



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2010 Feedback Report

Greater Seattle Area, WA

“Roots of empathy can teach the world that it’s not okay to hurt someone. Everyone is special and they should be treated kindly. Just because someone is doing something bad doesn't mean you have to do the same thing just to act cool. Someone can be different then you... Don't judge them.”

- Grade 4/5 Student, Lake Forest Park

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



Seattle Feedback Summary Report: 2009-2010

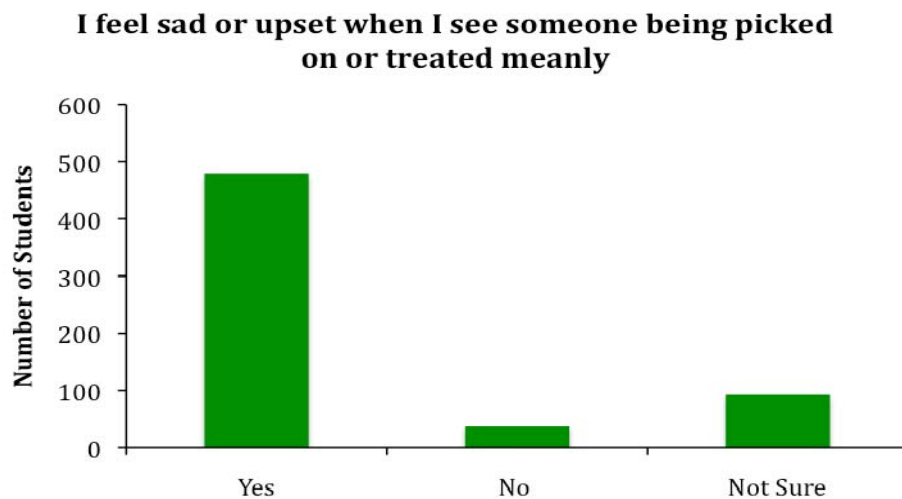
This report is a summary of the feedback data collected from students and teachers throughout the greater Seattle area, for the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. Unlike most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

- 78% of students reported feeling sad or upset when seeing someone being picked on or treated meanly



Feedback Results: Teachers

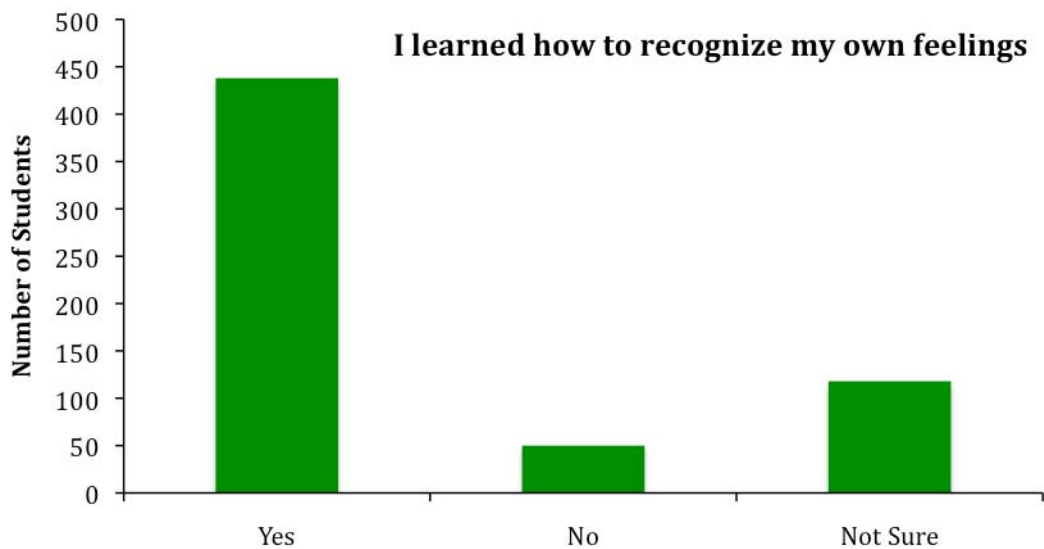
- 79% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic
- 69% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view (31% were not sure)

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

- 71% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 84% of students reported understanding how other people feel
- 90% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 90% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings
- 83% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have an increased understanding of how others feel
- 90% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

