



Roots of Empathy  

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Racines de l'empathie

**Roots of Empathy**  
**2014 Annual Program Evaluation Report**  
**British Columbia**

**100% of teachers feel that the Roots of Empathy program supports the school's curriculum**

**“Roots of Empathy could teach the world about bullying and how to prevent it. It could also teach about how to care for any baby. It could teach children to be kind to their friends like the parent being kind to the baby.”**

*– Grade 5 Student, Fort St. John*

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



## British Columbia Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2013-2014

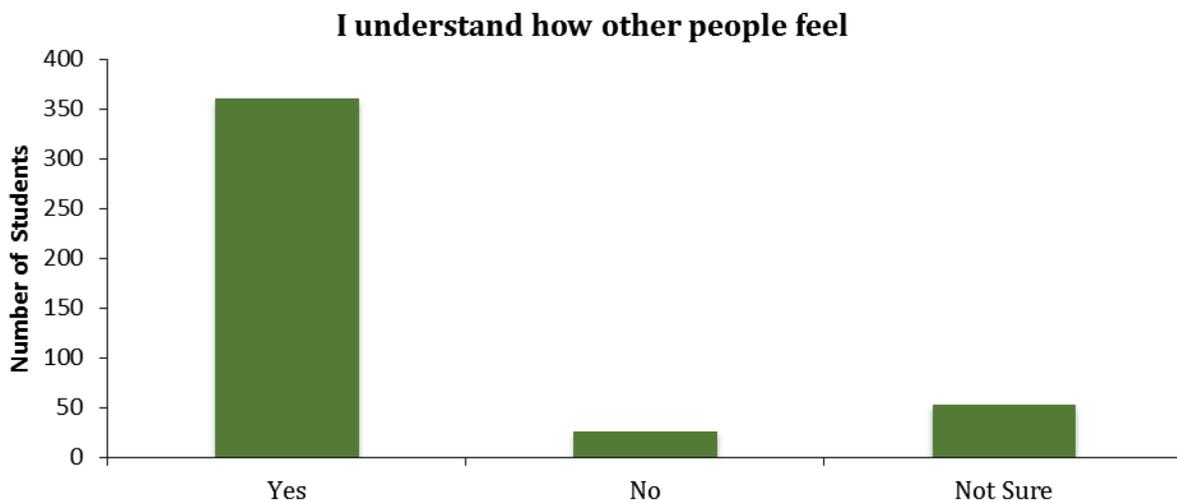
This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from students and teachers throughout British Columbia for the 2013-2014 school year. The teachers were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students who participated in the Roots of Empathy program. 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 understanding how other people feel



#### Feedback Results: Teachers

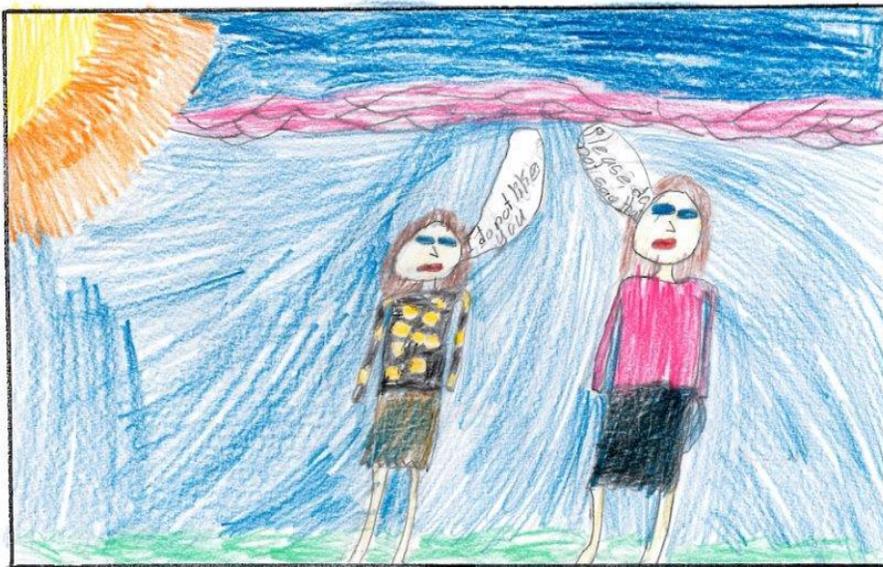
- 86% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more able to understand other people's points of view
- 93% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are more empathic to one another

Across British Columbia, Roots of Empathy students in the primary grades provide age-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included a sample of children's artwork below which is connected to the development of empathy, one of the main goals of Roots of Empathy:

### Development of Empathy

Empathy is inversely related to aggression. Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program that reduces aggression, including bullying.

