



Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy: A Brief Summary of Research

Since 2000, the Roots of Empathy program has been evaluated in both comparative and randomized controlled studies designed to measure changes in the behaviour of participating students. Independent research has been conducted in Australia, the Isle of Man, New Zealand, The Republic of Ireland, Scotland, as well as eight university-based Canadian studies.

key research findings show that Roots of Empathy children perceive a more positive classroom environment by the end of the program (e.g. increased sense of classroom belonging and peer acceptance). Roots of Empathy children also exhibit:

- An increase in pro-social behavior (e.g. sharing, helping and including)
- A decrease in aggression. For example, applied to all the children that will participate in Roots of Empathy, on average it is expected that the program will reduce the number of children fighting by approximately 50%^[1]. This is particularly significant given that children in the comparison classrooms show increases in aggression across the school year
- An increase in social and emotional understanding
- An increase in knowledge of parenting
- An increase in cognitive and emotional empathy

Studies conducted by researchers at the University of British Columbia looked at specific types of aggression (i.e. proactive (bullying), physical, relational and reactive). All of these studies showed a significant decrease in aggression in the program groups.

An accelerated, longitudinal study showed that the beneficial effects of the program were mostly maintained or continued to improve throughout the follow-up years (physical aggression decreased, indirect aggression decreased, and pro-social behaviors increased).

^[1] Santos, R. G., Chartier, M. J., Whalen, J. C., Chateau, D., & Boyd, L. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based violence prevention for children and youth: Cluster randomized field trial of the Roots of Empathy program with replication and three-year follow-up. *Healthcare Quarterly*, 14, 80-91.