



Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

Roots of Empathy

2019 Annual Program Evaluation Report

Newfoundland and Labrador

“This program has been going ahead in my community for 18 years. I truly believe it has had a positive impact on our school and community. The Roots of Empathy classroom is a safe place where students talk about feelings as part of the curriculum.”

– Grade 8 Teacher, St. James Regional High, Channel Port aux Basques

“I believe that RoE gives students a knowledge base to draw upon when they are asked to talk about their emotions. I believe that students that feel more socially and emotionally understood may be more willing to try new things, or put themselves out there for extracurricular and co-curricular activities.”

– Grade 5 Teacher, William Mercer Academy, Dover

“I feel that Roots of Empathy had a great impact on my students which in turn will have an impact on families. I noticed that the students were more patient with each other, included each other more often in unstructured activities and they seemed to be genuinely more concerned about each other. Students seemed to be very quick to help others when in need.”

– Grade 3 Teacher, Rennie's River Elementary, St. John's

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



Newfoundland and Labrador Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2018-2019

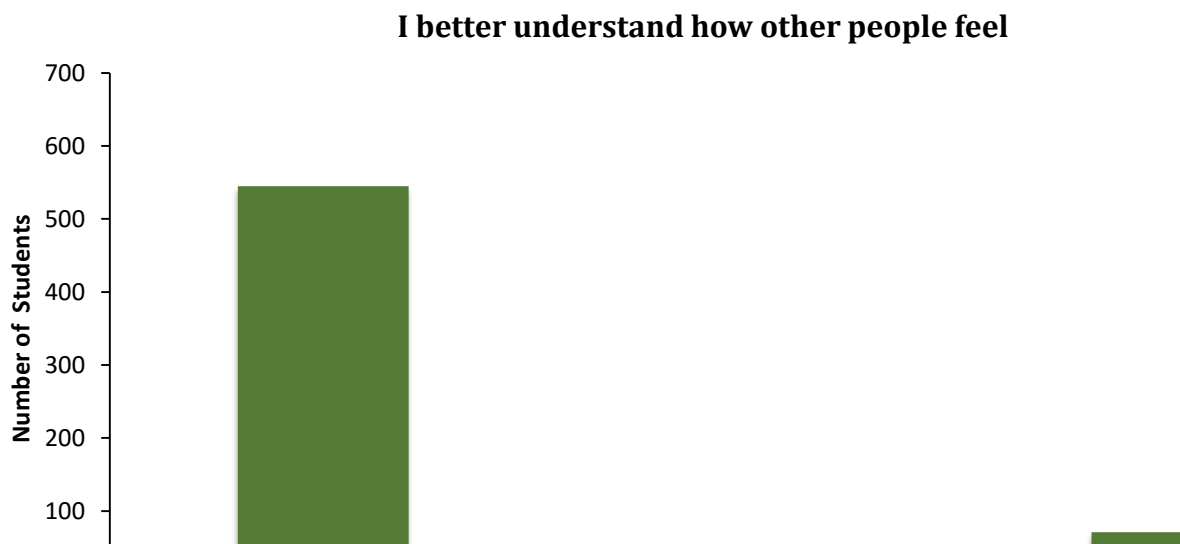
This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from students, teachers, Instructors and volunteer parents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers, Instructors, and volunteer parents were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in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

- 84% of students reported better understanding how other people feel



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 100% 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
- 95% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more empathic to one another

Across Newfoundland and Labrador, 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? “Roots of Empathy can teach the world to be [kind].”

