



# **Roots of Empathy**

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## **Racines de l'empathie**

### **Roots of Empathy**

### **2022 Global Annual Program Evaluation Report**

**“Roots of Empathy can teach the world that everyone even a baby should be heard.”**

- Primary 5 Student, Irvinestown Primary School, Irvinestown, Northern Ireland

**“It teaches empathy and teach others to understand how others feel. Learn about other's feelings and being [empathic].”**

- Year 3 Student, Nambour Christian College, Queensland, Australia

**“It can teach people not to [bully] because of the way they look or speak and it doesn't matter how you look we [are] all different.”**

- 5th Class Student, Cappoquin Primary School, Cappoquin, Ireland

**“Roots of Empathy can teach the world that everything is better when others try to include others or it's better when people don't be racist and bully.”**

- Grade 4 Student, Kalihi Waena Elementary School, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

**“It can teach kids to be nice and when the kids are older they can be nice to other people and then the other people will be nice [too] and then the world will be a better place! :)”**

- Grade 3/4 Student, North Glenmore Elementary School, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

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



## Global Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2021-2022

With the changing landscape of how education has been delivered during the pandemic, and the variety of measures required to keep schools and children safe, Roots of Empathy innovated to support children wherever they were having their education: on a screen at home, or in their classroom. During the 2021-2022 school year, most of the Roots of Empathy programs were delivered virtually, through the Recovery Program. But across North America and the United Kingdom, there were regions where it was possible for children to participate in our traditional experiential program, with a Tiny Teacher on a Green Blanket in their classroom. Whether or not children were participating virtually or in person, they all had the opportunity to explore how they were feeling and to share those feelings with their peers in their Roots of Empathy class.

The Roots of Empathy Recovery program was created in response to the pandemic, in order to support children's mental health and wellbeing during such a challenging time. Children's mental health was suddenly on everyone's agenda as it plummeted when children were deprived of the regulating impact of playing and learning together in school. Students have responded in a resoundingly positive way to the opportunity to discuss not only how they feel but how people who are disenfranchised, lonely or sad also feel. Roots of Empathy is a trauma-informed program endorsed by Dr. Bruce Perry who has been an advisor to Roots of Empathy for many years.

Both the Recovery and traditional programs foster the development of emotional literacy and empathy, reduces levels of bullying and aggression, promote prosocial behaviours (e.g., helping, caring, sharing, including, etc.), promote children's mental health, and prepare students for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting.

This report is a combination of feedback we have received from our traditional in-class programs and virtual Recovery programs in 11 countries around the world. Children's mental health, well-being and self-regulation skills declined during the pandemic (Elisheva & Wangsness Willemsen, 2022; Bayrami, 2022; Alphonso, 2022; SickKids, 2021). It is important to view the data below with this context in mind. The report is a snapshot of Host Classroom Teachers', ROE Instructors' and Volunteer Parents' experiences with the Roots of Empathy Program during the pandemic. Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork throughout the report.

### Goal #1: To Foster the Development of Emotional Literacy and Empathy

Emotional literacy 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 (Compas et al., 2017). Research also demonstrates that children with good perspective-taking skills and emotional literacy have better attitudes towards themselves and others, show more prosocial behaviours, and exhibit less aggression (Laible et al., 2004).

Empathy is regarded as one of the most desirable of personality traits due to its positive association with prosocial behaviours such as sharing, helping, and cooperating, and plays a crucial role in the



development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (Laible et al., 2004). Interpersonal relationships are essential for mental health and can help shield children from the negative effects of stress (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Bagwell et al., 1998). The ability to take the perspective of another person (cognitive aspect of empathy) also plays a key role in helping individuals resist aggressive behaviours by providing a buffer against antisocial and aggressive temptations (Noorden et al., 2015).

### Feedback Results: Students

- 85% of students reported that Roots of Empathy helped them to learn that everybody has feelings.

### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 85% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are better able to understand other people's points of view.

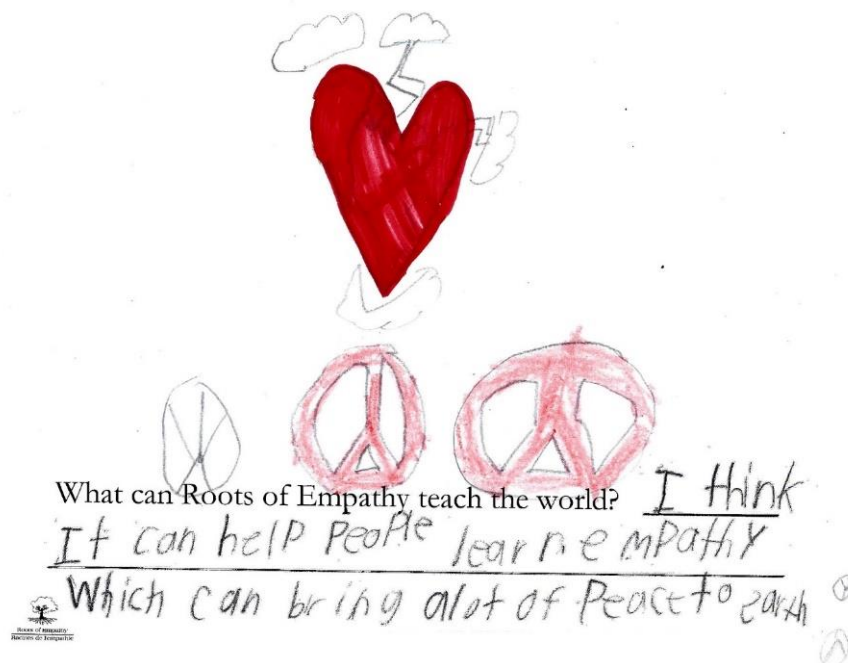
### Feedback Results: Instructors

- 89% of Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that the children became more empathic because of Roots of Empathy.

### Feedback Results: Parents

- 98% of Volunteer Parents reported that they felt that along with their baby, they were helping children to develop empathy.

**Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.**

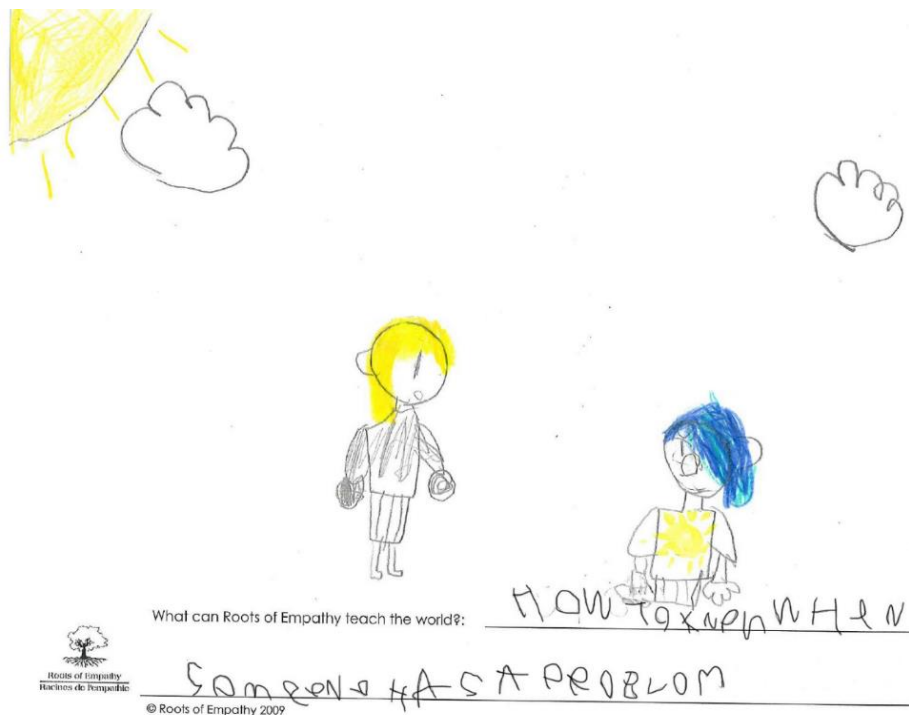


What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “I think it can help people learn empathy which can bring a lot of peace to earth.”

- Grade 3, Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada

“This 8-year-old from Miramichi has a deep understanding of how empathy works for us to connect to ‘the other.’ Through the Tiny Teacher, the children come to understand that everyone in the world started life as a baby. Because they understand the range of feelings that a baby can have and that they are just bigger babies, they appreciate the universality of the human condition. It is hard to see the other as an enemy when you realize that they feel much like you do. This is why this eight-year-old citizen believes that empathy will build peace.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon

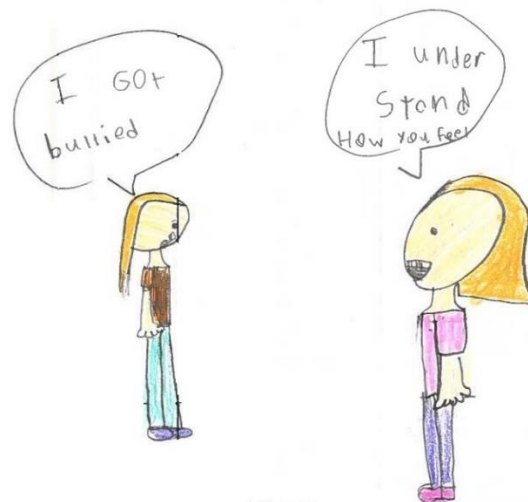


What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “How to know when someone has a problem.”

- Grade 2, Saskatchewan, Canada

“Children as young as seven, with coaching, are able to take the perspective of classmates and demonstrate empathy action by doing something to support a classmate who may be lonely, sad, worried, or just plain confused. When children are collectively exposed to social responsibility, it changes not just how they see things but also how they behave. Being able to observe that a classmate is sad and being socially responsible in helping is how we build a civil society.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? Roots of

empathy can teach the world how you can understand others

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “Roots of empathy can teach the world how you can understand others.”

Speech Bubbles: “I got bullied,” “I understand how you feel.”

- Grade 2/3, Gordon Public School, Welland, Ontario, Canada

“Usually, in grade school, children are reluctant to admit that they are being bullied because it makes them feel vulnerable and embarrassed. In this Roots of Empathy class, the child in the illustration had the courage to say to her classmate that she had been bullied. The classmate was able to respond empathically and let her friend know that she understood what it felt like. In grade school, and in life, we all seek understanding. In the Roots of Empathy classroom, children learn through their Tiny Teacher to understand their own feelings and to be able to understand and feel with the other: empathy. One must first recognize a problem before it can be solved. Bullying is proven to be reduced significantly in Roots of Empathy classes on three continents. Not only do children learn to identify bullying but they also develop the courage to challenge it.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon

**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:**

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world to respect others and to love each another even if they are [different] and also to learn about each others feelings.”

- 4th Class, Mary Queen of Ireland, Limerick, Ireland



« Les sentiments, pas juste les sentiments des bébés, mais aussi les sentiments de tout le monde, et à traiter les autres de la même manière, même si ils sont différents. » (“Feelings, not just babies’ feelings, but everybody’s feelings, and to treat others the same way even if they are different”).

- Grade 5, École Blanche-Bourgeois, Cocagne, New Brunswick, Canada

«Det kan lære om følelser og at man burde også bry seg om andres følelser også og ikke bare oss selv ([The world] can learn about feelings and that we should care about other people’s feelings and not just ourselves).»

- Grade 4, Tinnemoen skole, Notodden, Norway

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world that everyone has feelings, and when we use empathy, good things can come from that. We may not think of a baby as having complex emotions, but when we take the time to observe and use empathy, we can see that they really do! That also applies to more than just babies; it applies to other people as well. It taught me that, and I believe it can show that to the world.”

- Grade 7/8, Near North Virtual School Elementary, Ontario, Canada

## Goal #2: To Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours and Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression

The presence of prosocial behaviours helps to promote positive development in children, by improving the quality of their relationships, and through fostering positive and safe classroom and home atmospheres. Quality relationships and perceived social support greatly increase an individual’s resilience and protect against negative and stressful experiences (Lee et al., 2001). Prosocial behaviour has also been linked to improved academic outcomes (Caprara et al., 2000).

Aggressive children often have fewer social, cognitive, and emotional regulation skills available to them and are therefore more likely to be rejected by other children, and are less likely to get along with teachers (Schick & Cierpka, 2016; Mulvey et al., 2017; Decker et al., 2007; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). 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 (Tremblay, 2004). As a result of the pandemic, teachers around the world report that conflict resolution and problem-solving skills have declined and serious behavior issues like emotional dysregulation, disruption, and defiance are more common than they used to be (Elisheva & Wangsness Willemsen, 2022; Bayrami, 2022; Alphonso, 2022; SickKids, 2021). This accounts for the all-time low statistic of teachers observing reductions in aggressive behaviours. Teachers found teaching to be more challenging and Roots of Empathy supported the students’ ability to reflect on their feelings and behaviour.