Tessa



Bubbles:

"I do not like you"

"Please do not say that"

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?: Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to stand up to bullies everywhere.

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?: "Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to stand up to bullies everywhere."  
- Grade 2 Student, Osoyoos

Eight year old Tessa is demonstrating moral courage in standing up to the person who said "I do not like you". Tessa during her year with Roots of Empathy became emotionally literate. This allows her to communicate with emotional integrity. She recognizes that it is hurtful to be told she is not liked, so she advocates for herself.

## Development of Emotional Literacy

Schools are experts at teaching traditional literacy – reading and writing. We have yard sticks to measure every stage and assign grades, and huge amounts of teacher time in ensuring success for all children. It is becoming increasingly accepted at the United Nations (UN) that as important as it is to learn to read, it is equally important to learn to relate. Emotional literacy is the language of relationships. Roots of Empathy for 14 years in British Columbia has successfully taught children emotional literacy.

104 VMA



My happiest thing in Roots of Empathy was:

learning to be kind to others.

My happiest thing in Roots of Empathy was: "Learning to be kind to others."  
– Kindergarten Student, Campbell River

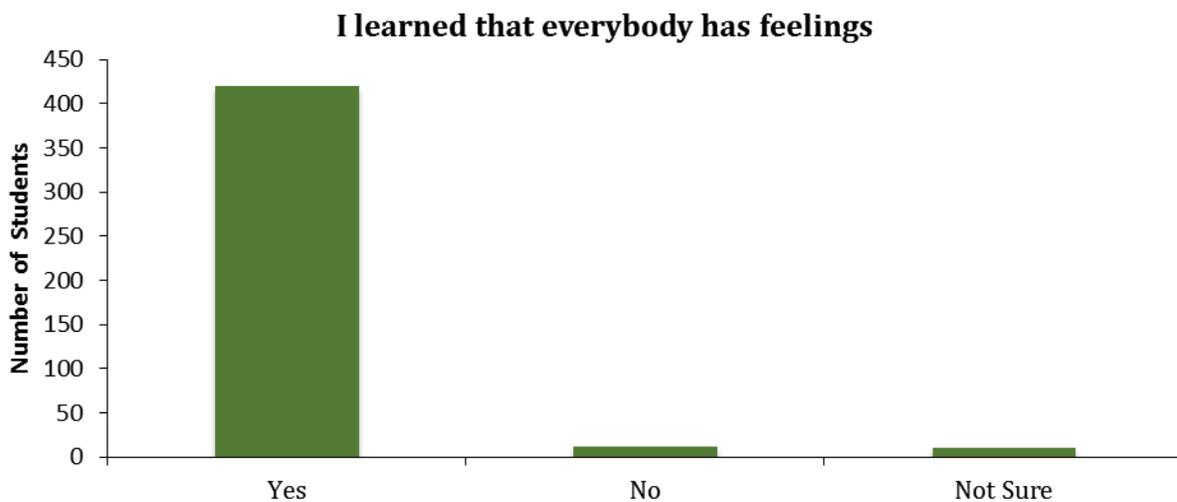
Research confirms that being kind to others brings personal happiness, and there is neuroscience to back this up. This kindergarten child from Sandowne Elementary school is emotionally literate enough to realize the happy feeling she gets when she is kind to others. This kindness is a demonstration of empathy.