- Grade 1 Student, Gander Bay

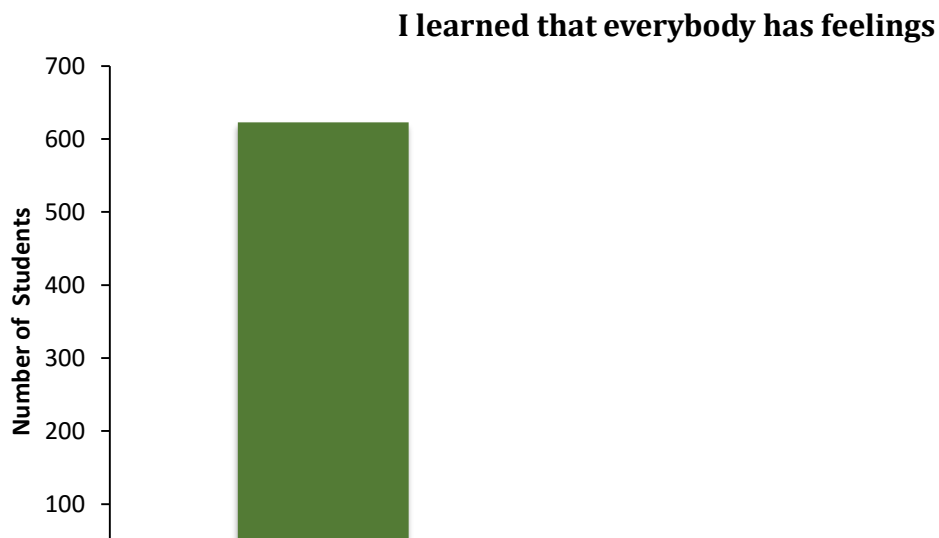
Six-year-old Kierran from Gander has drawn a picture where a stranger understood his fear and upset after a car accident. The stranger demonstrated empathy, “Are you ok?”. In order to be kind, we first must have empathy to be able to imagine how the other person feels. Gander is known worldwide for its empathy in the 9/11 empathic response. It is interesting that the day of Kierran’s trauma had a black sky.

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

- 95% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings
- 72% of students reported learning to better recognize their own feelings
- 92% of students reported learning to recognize how the baby is feeling



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 100% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students talk more about their feelings
- 95% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

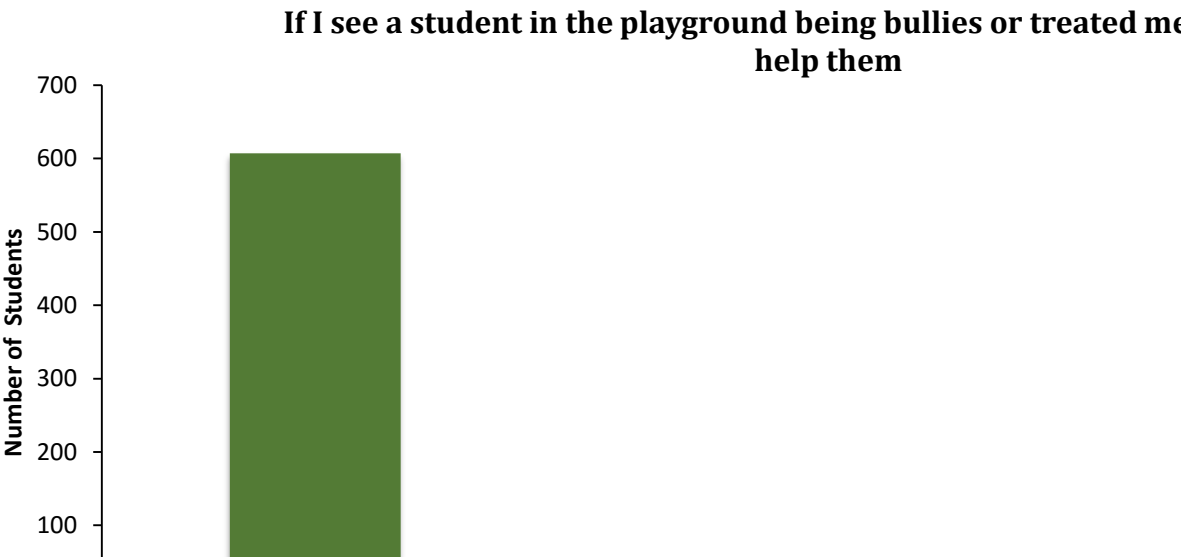
Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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 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