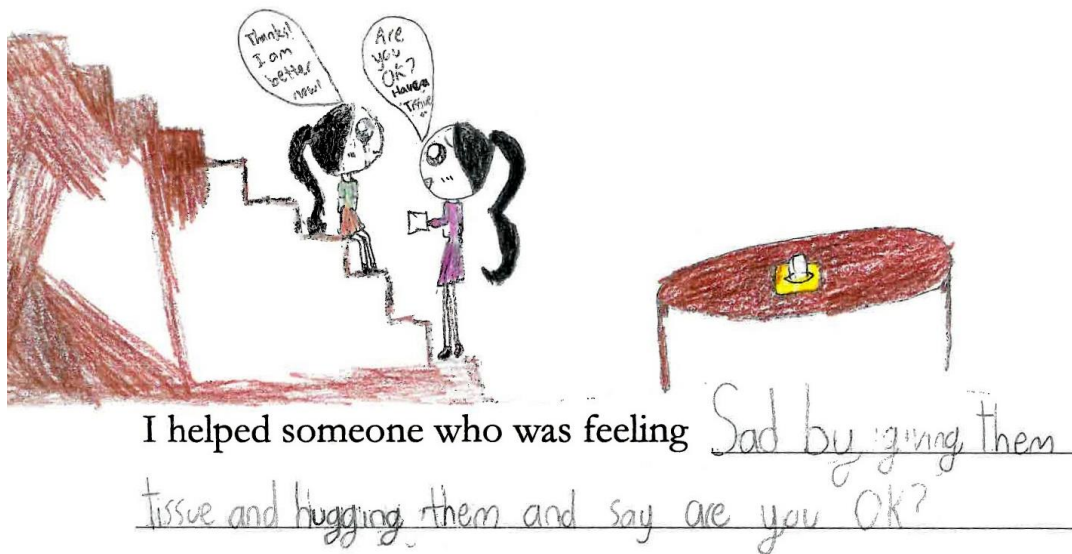
### Feedback Results: Students

- 87% of students reported that they would try to help someone who feels sad, scared, or lonely.
- 88% of students reported that if they saw a student or friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them.





Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.



I helped someone who was feeling “sad by giving them tissue and hugging them and say are you ok?”

Speech Bubble: “Are you ok? Here’s a tissue,” “Thanks! I am better now.”

- Year 4, Pinehill School, Auckland, New Zealand

“In order to comfort a classmate who is physically or emotionally hurt, a student has to understand how they are feeling. This eight-year-old child demonstrated how concerned she was for a classmate who was feeling sad. She provided three strategies of empathic support: she provided a tissue to catch the tears; she gave a hug, which means more than anything else; and, lastly, she asked if the little girl was okay. Research on Roots of Empathy identifies prosocial behaviours as covering kindness, caring, helping, including, and sharing. This little girl provides a wonderful playground model of prosocial behaviour and empathy.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



To me, bullying means disliked and hurtful  
words and motion.



To me, bullying means “disliked and hurtful words and motion.”

Bullying can look like... “Loser haha,” “Online Bullying.”

Bullying can feel like... “a mask,” “depression.”

- Grade 4, Kalihi Waena Elementary School, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

“Nine- and ten-year-old children in this Roots of Empathy class have developed the reflective capacity to recognize verbal, cyber, and physical bullying and the attendant emotional pain. At nine years of age, this child is already talking about feeling depressed because of bullying. Bullying is pernicious, and in the Roots of Empathy program, it is outed and demystified. Having an open discussion about what bullying feels like allows students to appreciate that what hurts my feelings is likely to hurt yours. Roots of Empathy draws the curtain on cruelty, whether it be formal bullying or garden-variety meanness – it has no place in the Roots of Empathy classroom. Students become supporters of one another rather than feeling worried that they will be the next ones to be picked on. Children learn well in the Roots of Empathy classroom because they’re not fearful or anxious about being targeted.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon







Wat kan Roots of Empathy de wereld leren?: *hoe je om te gaan met andere*



*kinderen*

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? (Wat kan Roots of Empathy de wereld leren?)

“How you have to deal with other children (hoe je om moet gaan met andere kinderen).”

- Groep 1, Rotterdam, Netherlands

“Children in the Roots of Empathy program develop friendships in the classroom. Friendships that children are able to sustain pave the way for relationship-building all their lives. Children are able to make friends because Roots of Empathy supports them in knowing how to connect to others through our shared feelings. This empathic capacity will not only help children in their personal lives but will build a citizenry that has the capacity to be inclusive, to embrace diversity, and to build peace.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon

**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:**

“I think that Roots of Empathy can teach the world about helping people in need.”

- Year 3, Murrays Bay School, Auckland, New Zealand

“To be kind to others and include others and also stand up for other people.”

- Grade 5, Gordon Denny Community School, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan, Canada

“To treat people better and help people when they are down or not feeling good or getting bullied, and to treat people the same as everyone else.”

- Grade 5, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

### Goal #3: To Prepare Students for Responsive Parenting

The Roots of Empathy program focuses on the parent-baby relationship because it is the most powerful example of empathy in the world. The parent's attunement to their baby's emotional state and physical needs helps the baby learn to regulate their emotions, explore the world with confidence, and develop healthy relationships with others. In turn, the baby's ability to develop a secure attachment to the parent is dependent on this attunement (Rees, 2007).

If everybody understood that babies are like everybody else with a full range of emotions, there would be less child abuse and a higher level of parenting satisfaction. Babies may feel lonely, frightened, anxious, confused, frustrated, and children in Roots of Empathy can list up dozens of feelings babies might have. This leads them to respect the humanity of the baby and it is a protective factor when the students are adults. It could be a brake against harming a baby through ignorance. Roots of Empathy reframes the period of infancy so that there is an understanding that babies have both physical states and emotional states and it is the job of the parent to attune to the baby's state in order to meet their needs.

#### Feedback Results: Students

- 91% of students reported learning that babies do better when they are loved and cared for.

#### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 86% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students understand more about the responsibilities of being a parent.
- 98% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students were able to recognize how the baby was feeling.

#### Feedback Results: Parents

- 96% of Volunteer Parents felt that the students learned about their baby's emotions and reactions to situations.

**Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.**





My happiest moment in the Roots of Empathy Recovery

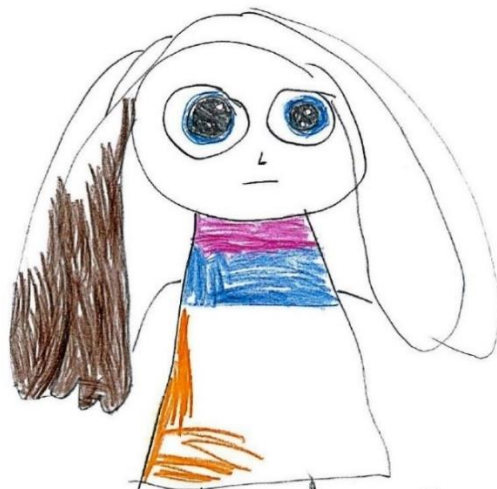
Program was Woch in hre Be  
Loved.

