



**Roots of Empathy**  

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**Racines de l'empathie**

**Roots of Empathy**

**2019 Annual Program Evaluation Report**

**Nova Scotia**

**“Roots of Empathy teaches the world that empathy is needed in all of us, and empathy can help with making friends. Empathy is a great thing and I’m glad I got to be taught by an amazing teacher[a baby]”**

- Grade 6 Student, Middleton Regional High School, Middleton

**“They can not only teach you about how the baby develops and learns, it helps learn about yourself. It teaches you to understand your own feelings and signals. It helps you learn about how to help and communicate with others.”**

- Grade 7 Student, Landmark East School, Wolfville

**“Through ROE and the baby visiting I think they realize they need more kindness in their lives and because they wouldn’t do or say something to the baby they shouldn’t to each other.”**

- Grade 6 Teacher, Robert Kemp Turner Elementary, Dartmouth

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



## Nova Scotia Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2018-2019

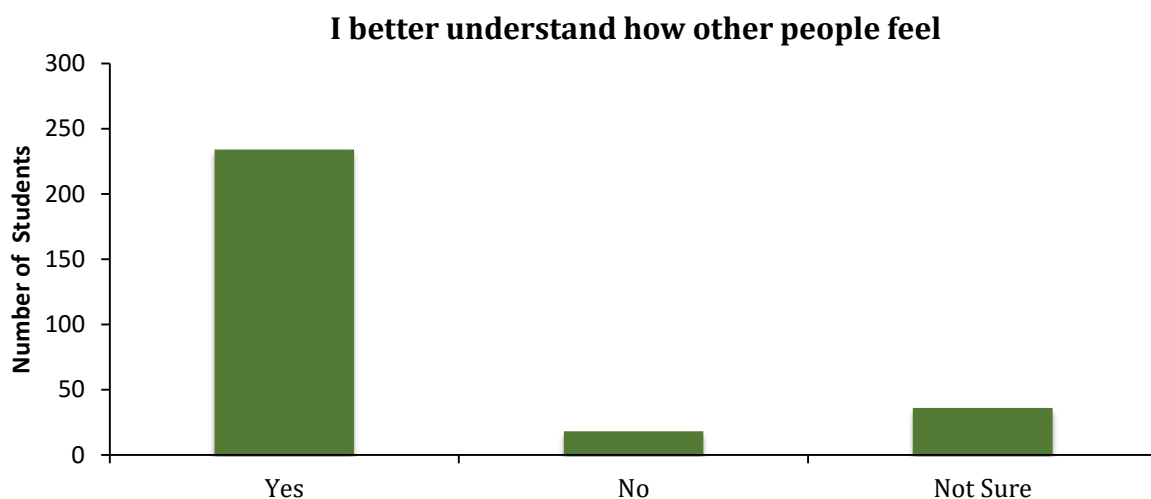
This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from students, teachers, Instructors and volunteer parents throughout Nova Scotia for the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers, Instructors, and volunteer parents were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in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

- 81% of students reported better understanding how other people feel



#### Feedback Results: Teachers

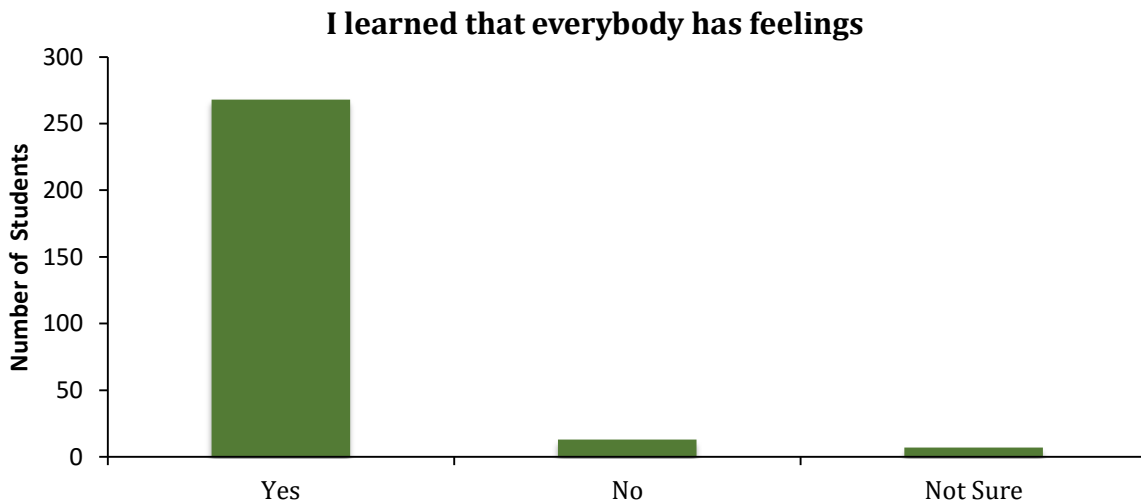
- 88% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more able to understand other people's points of view
- 94% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more empathic to one another

