each student eager to hear from their peers and supportive as the need arose."

-Grade 2, Mount Pearl

"The children are enjoying the program. They look forward to [baby] visits. The children demonstrate genuine acts of kindness towards me and I am told by the teacher that she is seeing the impact of the program on the children. The school initially only had the one program, but then scrambled to add on a second program once seeing/hearing about the impact with the first group."

-Grade 5, Carbonear