My happiest moment in the Roots of Empathy Recovery Program was "[Watching her] be loved."

- Kindergarten, Loyal Heights Elementary School, Seattle, WA, USA

"Celebrating the attachment relationship between parent and infant is an endorsement of the family and resonates deeply, not just in the classroom, but in the broader community. Empathy is innate but develops in the earliest months and years through the loving relationship between parents and baby."

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?: To never ever shake a baby



because it might could get brain damage.

© Roots of Empathy 2009

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? "To never ever shake a baby because it could get brain damage."

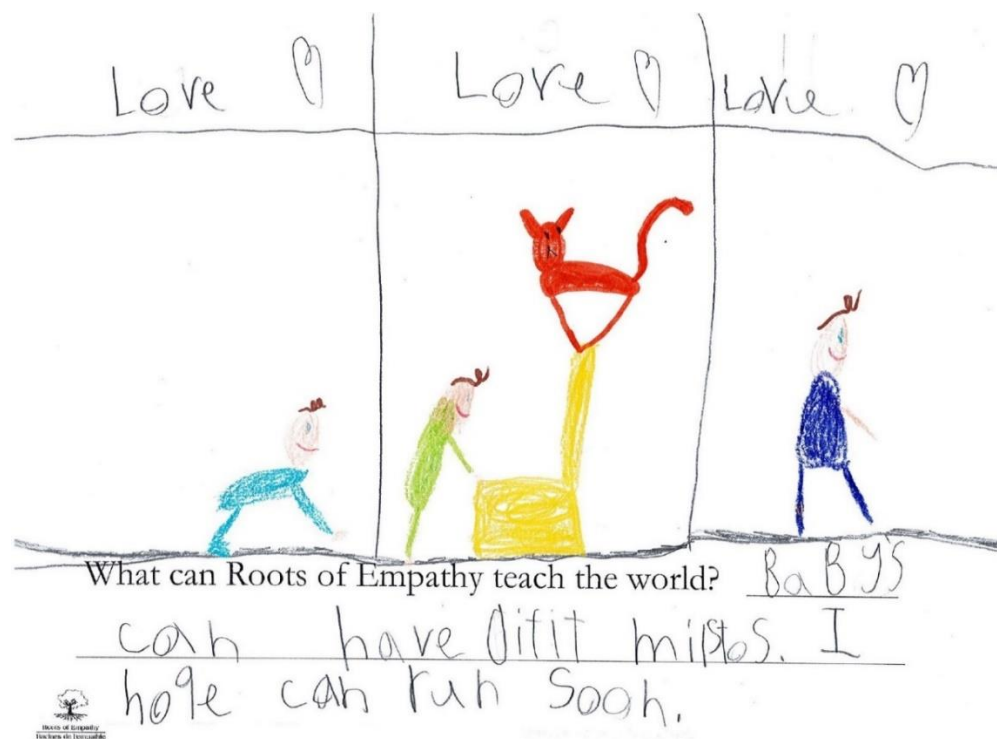
- Year 2, London, England



“Roots of Empathy pupils learn about neuroscience and how vulnerable a baby’s brain is. In learning about keeping a baby safe, pupils hear about the hazard of Shaken Baby Syndrome in a developmentally appropriate way. Over the course of the Roots of Empathy program, pupils learn that babies cry not just for physical reasons but for emotional reasons like being scared or lonely. Exhausted and isolated parents who may not have an understanding of why their babies cry sometimes resort in desperation to shaking their babies with disastrous results.

“Roots of Empathy strives to break intergenerational cycles of violence and poor parenting. This 6-year-old child understands that babies cry for a reason and that they experience the full range of feelings, not just physical ones. Even the youngest Roots of Empathy pupil understands our public health message that you can ‘never shake a baby’.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?

“[Babies] can have [different milestones]. I hope [he] can run soon.”

- Grade 1, SouthPointe School, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada

“Children come to understand and respect that all babies have a unique timetable for growth and meeting their milestones. They also gain insights into their own patterns of growth and learning, appreciating that as students each person learns differently and takes different amounts of time to ‘get it.’ They understand that just like the baby, who might take a lot of practicing in crawling before being able to stand, that they might need more practice with a math concept before being able to own it.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:**

“How to properly care for a baby and be responsible with them. Also how to find your own emotions, milestones, and temperament.”

- Grade 6, Minto Elementary School, Minto, Manitoba, Canada

“That when you are frustrated DO NOT hit [your] baby just ask for help.”

- Primary 5, Lhanbryde Primary School, Lhanbryde, Scotland

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to be better people and how to treat babies correctly, while teaching us how to take care of babies and not hurt the baby.”

- Grade 6, Lundy Elementary School, Lowell, Oregon, USA

“I think that Roots of Empathy can teach the world more about babies, how babies feel and know their emotions, how every person should be treated the same and we are all humans. Roots of Empathy can educate more people about babies and children have more knowledge about them that can help them later if they want to have a child.”

- Grade 5/6, Humewood Community School, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## **Goal #4: To Prepare Students for Responsible Citizenship**

Students learn to build consensus and to respect different views of their classmates while having experience in presenting their own views. Every child has a voice but sometimes they can't find it because of other powerful disincentives, like people making fun of them. In a Roots of Empathy classroom, students do not laugh at other students because they know how they would feel. Roots of Empathy is a brake against cruelty but not a guarantee. When children understand that their actions, like excluding another person, affect others' wellbeing, they are more likely to operate with a lens of empathy. Being a responsible citizen in adulthood starts in childhood. The Roots of Empathy classroom is sometimes spoken about as a participatory democracy.

