

Program Commitment

School Program Commitment

Research has indicated that the Roots of Empathy program is most successful when all required elements are in place. To maintain program integrity, we ask you to follow these guidelines when hosting the program in your school. If for any reason you experience difficulty with these terms, please contact the Roots of Empathy Program Manager.

A successful Roots of Empathy program will involve:

- Strong principal support
- A supportive classroom teacher who requests the Roots of Empathy program
- Occasional use of the school photocopier
- Willingness to participate in and return program evaluations (Roots of Empathy End of Year Feedback Forms)

The Roots of Empathy Commitment

All Roots of Empathy Instructors are trained to implement our structured curriculum which is specialized for different age levels. Instructors receive intensive training and ongoing mentor support in program delivery.

The responsibilities of the Roots of Empathy Instructor are to:

- Conduct 27 Classroom Visits over the course of a school year
- Use the Roots of Empathy curriculum as specified and prepare all teaching materials required
- Schedule an information meeting with the principal and teacher at the start of the program to review concepts and roles of all people involved
- Communicate with the classroom teacher regarding the teacher's role and responsibilities for each lesson
- Schedule Classroom Visits with the Roots of Empathy family and classroom teacher and ensure that any changes to the schedule are communicated to all parties involved
- Maintain ongoing communication with the Roots of Empathy family, conduct the initial home visit and prepare the parent(s) for their visits over the school year

The Principal's Commitment

Principals can support the program by making it a whole-school venture. Some ways of doing this include:

- Attending an introductory Roots of Empathy principal/teacher presentation
- Sharing information on Roots of Empathy with the school staff and school community, and/or host a presentation
- Sharing information about Roots of Empathy with other schools and education authorities
- Inviting the Roots of Empathy family to school assemblies or having Roots of Empathy students make a presentation at a school assembly
- Providing space for the Roots of Empathy bulletin board

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The Teacher's Commitment

Research shows that the Roots of Empathy program is successful when the classroom teacher is supportive of and enthusiastic about the program. When teachers support the program, work in consultation with the principal, and work proactively with the Roots of Empathy Instructor, students have the most profound results. The classroom teacher is an active participant during the Roots of Empathy visits, assisting with note-taking, picture-taking, art activities, drama or writing. Roots of Empathy prefers to postpone the Roots of Empathy class if there is a substitute teacher because of the importance of continuity with the classroom teacher. While the Roots of Empathy Instructor is delivering the program, the classroom teacher benefits from the unique opportunity of observing the students from another vantage point. The power of Roots of Empathy lies in the classroom teacher's ability to integrate the learnings from the Roots of Empathy classes into the regular classroom work. Teacher extensions are as unique as the teachers themselves.

The responsibilities of the classroom teacher are to:

- Attend an introductory Roots of Empathy principal/teacher presentation
- Welcome and support the Roots of Empathy Instructor and family
- Maintain regular communication with the Roots of Empathy Instructor (e.g. setting times for visits, notifying the Roots of Empathy Instructor as soon as possible of any changes in lesson times)
- Be present and involved in the Roots of Empathy classes in the following ways:
 - Recording information on flip chart during class discussion
 - Taking photos during family visits
 - Helping the Roots of Empathy Instructor to maintain classroom management
 - Allowing time for completion of Roots of Empathy art/writing
 - Providing space for and helping to maintain a bulletin board
 - Completing a Roots of Empathy feedback form at the end of the year
 - Collecting student permission forms

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why must the Roots of Empathy baby be between two and four months old at the start of the program?

A. The first year of life is magical and a baby grows dramatically. Students learn infant and human development by observing the greatest learning period of a person's life span. The students witness the vulnerability of the baby during this critical year of life. Bringing the baby into the classroom as early in his/her life as possible reveals a greater range of infant development stages over the year and optimizes the learning opportunities for the students. The Roots of Empathy family demonstrates the parent-infant attachment relationship and the attunement of two people. If a baby is younger than two months or older than four months at the beginning of the program, the full span of development outlined in our curriculum may not be demonstrated.

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Q. Do classroom teachers teach Roots of Empathy in their own class?

