



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy
2010 Feedback Report
Ontario

"I think Roots of Empathy could teach the world that babies are precious."

- Grade 3 Student, M'Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world to take care of one another. Also it can teach people to stop bullying and it can change a school yard."

- Grade 5 Student, Niagara on the Lake

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



Ontario Feedback Summary Report: 2009-2010

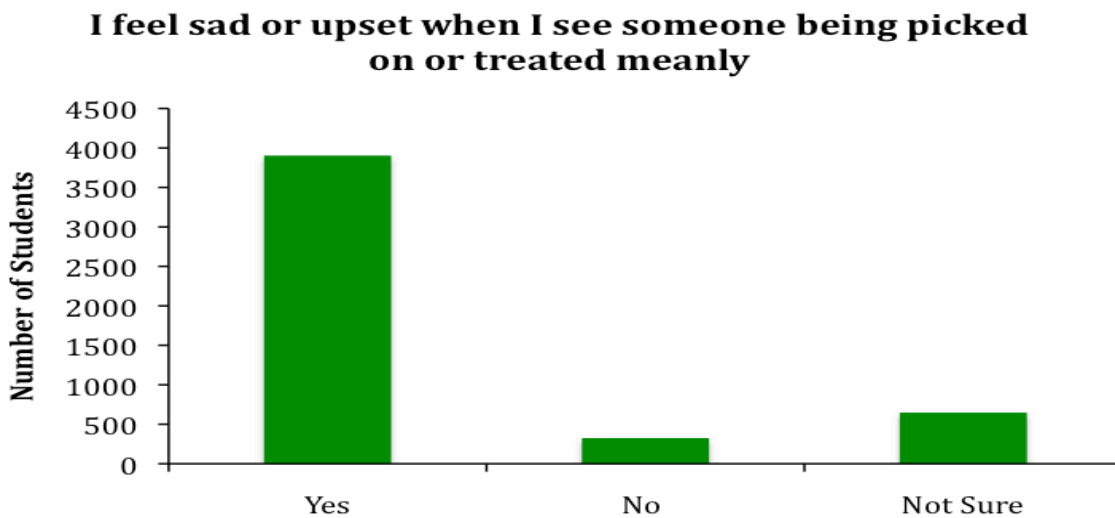
This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout Ontario for the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. Unlike most school experiences, where students are asked to demonstrate what they know, Roots of Empathy invites metacognition. More specifically, students were invited to gain experience in 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 behaviors 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 behaviors such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Feedback Results: Students

- 80% of students reported feeling sad or upset when seeing someone being picked on or treated meanly



Feedback Results: Teachers

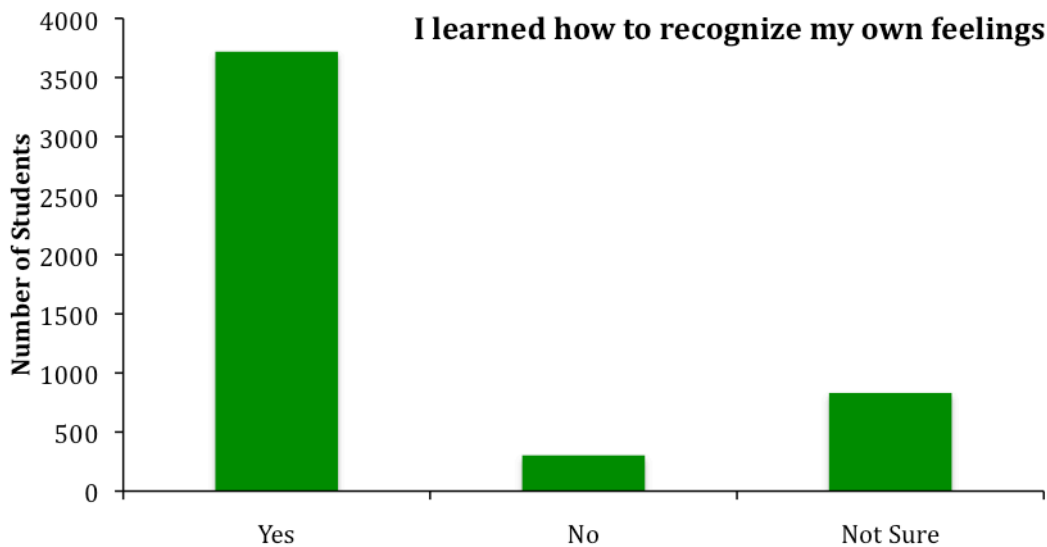
- 87% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic.
- 86% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view.

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 about themselves and others, show more prosocial behaviours, and exhibit less aggression.