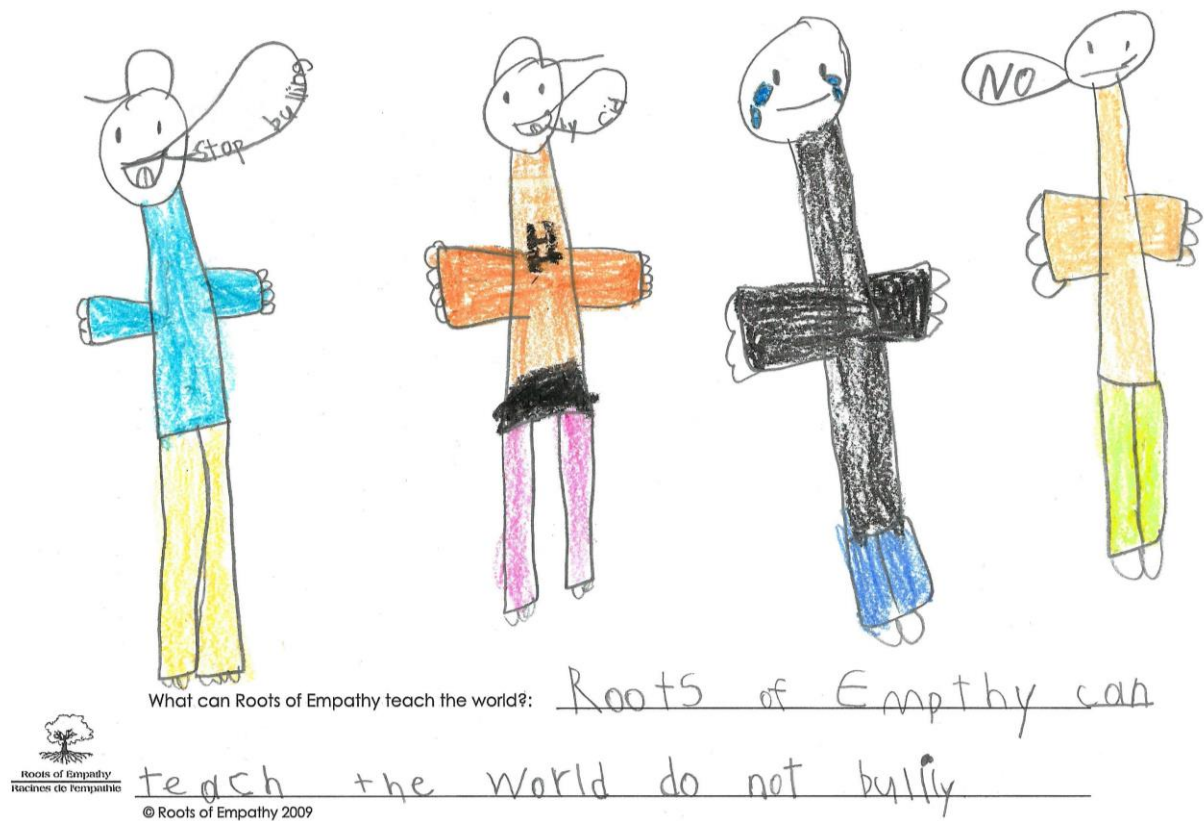
- 96% of students reported that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them
- 92% of students reported that if they saw a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them



Feedback Results: Teachers

- 92% 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
- 95% 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...)
- 73% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of ROE, students are better able to resolve conflicts

Reducing Aggression and Bullying and Growing Children's Prosocial Behaviours



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “Roots of [Empathy] can teach the world do not bully”
- Grade 1 Student, Wings Point

Carson is learning to read this year in school. The letters and the drawing come easily to him. What is new is learning the names of all of the feelings he has and learning to recognize how his friends feel. He has identified a bullying scenario which is quite typical, except the outcome is not. Two children stood up for the child in black who is crying. When children have a good sense of themselves and good vocabulary to express themselves, they are more likely to challenge injustice like bullying. Research from three continents confirms that children who have Roots of Empathy are less aggressive, bully less, and are more emotionally literate.

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

- 99% of students reported learning that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she can harm her baby
- 98% 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

- 97% of students reported learning babies do better when they are loved and cared for
- 92% 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 Roots of Empathy program supports the school's curriculum

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

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world kindness and respect to its elders and newborns, it can also show the world to respect each other and that we shouldn't fight."

- Grade 5, Indian River Academy, Springdale

"Roots of empathy can teach the how to recognize how to understand other people's feelings all the way from adults to babies."

- Grade 4, Holy Trinity Elementary, Torbay

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world that everyone has feelings and everyone can make a change by being nice. Also that everyone should be treated fairly."