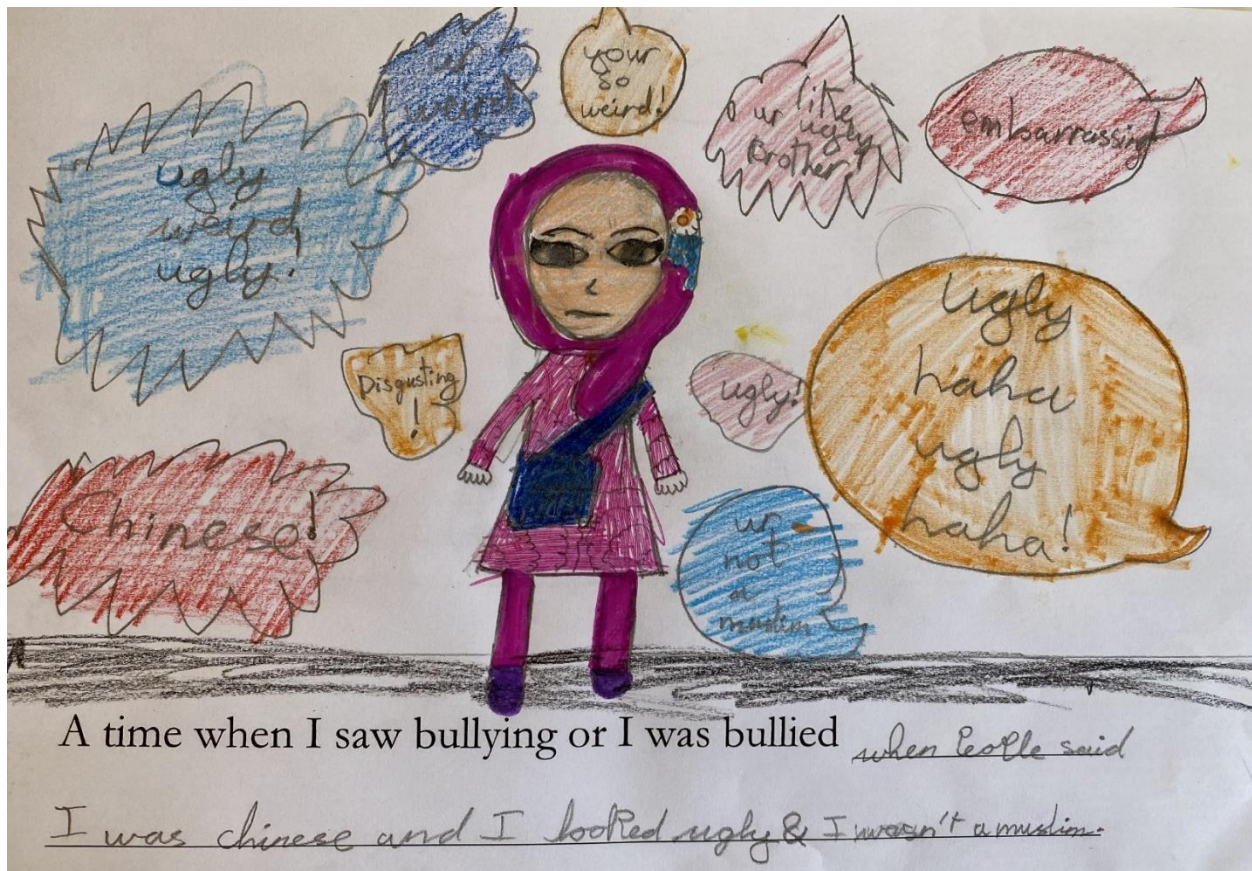
### **Feedback Results: Students**

- 88% of students reported that it is wrong that some people get excluded because they are different.

**Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.**







A time when I saw bullying or I was bullied “when people said I was Chinese and I looked ugly & I wasn’t a Muslim.”

Speech Bubble: “ugly weird ugly,” “Chinese!”, “Disgusting!”, “[You’re] not a Muslim,” “Ugly!”, “ugly haha ugly haha!”, “embarrassing,” “like [your] ugly brother,” “[you’re so weird!], “[you’re] weird.”

- 3rd Class, Ireland

“Bullying, in this case, is denying this little 9-year-old girl of her Muslim heritage and making fun of her race. She is processing being told that she is ‘ugly, weird, disgusting, and embarrassing’ because she was being perceived as different. Roots of Empathy helps children identify what makes us human and connects us together – our ability to feel. Over the course of the school year, bullying and other injustices are challenged and children develop empathy which helps them understand how classmates would feel if they bully them. Roots of Empathy is the brake against bullying. Multiple studies have shown that the Roots of Empathy program reduces aggression and bullying (Lätsch and Bollinger, 2017; Santos et al, 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al, 2012). In Roots of Empathy, children have opportunities to paint their pain because they might not be able to communicate in words the deep hurts of bullying. Her courage in sharing is a result of the safe and supportive environment created in the ROE program.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon







What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? don't

be mean for peeps differences



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “Don’t be mean for [people’s differences].”

Speech Bubble: “Are you ok.”

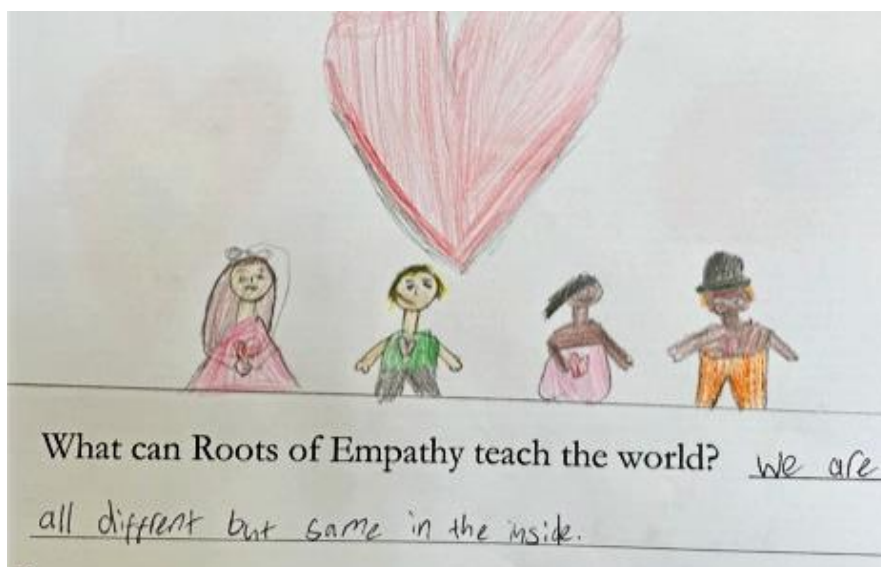
- Grade 1, Florence, Oregon, USA

“Children as young as 6 years old understand that sometimes people are mean to you because you are different or you stand out in some way. Lessons on inclusion are absorbed in all 27 classes of Roots of Empathy throughout one year. There are many opportunities provided for children to have discussions about differences and how people would feel if they are excluded or spoken to in a mean way. Decency and morality don’t have a shelf life, and the youngest child can be an outstanding citizen who lives the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

“Democracies develop in classrooms, not in boardrooms or war-rooms, when children have the opportunity to contribute to another person’s well-being – to be a ‘giver’ or, as we say in Roots of Empathy, to be a ‘changer.’ We explain to children that when one of their classmates is upset or when something isn’t fair, that it usually is not their fault but they might have a chance to change either the situation or how the friend feels. The empowerment of being able to help a classmate is reinforcing and makes the child a card-carrying citizen in the participatory democracy of the Roots of Empathy classroom.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon





What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “We are all different but same in the inside.”

