



Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2019 Annual Program Evaluation Report

British Columbia



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?

"If you have a baby sister or brother,
don't do [something] bad,
[because] when the baby gets [bigger]
it is going to copy you."

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?: If you have
a baby sister or brother don't
do something bad becuz when
the baby gets bigger it is going to copy you

- Grade 2/3 Student, Abbotsford

This 8-year-old child from Abbotsford has understood the Roots of Empathy message that our actions can hurt or help people and that they hold power because they influence younger children. Here we see the building of an empathic responsible citizen, just what we are looking for in BC.



British Columbia Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2018-2019

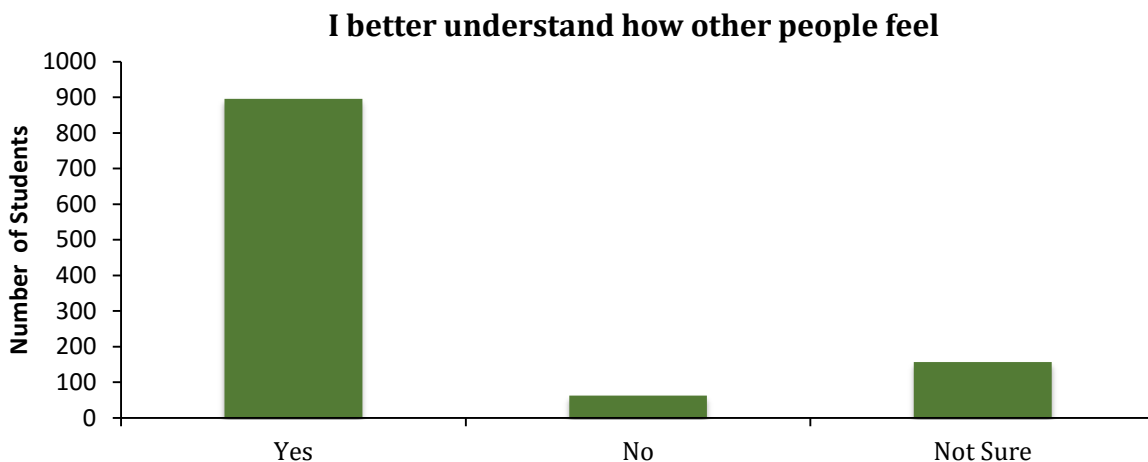
This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from students, teachers, Instructors and volunteer parents throughout British Columbia for the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers, Instructors and parents were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students 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, the 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 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

- 80% of students reported better understanding how other people feel

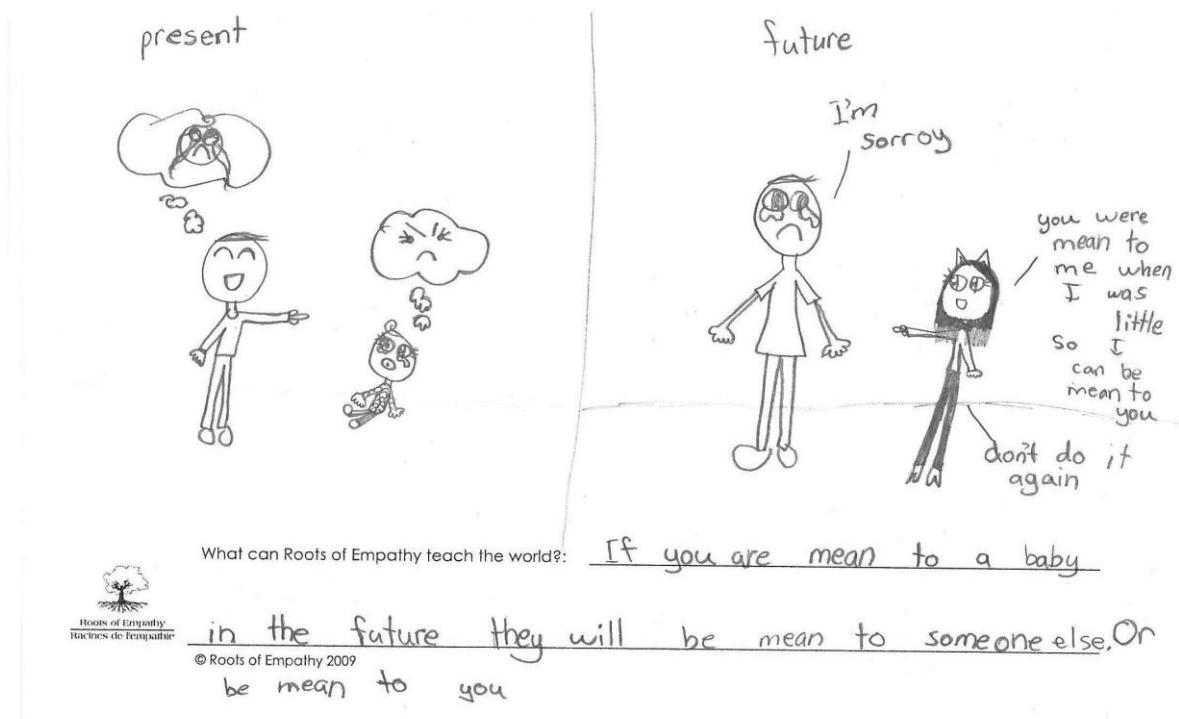


Feedback Results: Teachers

- 91% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more able to understand other people's points of view
- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, 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 samples of children’s artwork throughout the report.

