

Curriculum Services Canada Review

From 2001 to 2018 Curriculum Services Canada was Canada's leading standards agency for the evaluation of educational resources. In 2007 and 2009 it reviewed and recommended the Roots of Empathy curriculum "as a valid program for use with students in Kindergarten to grade 8 to promote understanding of human development, diversity, and the uniqueness of individuals."

Curriculum Services Canada Review

Curriculum Correlation:

Roots of Empathy is a multi-disciplinary classroom program that focuses on the affective development of students from Kindergarten to grade 8 by developing positive parenting skills. This learning resource reflects the overall goals of education and supports learning in Language Arts, Health, Mathematics, Music, Art and Social Studies.

Content:

This classroom parenting program teaches human development, emotional literacy, and nurtures the growth of empathy, using a variety of learning experiences differentiated for students according to age/grade. The information is presented in a style that is accessible for students at all levels of the elementary school program. Research, statistics, stories, and theories from well-known and highly respected psychologists, pediatricians, sociologists, and writers are included. Trained personnel actively seek families who live in the school's community, and encourage both parents to be involved in the program. An emphasis is placed on finding babies to take part in the program who are from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and/or those who might be challenged in some respect. Although the themes are the same for all students, the literature, discussions, and learning activities are age/grade appropriate. Common misconceptions about parenting practices, based on current research findings, are addressed in a sensitive and timely manner. The language used for scenarios, fact sheets, charts, and visuals included in each unit is modified and adapted for the age and maturation levels of the students.

Methodology:

The *Roots of Empathy* program is delivered by an instructor specifically trained in the program, assisted by teachers in the participating school. This learning resource reflects current learning theories and adapts its materials to build opportunities for all children to experience success whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. It engages learners by using a wide repertoire of teaching/learning strategies and a variety of learning experiences in which learners can respond in different ways. Within a safe and caring environment, students learn about interesting topics such as human growth and development, Neuro-science, temperament traits and attachment theory, and a variety of syndromes. Depending on the activity, students work as a class, independently, or in collaborative groupings. They are asked to solve problems, make predictions, gather data and report their findings, reach consensus, share creative solutions, and respect the opinion of others.

Assessment:

While focussing on the affective domain, *Roots of Empathy* provides opportunities for observing students' understanding and for reinforcing skills in a number of curriculum areas. Specific assessment strategies are not included. The resource includes a number of evaluation and tracking forms to assist in monitoring the success of the program.

Format:

The *Roots of Empathy* program is well-organized within four large binders – three are curriculum guides and the other a trainer's manual for those implementing the program. The "Curriculum Guide" includes suggested approaches and reproducible handouts to use when working with the themes with different age groups – K, grades 1-3, grades 4-6, grades 7-8. The Trainer's Manual has sections that detail the program's philosophy, background information based on current research about infant and child development and behaviour, and suggestions for integrating with curriculum. Program features and an audiocassette of songs and action rhymes are included. A short video provides an overview of the program.

Bias:

In the *Roots of Empathy* program, welcoming diversity and celebrating the uniqueness of the individual are common threads in every theme. The selection of a baby's family, the multi-cultural literature used throughout, and the types of learning activities provided, all speak to inclusion issues. Babies and families chosen for the program come from a variety of family structures and are representative of cultural, racial, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The walls of exclusion are broken down as the students move through the program developing empathy for others through discussion and cross-curricular activities.

Review Recommendation:

Roots of Empathy is recommended as a valid program for use with students in Kindergarten to grade 8 to promote understanding of human development, diversity, and the uniqueness of individuals.