- Grade 3, Beachy Cove Elementary, Portugal Cove St-Philips

"Roots of empathy can teach the world like for example, they teach you if a women is pregnant and they smoke/drink it can harm the baby. I think every school in the world should learn roots of empathy in Kindergarten so they know sooner"

- Grade 3, Hazelwood Elementary, St. John's

“It can help people know that other people have feelings. If you leave someone out, [you’re] hurting their feelings. A true friend is someone who treats you nicely and believes you.”

- Grade 3, Beachy Cove Elementary, Portugal Cove St-Philips

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

“I believe experiences like Roots of Empathy is what schools should be providing for their students. Hands on, experiential learning is one of the best way for students to immerse themselves into their own education and connect to learning.”

- Grade 8, Frank Roberts Junior High, Conception Bay South

“Students in my class always looked forward to the days when we had ROE, especially when the baby came in. Children learn so much by just observing the baby and discussing feelings, emotions etc. They learned how to communicate better and share more with each other. They became more aware of sensitive areas where feelings could get hurt they learned not to argue or get upset when someone's opinion was different than theirs. Hopefully the students will take what they learned into their families and communities”

- Grade 4/5, Fortune Bay Academy, Rushoon

“ROE definitely introduces students to the understanding of the many emotions that themselves and other people can have, how to recognize them in themselves and others and to be able to have a better grasp of how to react to their emotions and to be empathetic to others. Being able to self-regulate and understand the feelings they have will assist them in learning as well as to work in an environment where they are exposed to the many emotions of fellow students.”

- Grade 1, Riverwood Academy, Wings Point

“At the beginning of the year there were some students who came to my class with some bullying behaviors that included verbal, physical and social issues. I was actually wondering if ROE would be a good fit as I was worried those students would be too disruptive, say things that were not appropriate and exhibit unacceptable behaviours when our group instructor came. As the day drew closer to when Baby Chelsea would come, I was happy to see the progress those students had made from the beginning sessions to this day! Through the quality children’s literature that was read to the students along with the class discussions on many issues, I had begun to see a change in some inappropriate behaviors and now saw students showing more caring, friendly attitudes and an overall concern for their friends in their class and especially towards "Baby Chelsea"! One of those students I was concerned about even asked if he could wear his tie to school the day Baby Chelsea came to look his best! Sure enough, he came to school wearing his bow tie! His mom said he was adamant that he wanted to wear it because it was going to be a very special day!”

- Grade 1, Riverwood Academy, Wings Point

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

“There were a few students with special needs who became more connected and involved over the year. One boy, at the last family visit, rose to speak to the parents. He told them that he has depression and that having the baby in class had helped him a great deal. I found that I developed good relationships with most of the children. Many asked each visit if they could help me with something. Most students

seemed as if they were more serious about Roots of Empathy as the year went on, and appeared to be deep in thought at times, especially during themes 8 and 9.”

- Grade 4, Cowan Heights Elementary, St. John’s

“This particular group of Grade 5 students are a more difficult group. They tend to be a little more aggressive than the previous groups. The baby allowed them to let their guard down and learn from her. They loved having her come into the school and took ownership of her as “their baby”. It showed a more vulnerable side to the kids and this was nice for teachers to be able to witness them in this role.”

- Grade 5, Pasadena Elementary, Pasadena

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

“I think this program is great! The earlier we can teach our children to be empathetic towards others the better. You never know what people are going through or experiences they struggle with. So just be kind! I think this program is a wonderful tool to use in classrooms.”

- Grade 5, Helen Tulk Elementary, Bishop’s Falls

“The children became more comfortable with the baby and excited to see him. They became increasingly interactive, caring and protective of the baby. Even the more quiet children in the class began to talk more. Now, when I see the children in our neighbourhood or at other school events, they are excited to see the baby and they always stop to talk to him. We call each other by name and there is a wonderful sense of community. I’ve even met some of the parents of the children through involvement in ROE and they consistently tell me that their child speaks about the baby at home.”

- Grade 4, Bishop Feild, St John’s

“Roots of Empathy teaches children to take another's perspective, in this case, a baby or a parent. I think this is a valuable lesson because it allows them to envision what another may feel like, the true definition of empathy. Roots of Empathy can teach the world the importance of identifying and recognizing emotions in yourself and others, and understanding how another might feel in a certain situation. It promotes an appropriate expression of feelings/emotions and encourages children (and adults) to share their feelings with others.”

- Grade 8, Frank Roberts Junior High, Conception Bay South