## 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

- 93% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings
- 63% of students reported learning to recognize their own feelings better
- 92% of students reported learning to recognize how the baby is feeling



### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 81% 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

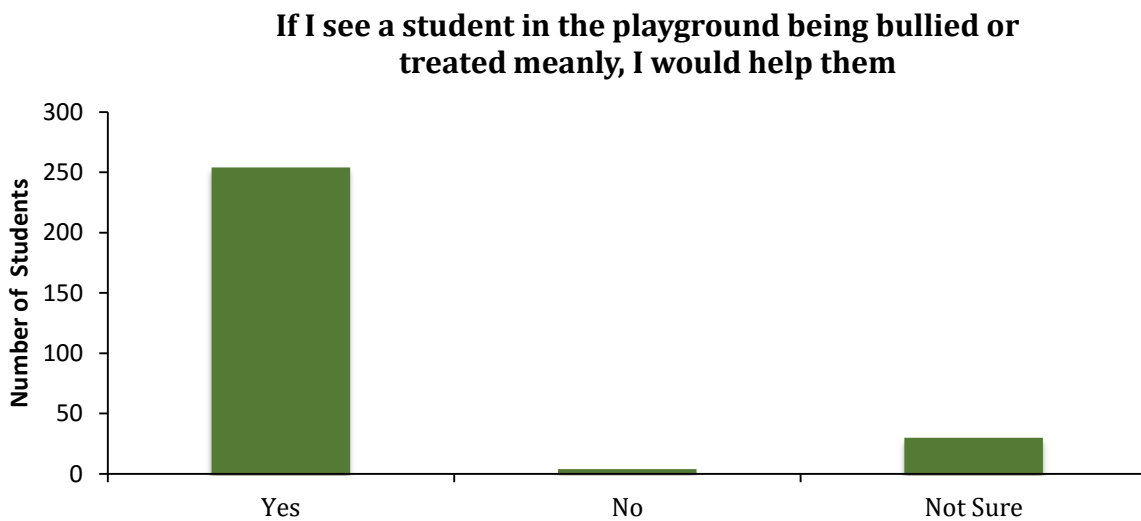
## Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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 that 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

- 94% of students reported that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them
- 88% of students reported that if they saw a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them



### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 91% 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
- 88% 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...)

### 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
- 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**

- 96% 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**

- 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:**

"How to have Empathy for others"

- Grade 4, Coldbrook & District School, Coldbrook

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to respect and take care of a child or other people. It's about knowing what empathy means and how to give it"

- Grade 6, Middleton Regional High School, Middleton

"That everybody is the same, if they have a disability, their race, their religion, their feelings, their personality, and just the way people are. They are living being just like you. This is how I think of the group. Just imagine the whole world is a tree, and everybody is a root. When everybody does something kind, a leaf forms. The roots are helping people with empathy in every human. Just be yourself"

- Grade 3, Sackville Heights Elementary School, Middle Sackville

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

"Creates more awareness of what empathy is and allows our youth to problem solve better in situations that may be new."

- Grade 4, Coldbrook School, Coldbrook

“Positive impact. They learned that all their emotions were perfectly normal and that everyone experiences those emotions in different ways. You saw them demonstrating positive behaviours outside of school.”

- Grade 2, Antigonish Education Centre, Antigonish

“I believe it teaches the children to be in more touch with their own feelings, to those of others and generally more empathetic towards each other. It teaches acceptance to be different, which in this day in age is essential.”