- Year 4, Our Lady of the Angels RC Primary School, Cwmbran, Wales

“The power of learning that we all share the same emotions and therefore the same humanity coupled with respect for differences helps make Roots of Empathy pupils more aware of others’ feelings and rights. This empathic capacity will not only help children in their personal lives but will build a citizenry that has the capacity to be inclusive, to embrace diversity, and to build peace.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon

**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:**

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world to be kind and to respect everyone no matter if they speak different look different or have different [cultures] and [celebrations].”

- Grade 5, J.C. Charyk School, Hanna, Alberta, Canada

“I think Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to understand other people and everyone is unique in their own ways.”

- Year 3, Murrays Bay School, Auckland, New Zealand

“That children are responsible for the future and can make the world a better place through empathy and inclusion.”

- Grade 5, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

“How to be kind and create a peaceful society that treat everyone with respect.”

- Grade 5, Major Pratt School, Russell, Manitoba, Canada

## Goal #5: To Promote Students' Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Resilience

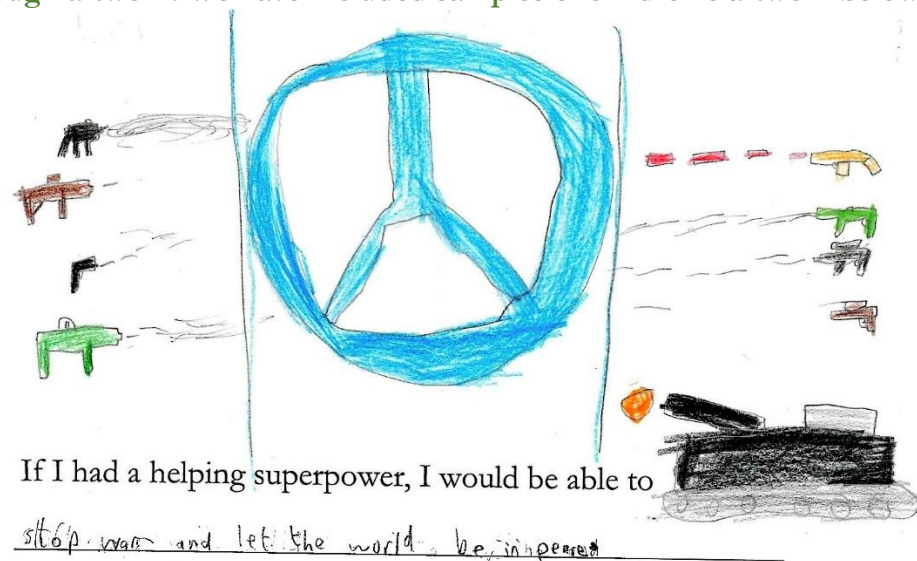
Over the course of the pandemic, children have been separated from their friends and communities. They have experienced a collective trauma. While the impact of this might vary from child to child, all will carry this experience throughout their lives. For many, the experience of being isolated and unable to engage with others their own age will have lasting effects on their mental health and wellbeing. Additional anxiety in children has resulted from the war in Ukraine, the new flu, and the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Roots of Empathy fosters resilience in children. [Dr. Bruce Perry](#) stated, "Roots of Empathy is critically important as a resiliency building program. It teaches children how to develop a comfort level with creating relational opportunities." [Dr. Michael Ungar](#), a world-renowned resilience expert, noted, "Roots of Empathy is seeding the foundational stones for a more resilient community."

Roots of Empathy fosters the development of empathy and prosocial behaviours, both of which are associated with the ability to make friends and with positive mental health/emotional wellbeing. Empathy is necessary to build healthy relationships and resilience (Mehrabian, 2000; Jones et al., 2015).

### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 97% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have an opportunity to talk about their feelings.
- 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students understand that all feelings are okay.

Roots of Empathy children in the primary grades provide developmentally-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork below.

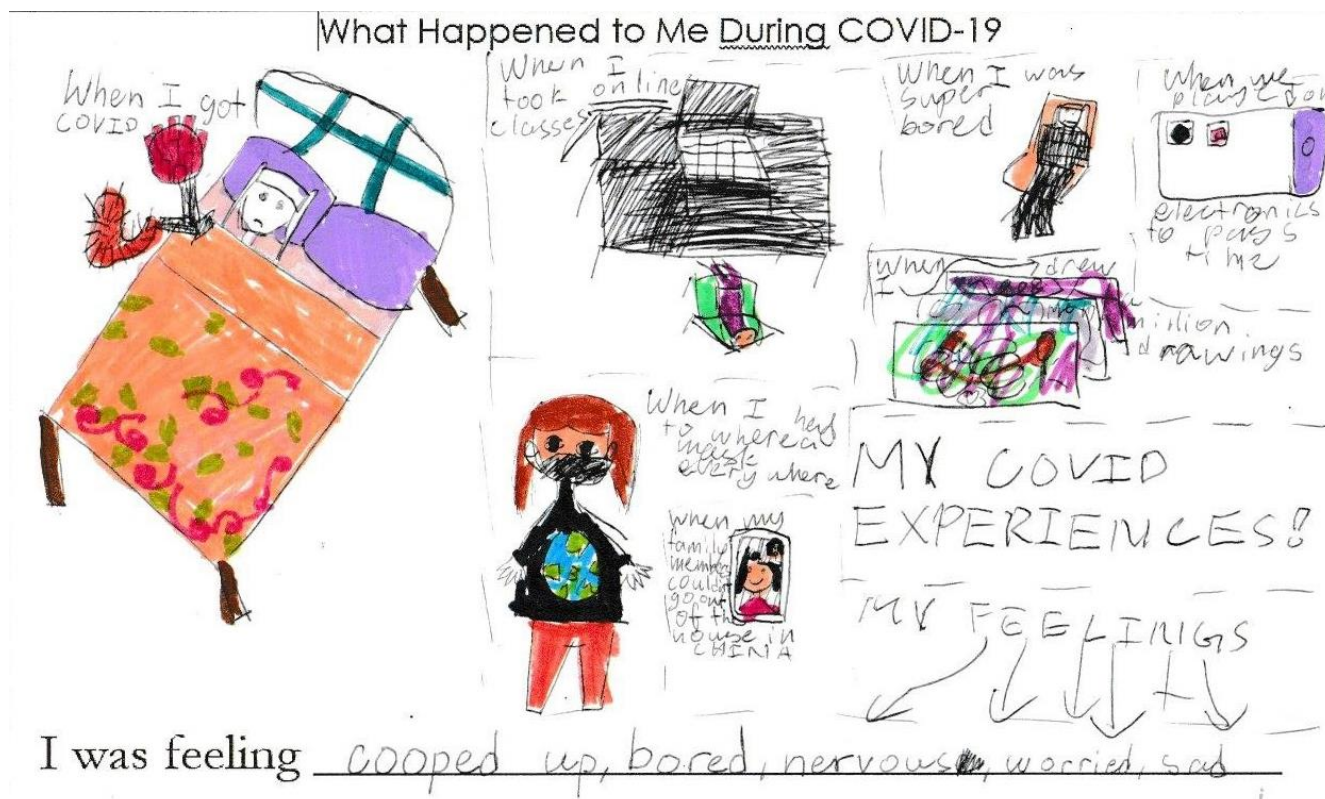


If I had a helping superpower, I would be able to "stop war and let the world be in peace."