Development of Empathy



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “If you are mean to a baby in the future they will be mean to someone else or be mean to you”

- Grade 2/3 Student, Abbotsford

Perspective taking is the cognitive aspect of empathy. He is able to understand that hurtful behaviour can have a long-term impact and can make the victim also hurt others when older. This is sophisticated thinking for a little boy of seven. We need more like him.

Goal #2: To Develop Emotional Literacy

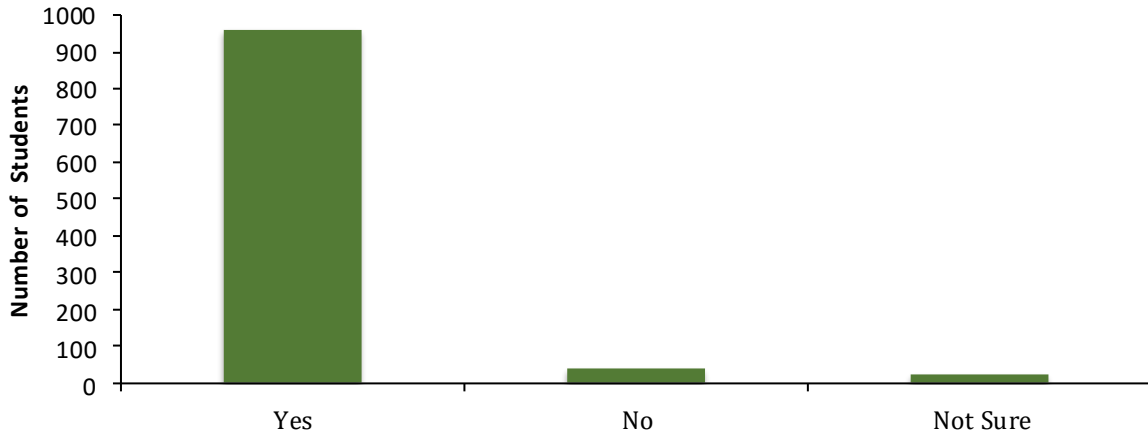
Emotional literacy, or social and emotional learning (SEL), includes developing the skills to recognize, manage, and express feelings. These skills are integral to the ability to regulate emotions. Children who can regulate their emotions are less likely to suffer from childhood psychological disorders, 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

- 92% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings

- 68% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings better
- 88% of students reported learning to recognize how the baby is feeling

I learned that everybody has feelings

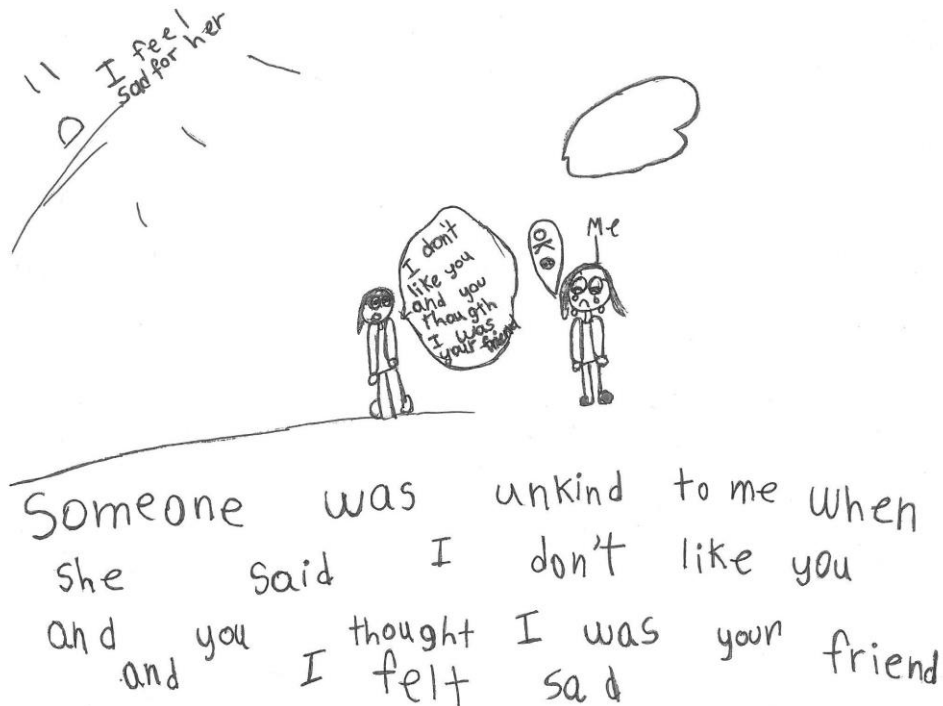


Feedback Results: Teachers

- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students talk more about their feelings
- 91% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

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 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. For 18 years Roots of Empathy has successfully taught children emotional literacy in British Columbia.