Feedback Results: Students

- 77% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 88% of students reported understanding how other people feel
- 94% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 89% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings
- 91% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel
- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

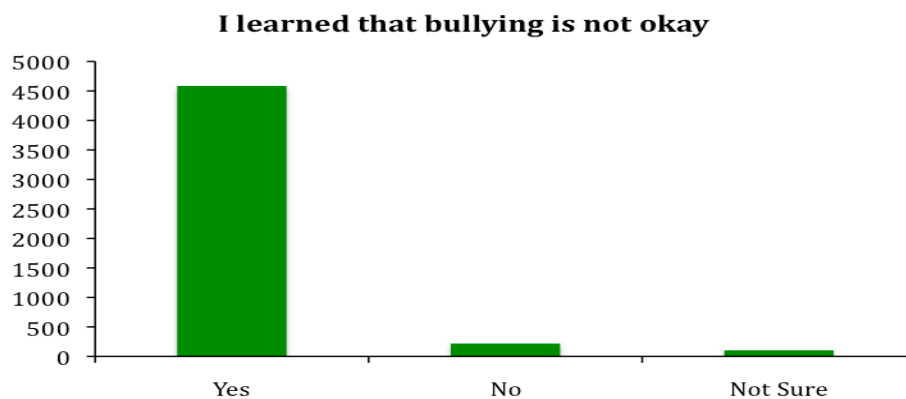
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Pro-social Behaviours

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 increases an individual's resilience as well as protects 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
- 94% 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 I'm feeling angry, sad, or scared



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 73% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates
- 82% of teachers strongly agreed or 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
- 83% 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

- 85% of students reported learning babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for
- 90% of students reported learning that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work

Additional Findings:

Curriculum Expectations

- 88% of teachers feel that the ROE program supports the school's curriculum

Program Enjoyment

- 81% of students reported thinking that other children would like to have ROE in their class
- 83% of teachers would like to have ROE in their class next year (10% were not sure)

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

“Roots of Empathy can teach that it is not ok to be mean because that would cause a big world of meanies and that’s not OK.”

- *Grade 4, Ancaster*

“ROE can teach the world that bullying is not ok because it can hurt other people's feelings”

- *Grade 5, Toronto*

“ROE can teach you to never hurt a baby and to never drink and smoke when you’re pregnant or drink and smoke around the baby.”

- *Grade 3, Thunder Bay*

“For people can see the right side and think about what’s going on. And see what to do when you don’t know what to do and feel the way they want to feel. Thank you :P”

- *Grade 4, Little Current*

“Racine de l'empathie peut apprendre au monde de vivre en paix et harmonie.”(Roots of Empathy can teach the world to live in peace and harmony)

- *Grade 4/5 Student, Toronto*

“Le programme de racines de l'Empathie peut apprendre au monde que c'est bien de ressentir ce que les autres ressentent. Racines de l'Empathie peut aussi te faire apprendre pourquoi il est mal de faire de l'intimidation. Mais, j'ai aussi appris beaucoup sur les bébés comme si tu le secoues, il peut avoir des problèmes quand il grandira comme des problèmes mentaux et sa peut même l'apporter à la mort.”

(The Roots of Empathy program can teach the world that it is good to feel what others are feeling. Roots of Empathy can also teach you why it is wrong to bully. But, I also learned a lot about babies like if you shake them, they can have problems when they grow up, like mental problems and it can even cause them to die)

- *Grade 4, North Bay*

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

“ROE helps students to be more empathetic, to see the viewpoints of others and to make connections to real world experiences. ROE also helps to bring the concept of family in to the school while, also, building bridges to community members. A great philosophy...and a great program!” - *Grade 8, Toronto*

“Built a positive community in my room - Needs to be available in more classrooms.”

- *Grade 5, St. Thomas*

“A long-term, trickle down effect that will encourage positive and inclusive attitudes across the spectrum.”

- *Grade 3, Hamilton*

“The children are showing more awareness of their own feelings and the feelings of others. They were always excited and engaged as they observed and shared happy moments with the baby.” - *Grade 1/2, Toronto*

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

"I think the children became more aware of their own feelings and were starting to then realise how their behaviour can affect others feelings. Some children really picked up about being safe and loving when caring for a baby and how important all of this is to a baby's emotions. Some of the children looked at children within their extended family and were able to reflect on what we were learning in the ROE class with this baby. Children seemed to react very positively when they saw either myself or the parent and baby within their life outside school. Some of the stories really allowed the refugee children within my class open up about their own personal experiences."

- Grade 1 Instructor, Thunder Bay

"I believe the children not only learn about infant development and safety and parenting but learn to be more inclusive, respectful and tolerant of others. This spills over into the community. I feel confident that they have an increased awareness of their temperament, their needs and their own feelings. This program provides a win-win situation for the Students, the baby and parents, the teacher the school and the community to which they belong."

- Grade 2/3 Instructor, Kingston

"I believe that the ROE program is an excellent way to reach so many children. Empathy is the basis for it all."

- Special Education Instructor, Mindemoya, Manitoulin Island