



News From the Green Blanket

H1N1 and ROE

With flu season upon us, Roots of Empathy (ROE) understands that many parents and educators have concerns about the H1N1 virus. We have recently put together guidelines about the virus, which have been shared with ROE Mentors and Instructors. The

underlying principle is that ROE Instructors will comply with the individual policies and procedures at all schools and school boards and will always hold the baby's and children's safety as paramount. ❧

Government Cutbacks Affect Hundreds of ROE Programs in BC

Roots of Empathy will lose more than half of its programs in BC this year—affecting more than 8,000 children in the province—following the Government of British Columbia's decision to eliminate ROE's 2009-10 funding. In total, ROE will run just over 300 programs in BC, a huge loss compared to last year's 671 programs.

In September, the BC government announced a \$2.8 billion deficit, citing the global financial crisis and other factors, and since then numerous school boards and non-profit programs have received notice their funding will be cut, including many programs for children.

“For a while, there was a real possibility that our program wouldn't run at all this year in BC given the sudden change to our fiscal circumstances,” says Mary Gordon, ROE Founder/President. “However, because our BC government contract

extends into the fall, and because we have decided to go ahead under a reduced program scenario—with no new programs, no travel or training, no community outreach, and a reduced mentoring model for this year—we have been able to preserve the program for some children.”

Although ROE's “younger sibling”, Seeds of Empathy, did receive some government support for 2009-10 in BC, its funding has not been renewed at the same level as previous years, causing a loss of seven programs.

“I am heartbroken about the cuts, but we remain grateful for the Government of British Columbia's incredible longstanding support. We are hopeful funding can be restored when finances stabilize in the province,” says Gordon. “Our challenge now becomes raising sustainable funding for next year.” ❧

How YOU Can Help

Do you have a good story to share about the difference ROE makes to children, ROE volunteer parents, classroom teachers and communities? Or can you sum up how you feel about ROE in a sentence or two? Then we would love to hear from you! Email communications@rootsofempathy.org your story or testimonial as soon as possible. Please include your name and city or community and explain how you have been involved with ROE in the past. We will gather all testimonials and use them as we approach existing and potential funders. Many thanks in advance for your time and assistance.

A Centre of Excellence

This fall, ROE and the Toronto District School Board formed a partnership to open the first ROE Centre of Excellence in the world to demonstrate best practices at every grade level in fidelity with the curriculum and philosophy of the program. The Centre is being piloted in 18 classrooms in six elementary schools, with at least two ROE programs running at each grade level.



Karen Grose, System Superintendent, TDSB, Mary Gordon, Founder/President of ROE and Tracy Hayhurst, Central Co-ordinating Principal, TDSB.

The Centre of Excellence will be used to showcase ROE for international visitors, government representatives, ROE Mentors and Trainers, program funders and media. Additionally, ROE will use the Centre as a model for a planned Virtual Training Institute. ❧

Mitra Zarei and ROE Recognized for Crime Prevention in Alberta

The City of Grande Prairie's Crime Prevention department recognized Key Point Person Mitra Zarei and ROE recently through a 2009 Crime Prevention Award. The department gives ten awards annually to people and programs that are helping to make the city a safer place.

Zarei organizes ROE programs in the city on behalf of host agency Grande Prairie Family & Community Support Services. This year, ROE programs are running in 18 classrooms in Grande Prairie and in 25 across northwest Alberta, benefitting about 1,100 children. Congratulations, Mitra! ❧

New Kindergarten Curriculum

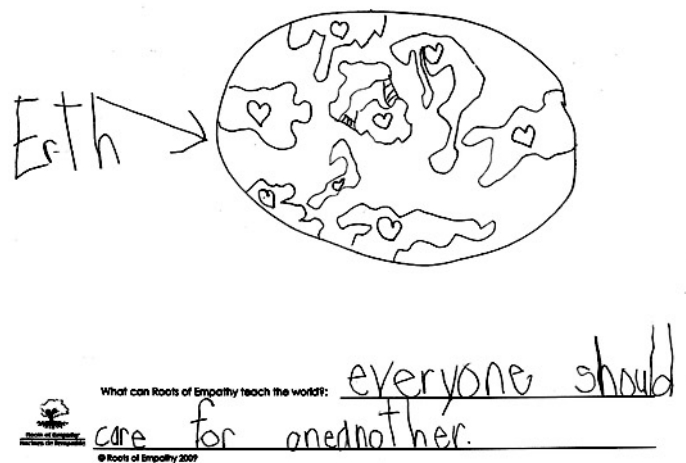


Kindergarten, ROE French class in Toronto, Ontario.