“Someone was unkind to me when she said I don't like you and you thought I was your friend and I felt sad.”

- Grade 3 Student, Surrey

The pain of exclusion has no shelf life. In Roots of Empathy, children paint their pain and the artwork gives voice to unspoken feelings and allows children to understand their feelings. It is healing when children realize that their classmates also have experience of similar feelings. The emotional literacy developed in Roots of Empathy is the affective side of empathy. Developing empathy is a brake against bullying and aggression.

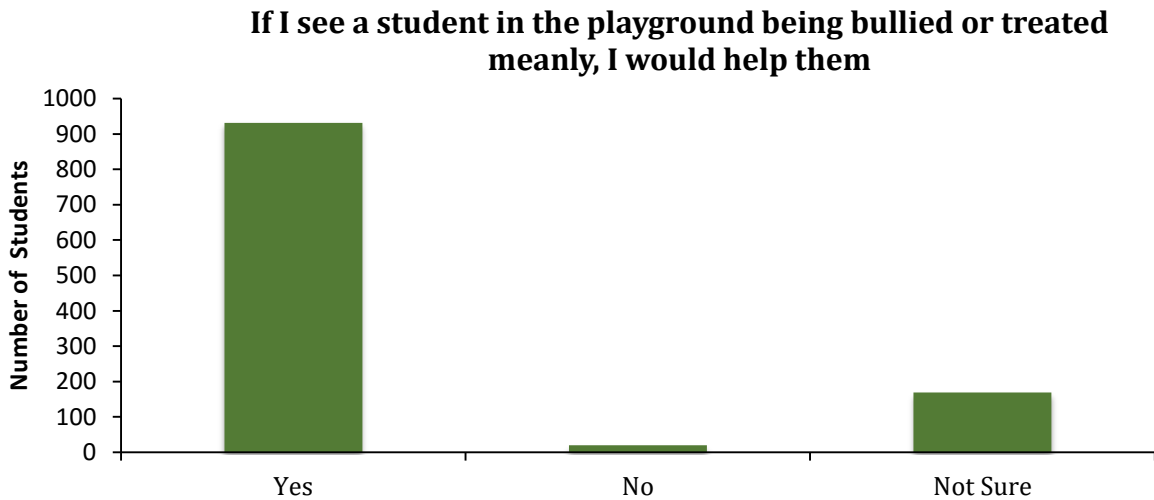
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

The presence of prosocial behaviours helps to promote positive development in children and 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 who 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 that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them
- 83% of students reported that if they saw a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 84% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students showed more prosocial 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 Roots of Empathy, students are more inclusive or accepting of others who are different from themselves (including culture, race, special needs, gender, etc...)

Reducing Aggression and Bullying and Growing Prosocial Behaviours



“What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “less violence”

- Grade 1 Student, Victoria

Violence is pervasive in children’s lives. They feel helpless in understanding it and being able to prevent it. In their Roots of Empathy classroom, they discuss bullying and aggression as a form of violence. They develop the understanding that aggression is hurtful both emotionally and physically. They feel they can teach the world to be less violent. We agree.

Goal #4: To Increase Knowledge of Human Development, Learning, and Infant Safety

Providing information about safe parenting can effectively increase parenting knowledge and 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

- 95% of students reported learning babies do 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

- 99% of teachers feel that the Roots of Empathy program supports the school's curriculum

When asked, "What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?" students reported:

"How infants develop into children, understanding of how we each develop, celebrating milestones)
So many issues are the same as we grow (safety, discovery, feelings)

- Grade 6, Hillcrest Elementary School, Cloverdale

"I learned that baby's communication is different than bigger kids and adults. I learned that being a parent is harder than I think!"

- Grade 3, Sir James Douglas School Annex, Vancouver

"Roots of Empathy taught me to understand myself better, so if it can teach me to understand myself better – maybe it can help others find their place in life by understanding themselves"

- Grade 6, Dorothea Walker Elementary School, Kelowna

"That everybody has feelings and that you should be kind to everybody and help others that you might not even know."