- Primary 4, Broadbridge Primary School, Derry, Northern Ireland

"We sometimes think that children are not listening to the news and are not aware of the violence around them. Make no mistake; there is a scent of anxiety that permeates the air when we speak of violence. Children in the Roots of Empathy program are invited to reflect and imagine the world as they would like it to be. Many children dream about peace and accept that it can start with them. They are hopeful, and they are our hope."

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



What Happened to Me During Covid-19: I was feeling "cooped up, bored, nervous, worried, sad."

Captions: "When I got COVID," "When I took online classes," "When I had to [wear] a mask everywhere," "When my family members couldn't go out of the house in China," "When I was super bored," "When we played on electronics to pass time," "When I drew a million drawings."

- Grade 3, Stratford Hall IB World School, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

"Grade 3 is a crucial year in learning to read because it is at this stage that children start reading to learn, and without competence in reading, it impacts negatively on many other kinds of learning where text is used. The pandemic created huge learning loss but more importantly, it created a tsunami of poor mental health and anxiety. Schools will be brilliant at closing the learning gap, but first, children must feel comfortable and be able to relate to others. Roots of Empathy helped close the emotional development gap and helped students reconnect to their own feelings and to one another so that they would be ready to learn."

- Founder/President Mary Gordon



I showed courage when I started school.

I showed courage when “I started school.”

- Kindergarten, Berwick and District School, Berwick, Nova Scotia, Canada

“Roots of Empathy gives teachers unparalleled direct line to understand their students’ feelings. For many teachers, finding out what their students feel courageous about is an eye-opener which allows them to connect to those students in a meaningful way. For shy and hesitant kindergarteners like Isabelle, it took a lot of courage to leave the security of being the centre of attention at home to being one of the group in her kindergarten. These early transitions can be supported when children have opportunities to speak freely about their fears and anxieties. Roots of Empathy gives children the emotional vocabulary to help one another. This is an example of school-based positive mental health.”

- Founder/President Mary Gordon

**When asked, “What can Roots of Empathy Teach the World,” students offered comments such as:**

“That feelings aren’t good or bad (Dat gevoelens niet goed of slecht zijn).”

- Groep 4, Public Elementary School Heksenketel, Assen, Netherlands

“That it’s okay [to] let [out] your emotions at [any] time and not feel [embarrassed].”

- Grade 5, Westmount School, Strathmore, Alberta, Canada

“Empathy helps us understand how others feels, helps us [connect] with people.”

- Grade 5-8, St. Anne’s School, South East Bight, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

“It can teach the world that we all have feelings and that we all matter even if we are different [than] others.”

- Grade 5, École Rose-des-Vents, Greenwood, Nova Scotia, Canada

“We can learn to stand up for everyone and make sure they [are] okay and to change the world.”

- Grade 5, Van Ness Elementary School, Washington, D.C., USA



## Global Additional Findings

Roots of Empathy offers programs on three continents in multiple languages. We compile a Global Annual Program Evaluation report. Below are the findings from Roots of Empathy's **global feedback** from Volunteer Parents, ROE Instructors, and Host Classroom Teachers. This shows the impact of the program on participants all around the world.

### **Curriculum Expectations**

- 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the ROE Program supports the school's curriculum.

### **Volunteer Parent Experiences**

- 85% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that by volunteering Roots of Empathy, they felt connected to the school.
- 96% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were giving back to the community by volunteering with Roots of Empathy.
- 87% of parents of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they became more aware of their baby's developmental milestones.
- 98% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported by their ROE Instructor.
- 99% of parents said that they would recommend the ROE program to other parents.

### **Instructor Experiences**

- 95% of Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering with Roots of Empathy built on other areas of their job/life.

### **Host Classroom Teacher Experiences**

- 94% of Host Classroom Teachers reported that they would be interested in having Roots of Empathy in their classroom again.

### **When asked about the impact of the program, Roots of Empathy Host Classroom Teachers offered comments such as:**

"The students were able to apply what they learned in Roots of Empathy to other social situations. Students are able to identify feelings in peers better and have showed more caring behaviors when they observe peers have unexpected emotions or behaviors. Students were more willing to open up about their feelings when they related it to something they saw in our Roots of Empathy baby."

- Brooklyn, Grade 1, Malabon Elementary School, Eugene, Oregon, USA

"Students continue to grow throughout the year, and are more open to talking about their emotions, rather than reacting in either a physical or verbal response. They connect with each other and show empathy for the other peers experience and have the vocabulary to have these discussions."

- Chelsea, Grade 7/8, Arbour Lake School, Calgary, Alberta, Canada





“The Roots of Empathy programme has been such a positive experience for my class. It has given the children the opportunities to learn about emotions and strategies they can use to manage their feelings, as well as developing their ability to manage and value relationships. Their Tiny Teacher helped them to have a better understanding of their own development and it has encouraged a growth mindset in class. They have also been able to explore and appreciate being unique ... I noticed an increase in participation in discussions about feelings and also children were able to identify their own emotions.”

- Kirsty, Primary 3, Merrylee Primary School, Glasgow, Scotland

“Our keiki often wonder if their feelings are ‘normal’. This program has strengthened the understanding that ALL feelings are valid ALL the time. It's awesome to see the keiki respect each other's differences. I feel they are encouraged by the fact that we ALL have dilemmas that we are faced with, no matter who we are.”

- Sue, Grade 4, Kapa‘a Elementary School, Kapa‘a, Hawaii, USA

“Roots is wonderful because it supports and furthers the work we do around social/emotional development and traditional Indigenous teachings about how to live a good life. It allows us to connect teachings to our lives in a tangible way. ... All the students seemed interested in the baby and seemed to feel protective or see the baby's vulnerability and reliance on others. It encourages them to think of others in a responsible way.”

- Kindergarten, Collicutt School, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

“As students returned to in-person learning I think the themes of body language were really important. Students lost key experiences to understand how other people were feeling. I also liked the [ROE] connection to how COVID has impacted the students' lives and gave them the chance to reflect on it.”

- Adam, Grade 1, Arbor Heights Elementary School, Seattle, USA

“The children were able to express even better what their feelings are, what they wanted to say and were open about this. You were able to talk to the children about what was going on in different situations and the children also regularly help each other. (De kinderen konden nog beter uitdrukken wat de gevoelens zijn, wat ze kwijt wilden en waren open hierover. Je kon goed met de kinderen in gesprek over wat er gaande was in verschillende situaties en de kinderen helpen elkaar ook regelmatig).”