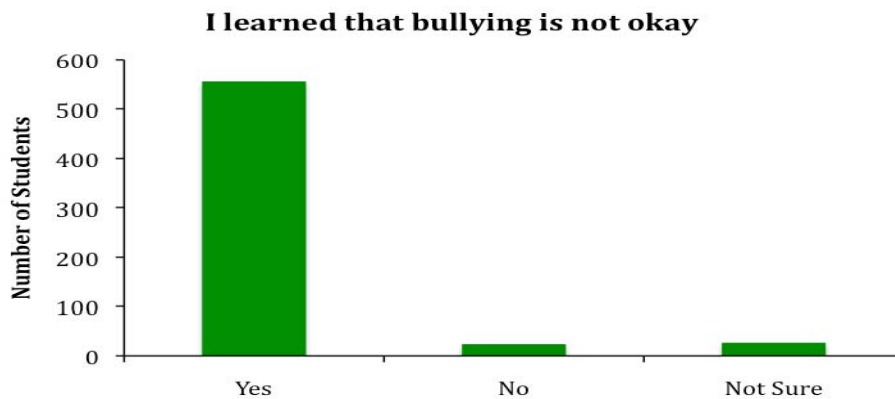
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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

- 90% of students reported learning that it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied
- 90% of students reported learning that bullying is not okay
- 84% 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

- 69% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more supportive in resolving conflicts involving classmates (24% were not sure)
- 79% 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
- 72% 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

- 92% 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

- 84% of students reported learning babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for
- 88% of students reported learning that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work

Additional Findings:

Curriculum Expectations

- 69% of teachers feel that the ROE program supports the school's curriculum (21% were not sure)

Program Enjoyment

- 75% of students reported thinking that other children would like to have ROE in their class (19% were not sure)
- 76% of teachers would like to have ROE in their class next year (14% were not sure)

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

"That it is nice to hug people if they are sad."
-Grade 3, Seattle

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world that we are all equal we all have feelings and we should stand up or help a friend if their being picked on even if you don't know that person they should also stand up for themself."
-Grade 4, Seattle

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world to be compassionate and friendly and nice to others. I know that everybody in my class loved Roots of Empathy and when my teacher asked what would you think if somebody bullied our ROE baby everybody was very ticked off. ROE would help people understand that other people have feelings. We're all different but we're all the same. If everybody could experience Roots of Empathy the world would be a better place."
-Grade 5, Kent

"Non-Haiku format: I think that ROE teaches other people how to respect and value each others' opinions and feelings. Haiku format: Feelings can be hurt. But ROE can fix that. Teaching how to love."
-Grade 5, Seattle

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

"My students are much more understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses after having ROE in our classroom this year. They encourage each other and are enthusiastic about making everyone a part of the learning process whether it be math or wall ball."
-Grade 5, Kent

"The children enjoyed the baby so much and learned to respect others' feelings. They are more responsive to the children in the room when they get hurt on the playground."
-Grade 3, Bellevue

"In some ways, the power of the program will come later, as the students mature. I'd like to think they would reflect on their experiences this year for many years. Roots of Empathy was great for the community. It drew a great deal of interest from other children and parents in the school. "Who's baby Max?" They all wanted to know. I do know the students talk about [ROE] with their parents at home. The program is aptly named - I'm curious to see how our roots will grow."
-Grade 5, Seattle

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

"...I truly believe the impact on the children in the classroom is big, they are learning to better understand other people in that they don't all think the same or feel the same about many different aspects of life. Some children live in their own little worlds where they don't get to experience many other cultures, and with the Roots of Empathy program they come to realize that there are other things going on outside their little world and it is not only about them and how they think and feel, but about everyone and how they think and feel also. It's ok to feel and think differently than the person next to you, no one is right or wrong."

-Grade 3, Seattle

"I think that the delivery of this program gives the children a better understanding of how much work is involved in caring for a baby. Most important, I feel the children learn to become more empathetic, and for some children, it seems to be their first learning about empathy. I have also had some special experiences when children have shared some very intimate emotions. Often, the teacher will say that the child has not shared this before. This sharing has resulted in more empathy towards that particular child by the classroom teacher, by me, and by the students."

-Grade 5, Seattle

"The children began to resolve their own conflicts by thinking about how their actions affected others around them (the teacher was also a big asset in this regard as she picked up the ROE teachings in her everyday methods, reminding the children to identify with their own feelings and the feelings of those around them). The teacher indicated to me that she saw changes in the students. The children, as the program continued, became a lot more comfortable in expressing their feelings. In the beginning they may giggle at another student's answer but 'the giggles' have stopped."

-Grade 4, Seattle