Children in Kindergarten have a new ROE curriculum this year. As a result of Canada-wide consultations with Instructors, Mentors, teachers and children, ROE has revised the program to make it more interactive. The new curriculum gives even greater emphasis to art, drama, music and movement and includes a new song and rhyme CD. As well, it emphasizes the importance of touch, a powerful dimension of sensory learning. The curriculum has been sent to all ROE Instructors working in Kindergarten classrooms, and a French version will be available by next year. ❧

This Just In...

Each year, as part of its ongoing evaluation process, ROE gathers extensive feedback from everyone who participates in the program: Instructors, students, classroom teachers and the parents of our "tiny teachers." To download feedback documents for the 2008-09 program year, [click here](#). ❧



What can ROE teach the world? "Everyone should care for one another" ~Grade One Roots of Empathy Student in Alberta.

Here's to You, Babies

In June 2009, ROE held Baby Celebrations throughout Canada and around the globe, in honour of the ROE infants and parents who generously shared their loving relationships with thousands of children this past year. In the photo below, dozens of proud ROE babies and parents gather in Toronto to celebrate each other. To see more photos from celebrations around the world, [click here](#). ❧



Roots of Empathy babies and parents at the Toronto Baby Celebration, 2009.

Mary Gordon Honoured by Canadian Teachers

In July, the Canadian Teachers' Federation honoured ROE Founder/President Mary Gordon with their prestigious Public Education Advocacy Award. The

annual award is presented to an individual outside the teaching profession who has made major a contribution in support of public education in Canada. ❧

Shine A Light

ROE Champion: John Knight

For John Knight, Chief Executive of the Isle of Man Children's Centre (IOMCC), ROE is an investment in the future. "We have a real commitment to support children and families at an earlier age," he says. "One of our lead politicians has even said Roots of Empathy is his 10-year strategy for early intervention."

Knight first encountered ROE in 2007 when his agency—a charity that manages and delivers programs for children and young people—attended a conference aimed at developing an early years strategy for the Isle of Man. A number of people attending mentioned ROE and thought it should be brought to the island. Knight's organization pursued the idea, and by 2008-09 the program was launched as a three-year pilot, supported by IOMCC and three government departments (by 2010-11, the program will be available in all of the island's 35 elementary schools).

The pilot has been running for one year now, and Knight has already seen results. "We've had entirely positive feedback,"



he says. "The children's connection with the baby has been very significant." He appreciates that ROE's nine themes fit so well with the Isle of Man government's five priority outcomes for children and allow teachers an opportunity to extend the ROE curriculum in the classroom.

This year, IOMCC has secured funding for an independent evaluation of the program, which will be conducted by researchers from Kings College London and the University of British Columbia (which to date has evaluated ROE in Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Knight's goal is to demonstrate in a measurable way that ROE is having an impact so that it can be funded long-term.

His advice to others considering bringing ROE to their schools? "I would encourage them wholeheartedly to do it," he says. "I would say, start evaluating in year one. And involve as many sections of the community and government as possible. That has been one of our greatest successes." ❧

Mary's Message



Often say that our work at ROE is to spread an "empathy virus," but this year we've been dealing with a virus of a different kind. H1N1 has been a serious concern across Canada and around the world, and ROE program delivery staff, working in partnership with schools and school boards, have responded with incredible teamwork and sensitivity.

The same positive action was apparent in British Columbia this year. Since ROE (and hundreds of other charities) saw government funding evaporate overnight, the outpouring of support has been phenomenal. Our partners and supporters on the ground have done a tremendous job in taking on

adversity in a positive and collaborative way. We are so grateful for your support.

At the same time that we are facing challenges, ROE is also experiencing great energy and excitement. We have a number of new board members, and I am delighted to welcome them. Our new Centre of Excellence is showcasing our best practices so we can grow the program for the future. We have started to build our virtual training institute – an offline and online video library that will offer a wealth of support for future Trainers, Mentors and Instructors. And we are working with partners in Nunavut, Seattle, Ireland, Germany and the United Kingdom to enhance and expand our program nationally and internationally. Exciting times indeed! ❧

Mary Gordon is Founder/President of Roots of Empathy.

Why is our newsletter called Green Blanket?

In Roots of Empathy classrooms, children gather around a green blanket where the loving relationship between a parent and baby is the lever for learning. The green blanket is where learning and sharing takes place – and that's what we want this newsletter to be too.

Green Blanket is an update on what's happening with Roots of Empathy. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, or to unsubscribe, please e-mail greenblanket@rootsofempathy.org