- Laurey, Groep 3/4, Christelijke Basisschool De Kleine Wereld, Groningen, Netherlands

“Students were able to identify how the baby might be feeling and connect to their own personal lives... Students have been struggling with prosocial skills as a result of the pandemic and missed opportunities to socialize and connect with each other in positive and constructive ways. Roots of Empathy increases a positive classroom environment through building fundamental life-long skills such as identifying emotions within self and others, empathy and perspective-taking.”

- Patricia, Grade 4, St. Andrew Catholic Elementary School, Oakville, Ontario, Canada

“We are based in low socio economic area and I feel that the course is vital in helping children to communicate with one another and to express their feelings. It also teaches about how our actions can hurt feelings etc.”

- Conchubhar, 2nd Class, St.Kieran's Spec School, Bray, Ireland



“I love this program. I have been involved with it as a parent who's baby was [a] ‘teacher’, then I became trained to be an instructor, and now I am a classroom teacher who has the program in my classroom. I have seen all sides and there is nothing but positive things to say. This program has great value in teaching kids how to have empathy and learn about their own feelings and how to manage them.”

- Grade 2, Blackville School, Blackville, New Brunswick, Canada

“I noticed that students who were vulnerable reacted really well when the baby and their mother were physically in the room. It was a transformative hour for them. Some students who had younger siblings and struggled with the new dynamic at home, also found themselves expressing some of those feelings. ... Students looked forward to the ROOTS sessions. I noticed less violent incidents in our class through the end of the program.”

- Grade 5, MacLean Memorial School, Chibougamau, Quebec, Canada

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

“[Roots of Empathy can teach the world] that empathy is teachable and so important in our young people. Empathetic humans will shape the future of communities.”

- Year 3, Katelin, Nambour Christian College, Queensland, Australia

“With everything going on in the world currently, we worry what kind of world our baby will have to grow up in. Roots of Empathy showed us that despite the decisions that adults are currently making, children are still good and kind. Being in Roots of Empathy gave me hope that maybe the next generation will be one that is kind and inclusive.”

- Tanis, Grade 1/2, Oliver Elementary School, Oliver, British Columbia, Canada

“Participating in this program created a even more Special bond between me and my baby. It got me to focus on each milestones and really appreciate every single one. I feel like every week we celebrate a new victory together.”

- Emilie, Grade 3, Gretna Green Elementary, Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada

“This was such a positive experience for our whole family! My other children loved having a ‘celebrity’ little brother as part of the school community. They regularly went to the ROE notice board to check on Tadhg’s latest development! Our instructor Mary invited them to the ROE graduation and thanked them for lending their brother to the class. The children felt so included and were thrilled! The memory books which documented his development throughout the year, which Mary and the class so lovingly compiled for Tadhg will always be treasured in our home. Both my husband and I have applied to train as ROE instructors such was our experience!”

- Aisling, Senior Infants, St. Colman's National School, Mullingar, Ireland

“It gave us a sense of connection with the rest of the world in a very isolating time for parents with young children (before a vaccine was available as the pandemic dragged on).”

- Rebecca, Grade 1/2, Brookside Elementary School, Lake Forest Park, WA, USA



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

“Teaching this program encourages empathy in my daily life and encourages patience in oneself. Lake Babine Nation has experienced tremendous loss and Roots is the perfect program to showcase how we can care for others during tough times. ...Children were more open about sharing how they felt and learned expressive language to label their emotions.”

- Katherine, Grade 1/2, Woyenne Primary School, Burns Lake, British Columbia, Canada

“[Roots of Empathy can teach the world] to show empathy and kindness and think about other people's feelings no matter what walk of life they come from and how different they may be as we're all the same on the inside.”

- Year 4, Judy, Pinehill School, Auckland, New Zealand

“I noticed that the students were easier on themselves when they couldn't do something right away. Learning that our baby wasn't doing something ‘yet’ and discussing that everyone learns at different paces has helped them to be more patient with others in the class and themselves when they are first learning a skill.”

- Tara, Kindergarten, Hazen White Saint Francis School, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada

“One child wrote in his reflection, ‘ROE could teach the world there is more to life than yourself and devices. I think Roots of Empathy could change the world because it already has changed me’.”

- Suzanna, Grade 3, Meridian Park Elementary School, Shoreline, WA, USA

“The children certainly gained more understanding of the challenges and joys of parentings. South East Bight is a remote community - there are no babies here (youngest are Grade 4). Having this experience allowed them to watch Baby Elena grow, reflect on these experiences along the way, and relate themes to their own lives. I do feel that they were kinder to one another.”

- Trudy, Grade 5-8, St. Anne's School, South East Bight, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

“I [embed] all of the philosophy of Roots of Empathy into my other role as a Child development officer working with children and families. The skills and knowledge I have learnt through being an instructor have helped me become a better listener, really hearing the children's voices, thoughts and feelings to help me support their emotional wellbeing.”

- Angela, Primary 3, Merrylee Primary School, Glasgow, Scotland

“Roots of Empathy not only reaches our students within the classroom, but also their families and the community.”

- Lorelei, Grade 2, Iron Ridge Elementary Campus, Blackfalds, Alberta, Canada

“[Pupils] talked about their feelings more. They learned that it was ok to feel sad or mad and learned how to help others that were feeling that way. Resilience was a big one for one of the boys in our class and he really liked the way that Avery (our baby) kept trying and could empathise with him.

“I love teaching the program and each year and in each lesson I learn something new from the children, parents, babies or teachers. The uniqueness of each of us is emphasised in each lesson by



the feedback from the children. The non judgemental method of delivering and accepting all answers empowers the children to share more with each other.”

- Belinda, Primary 3/4, Ballycraigy Primary School, Antrim, Northern Ireland

“They were more aware of their classmates feelings and I saw children in that class come together when someone was having a bad day or experience. They became protective of each other and especially our baby. They began to talk more empathically towards each others and others they play with.”

- Pam, Grade 3, École Julie Riel, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

“The children have become much more aware of each other and how each other might feel. They have become closer as a class and include everyone. The children recognised that everyone is different and that is ok.”

- Rachel, Year 4, Our Lady of the Angels RC Primary School, Cwmbran, Wales

“I saw some really beautiful moments, where some of the boys in the class ‘let go’ and really found a connection with the little Teacher, which I think had an impact on some of the other boys as well, that were a little distanced.

“I think [Roots of Empathy can teach the world] respect for diversity, increased tolerance, and a broader understanding of vulnerability and that we are dependent of each other.”

- Signe, Grade 3/4, Notodden, Norway



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