## 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 behaviors, and exhibit less aggression.

### Feedback Results: Students

- 95% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings
- 82% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings
- 88% of students reported learning to recognize how the baby is feeling



### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 99% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students talk about their feelings
- 96% 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 Behaviors

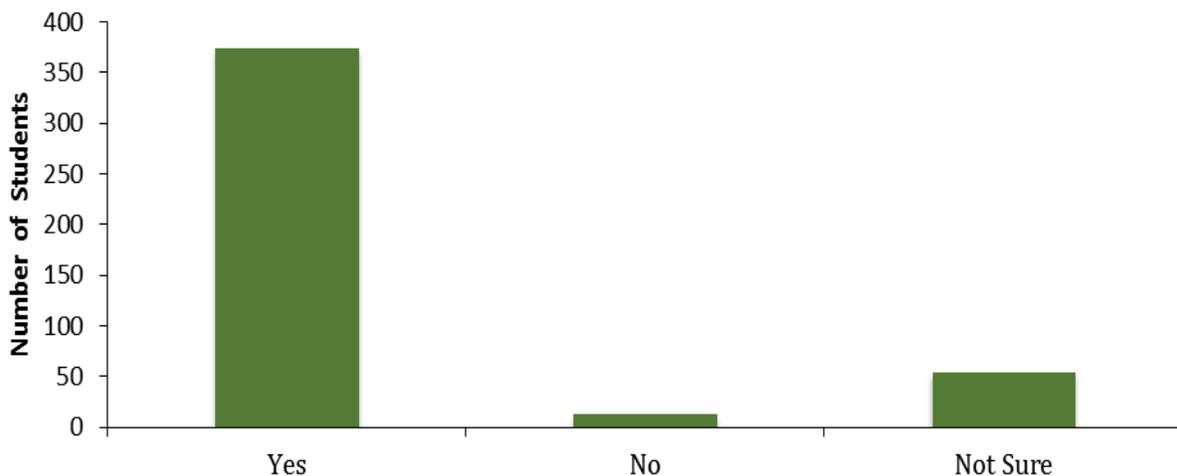
The presence of prosocial behaviors helps to promote positive development in children, improve the quality of their relationships, as well as the overall classroom atmosphere. Quality relationships and perceived social support greatly increase an individual's resilience and protect against negative and stressful experiences. Prosocial behavior 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 behavior 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

- 94% of students reported that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them
- 85% of students reported that if they saw a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them

**If I see a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, I would help them**



### **Feedback Results: Teachers**

- 85% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students showed more prosocial behavior (e.g. sharing, helping, cooperating) by the end of the school year
- 89% 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
- 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**

- 86% of students reported learning babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for
- 93% of students reported learning that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work

### **Additional Findings:**

#### **Curriculum Expectations**

- 100% of teachers feel that the ROE program supports the school's curriculum

**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?” students reported:**

“How to care for your friends if they get bullied. Having the baby helped me a lot because we learned about feelings and different emotions.”

- *Grade 5, Fort St. John*

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world many things like: treat people the way you want to be treated, don't bully.”

- *Grade 5, Kamloops*

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to care for and recognize others feelings.”

- *Grade 4, Courtenay*

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world by teaching about how to be mindful of others feelings.”

- *Grade 5, Vancouver*

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

“Roots of Empathy has given the students words to express their feelings and helped them read the facial and physical expressions of others. This has helped them with interactions. The experience they have through Roots of Empathy helps them use tools to work out differences and to remember to think about how the other person might feel. The strategies students practice helps to deescalate a situation.”

- *Kindergarten, Kelowna*

“Students have the vocabulary and the experience to more effectively reflect on their behaviours from another person's perspective and think about how they would feel. The students are learning to take responsibility for their actions and to care about how it impacts others.”

- *Grade 1, Vancouver*

“Roots of Empathy provides a real life learning situation where children can experience and learn about feelings and empathy first hand. They learned how to identify feelings. It brought out sweetness and caring in the children.”

- *Kindergarten, Duncan*

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

“Students show greater awareness of emotional language, body language, and perspective. It softened the classroom atmosphere to diverse needs and perspectives. It gave the children language to use when resolving conflict and making accommodations. It gave the children an opportunity to see attachment and attunement in action and it showed that respect for people starts at birth.”

- *Kindergarten, Fort St. John*

“With Roots of Empathy, the children are demonstrating reduced aggression and reduced bullying in the classroom and school.”

- *Kindergarten, Kelowna*

“The students really understood the importance of how to care for a baby and how that related to interactions with their peers.”

- *Grade 4, Surrey*