- Grade 4/5, Cheam Elementary, Chilliwack

"...to stop bullying and if you see someone that is getting bullied help them "

- Grade 3, Captain James Cook Elementary School, Vancouver

"Roots of Empathy can teach all of us no matter the age no matter the size, that we all need to care for each other. If we don't care for each other than how will we accomplish things like moon bases, ending global warming, and finding world peace."

- Grade 6, Dorothea Walker Elementary School, Kelowna

"...how to detect your emotions better and most importantly how to care for a baby"

- Grade 6, Colleen & Gordie Howe Middle School, Abbotsford

“I think that the Roots of Empathy program was a great way to teach young kids and pre-teens and teenagers to learn about feelings, health for a baby, safety for a baby. And safety for themselves. Roots of empathy is a great program and every class from kindergarten to grade 12 to learn about child and baby safety. I loved the experience, and think Roots of Empathy should be in every country in the world!”

- Grade 6, South Sa-Hali Elementary, Kamloops

“I feel like it can teach everyone how to be empathetic and to comprehend and to be aware of what situation you are in. I think it’s a great program to teach how to manage and control your emotions and bring peace in our generation”

- Grade 6, Dorothea Walker Elementary School, Kelowna

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

“The program allowed for those children from trauma backgrounds to have a chance to experience and to link emotions with behaviour. They were allowed to talk about what should be and should NOT be done to a baby. For some this was an important opportunity to expand their thinking about care and responsibility. It was empowering for them.”

- Kindergarten, George Pringle Elementary, West Kelowna

“We love it. It fits in so beautifully with what we are trying to do with our students - make them more caring, empathetic people, who can take others' viewpoints and perspective and put themselves in other people's shoes.”

- Grade 4, North Glenmore Elementary, Kelowna

“I have had a challenging group from the start. We have issues of self-harm and threats of suicide. I feel like the program has helped to have peers step forward and let an adult know. It has been a jumping off point to help us to explore how to help ourselves and others. Ways and methods of safely expressing our frustrations and feelings and how to deal with depression. There has been opening of minds in the way they think about things and in vocabulary that they might use or refrain from using as it might be negative or offensive.”

- Grade 6, South Sa-Hali Elementary, Kamloops

“I truly believe that in order for a student to be ready to learn they must have their other emotional and physiological needs met. So I think that through Roots of Empathy students now have a better understanding of their emotions and are able to identify what they are feeling. With this information they are able to regulate their emotions and use strategies to calm themselves which will then allow them to put themselves in a place where they are ready to learn.”

- Grade 3, Bear Creek Elementary, Surrey

“I loved that my class was able to watch our ROE baby grow, and sustain their attention over the course of a year - they became more aware of each other's feelings, and even of MY feelings! (it was great when they were able to realize that I was frustrated when they weren't listening, and able to identify how I was feeling, why I was feeling that way, came up with a solution, and even apologized to me!)”

- Kindergarten, Edmonds Community School, Burnaby

“I was very impressed by how my students were able to describe their feelings and the feelings of others, to the point where conflict resolution (a big part of any Kindergarten day!) went much smoother than I’ve experienced in previous years. Being able to identify and articulate their feelings was likely a large contributor to a year almost free of physical aggression. The bonding that occurred during our ROE lessons allowed for children to be more vulnerable in our daily sharing circle, given that all feelings were acceptable and honored in ROE lessons and our class culture.”

- Kindergarten, Doncaster Elementary, Victoria

“Students talk about ROE outside of the classroom. They are excited to share what they heard, saw or experienced. Some students have been observed using the same language as used in the classroom. eg; Hey that is not nice. Would you say that to baby?”

- Grade 3/4, Pleasant Valley Elementary, Nanaimo

When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy volunteer parents offered comments such as:

“I absolutely love this program and what it does for children. Seeing them relate to each other regardless of age, size, colour or language was truly amazing. I hope one day a program like this is standard in all kindergarten classrooms as no books or lessons can teach what they were able to see over the course of the year.”

- Kindergarten, Pauline Johnson Elementary, West Vancouver

“I think that the kids gained a better appreciation for other people through this program. In particular, I think they now better understand others emotions and the reasons behind unpleasant behaviors. I hope they also gained a stronger sense of community as they came together to celebrate my daughter. The maturity and compassion demonstrated by these little ones was probably fostered by the teacher in other ways as well, but I certainly noticed growth in that domain and feel so joyful to have been part of it.”

- Grade 2/3, Tansor Elementary, Duncan

“The children became very attached to my son. They were so excited and happy anytime they saw him do something new. Their voices got a lot softer when we would enter the room and they were always in tune with how August was feeling.”

- Grade 3, Coquitlam River Elementary, Coquitlam

“I feel the children gained a community resource in the connection with myself and baby Jackson. Those children are absolutely likely to seek me out in a community situation if they required support ...”

- Grade 4/5, Roberts Creek Community Elementary, Robert’s Creek