- A. The classroom teacher is never the Roots of Empathy Instructor in their own classroom. Roots of Empathy is a gift to the classroom teacher, providing teachers a rare opportunity to be with the children as a participant and observer outside of regular instruction. In Roots of Empathy, students learn through their relationship with the Instructor and benefit from the fresh perspective of an adult who has no history with the class. Having teachers actively participate rather than deliver the program increases its impact and provides a unique and powerful opportunity for the classroom teacher to gain deeper insights into the social/emotional development of their students.

Research has shown that Roots of Empathy has an exceptional 97% implementation rate as a result of this model. The responsibilities of the Roots of Empathy Instructor, as outlined in the Roots of Empathy Commitment, are extensive. The program requires a commitment to the full and timely delivery of 27 weekly classroom lessons and a substantial amount of out-of-class preparation including a home visit with the Roots of Empathy family and regular communication with the parent(s) of the Roots of Empathy baby. These responsibilities, combined with the existing high demands on classroom teachers' time and the immediacy of their students' needs, would make it daunting for a classroom teacher to honour the commitment of the Roots of Empathy Instructor and could compromise the implementation integrity of the Roots of Empathy program. Therefore, classroom teachers never teach the Roots of Empathy program to their own class.

Q. What characteristics are required for a classroom to receive the Roots of Empathy program?

- A. In a Roots of Empathy classroom students are together all day, every day with the same classroom teacher, with the exception of classes like music and gym. Learning in the program is strengthened through these ongoing relationships and Roots of Empathy messages are reinforced by the classroom teacher.

For these reasons Roots of Empathy will not be delivered in classes where students are on a rotary schedule. Roots of Empathy also does not allow the bringing together of two separate classes to receive the program or the bringing of one or more students from another classroom into the Roots of Empathy class for the program.

The Roots of Empathy classroom structure and the delivery of the program must remain consistent for us to be able to deliver the positive results that the program has shown, and which are expected by our funders and stakeholders.

Q. How can I learn more about Roots of Empathy?

- A. For more information please visit www.rootsofempathy.org

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What People Say about Roots of Empathy

"It is heart-warming to watch a group of people celebrate my baby's milestones and accomplishments, interact with him, learn about his needs, and care about his well-being. You showed that you understand that babies are little people who, like each of us, are vulnerable and need to be loved."

Elizabeth, ROE parent in a letter to the class
Toronto, Ontario

"I really enjoyed learning about how to treat and respect other people. And I enjoyed the class sharing each others' feelings and nobody laughed. I liked how [the baby] showed us how she grew and what things she learned to do."

Jason, ROE Student Grade 3
Port Alberni, British Columbia

"(The class is) becoming more aware of their feelings and the feelings of others. We have very open discussions on a regular basis as I think it is important for them to be mindful of how their actions can affect the feelings of another person. The program is a wonderful way of creating a caring environment in your classroom and a great way to get the community involved in our school."

Bonnie Rumbolt, ROE Classroom Teacher
Mary's Harbour, Newfoundland

"This brilliant program belongs in every classroom in every school in every country of the world, forever. There's no better way to teach empathy – the essential human trait."

Raffi, Children's singer, author, ecology advocate

"Mary Gordon introduces us to the wisdom of babies and shows us how they can teach us - and our children - what it is to be human. Over a lifetime, I have learned that the human capacities for empathy and respect must be fostered from earliest childhood to reduce violence in the world and build a truly civil society."

The Honourable **Landon Pearson**
Advisor on Children's Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

"Bullying exists in every school we have. We have rules about what to do when bullying goes wrong and harms somebody, but very little in terms of coherent effort underway to prevent bullying. This is what this program is about. It's called the Roots of Empathy...It is a proactive program, proven to work."

The Honourable **Gerard Kennedy**
Ontario Minister of Education (2007)

"When [Roots of Empathy] was underway in the province of Ontario, what they discovered was that the incidence of bullying went down in public schools in Toronto. It's a huge win for school districts, for communities and for families that children won't stand by and see another soul maligned or beaten in the process."

The Honourable **Linda Reid**
Minister of State for Child Care, British Columbia

"[Roots of Empathy] is a school-based prevention program... The early years of schooling... are critical and there is compelling evidence of the importance of children's experiences in their early years and the impact these experiences have on their development, learning, health, and well-being."

The Honourable **Alan Carpenter**
Minister for Education and Training, Western Australia (2005)