- Grade 5/6, Duncan MacMillan, Sheet Harbour

“The ripple effect. Each year that they mature more understanding comes into play. I am teaching siblings of some children that have another sibling that have gone through this program as well. This allows for more understanding and empathy within their home, neighbourhood. They are "thinking" about their behaviour and how it affects those. They also have learned not to judge others and that a crying baby is a baby with a problem.”

- Grade 2, Truro Elementary School, Truro

“We all know children learn best in an atmosphere of calm, non-threatening, safe, welcoming classrooms and learning communities. When upset, children revert to their limbic system brain, and the fight or flight kicks in, therefore blocking the potential to learn and concentrate. The program allows for much discussion on feelings and emotions and how we learn, so this is useful.”

- Grade 4, Holland Road Elementary, Fall River

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

“The children seemed to be more expressive with their emotions, more willing to share stories from their lives and more likely to comfort each other.”

- Grade 1, Ferrisview Elementary School, North Sydney

“Kids were more in tune with their feelings and the feelings of others. Their relationship with the Program, Program Material and the Family as well as myself also grew and those positive connections between people and curriculum is very important. Kids were keen on attending school when they knew they had Roots and were very sad when they missed it. Kids were already kind to one another so that was built on, modeled for other kids in the building and praised every week.”

- Grade 2, Harbourside Elementary, Sydney

“The children were able to really grasp the idea that we all deserve to be treated with respect. They had an awareness of different temperaments and could identify them in themselves, their classmates and their classroom baby.”

- Grade 1/2, Lawrencetown Consolidated School, Lawrencetown

“They became better listeners to their peers; they stuck up for one another if one was feeling down or bullied”

- Grade 1, École Saint Catherine's School, Halifax

“Roots of Empathy helps children better understand their role as human beings in a society. The program helps them understand how the brain works and how empathy not only makes the world a better place, it helps them find inner peace.”

- Grade 4, École Beaubassin, Halifax

“As I’ve seen every year doing this program...ROE effects every child that is involved...those inside the class room and the whole school population. Mostly though the positive effects it has on the most troubled and withdrawn children always brings me to happy tears. The effects range from the most confident child learning to listen more attentively and give other children a chance to share their thoughts to the most withdrawn student taking chances and joining in on our conversations. And as always the baby is drawn to the children that [are in] need and unknowingly [they] seem to gravitate to the baby as well ...this always is one of the many wonderful moments in the class room.”

- Grade 3/4, Middle Musquodoboit, Halifax

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

“... When they saw me out in the community apart from the program, their faces would light up and they would come over and tell their parents, sibling, or friend all about their baby. It was truly amazing and so wonderful to see how much they cared about my son and his well-being and development. The program also brought the children closer together as a class/community, I found. They were like one big family with their baby at the centre ... I have to say that I was especially surprised how much the boys in the classroom loved the baby and how much they wished to cuddle and hold him as it broke with the possible gender stereotype that girls are more attentive to babies. That was not the case in our classroom which I loved!”

- Grade 2, Windsor Elementary School, Windsor

“Roots of Empathy is a fantastic program, allowing students to see the interactions between parent and baby and to consider the baby's development, temperament, reactions, and uniqueness. It allows students to pay attention to a baby's feelings and to reflect on their own feelings, perspectives, etc.”

- Grade 3/4, Great Village Elementary, Great Village

“This program makes sure that all children at a young age are taught how to empathize, no matter what type of home situation they come from. They get to learn all the different stages a baby goes through and their emotions, how to relate to them, keep them safe, communicate and feel for them. This program works with kids at a young age and helps them learn to feel for others. This will help shape young minds into caring, compassionate, and giving people. This will help make the world a better place”

- Grade 1, St Mary’s Education Centre, Sherbrooke

“With the way the world is so technology driven, ROE brings back the fundamentals of people. Learning respect and real emotions and of course, empathy. You can’t get those things from technology.”

- Grade 2, Harmony Heights Elementary, Truro

“I believe that building empathy in children is a way to create more adults with high emotional intelligence, which I believe is required in all aspects of our society. *(Je crois qu’établir un comportement d’empathie avec les enfants est un moyen sûr d’en faire des adultes avec une intelligence émotionnelle supérieure, qui je crois, est requise dans toutes les sphères de notre société.)*”

- Grade 4, Centre scolaire de la Rive-Sud, Bridgewater