Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie

Teacher and Principal Presentation

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Johnny has 3 apples.
If Amélie takes 2 apples,

How will Johnny feel?
What is Roots of Empathy?

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based classroom program that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression and violence among school children while raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy.

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poor parenting and violence.
Mission

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

• To foster the development of empathy
• To develop *emotional literacy*
• To reduce levels of bullying, aggression and violence, and promote children’s pro-social behaviours
• To increase knowledge of human development, learning and infant safety
• To prepare students for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting
Our Teachers... Roots of Empathy Babies

A certified Roots of Empathy Instructor and neighbourhood parent and infant visit the classroom over the school year. These interactions and the accredited curriculum build children’s social and emotional learning.
Program Elements

- Infant and parent visit classroom once a month (9 visits)
- Instructor makes 27 classroom visits; including nine Family Visits
- Instructor coaches students to observe development
- 4 curricula; Kindergarten, grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-8

Messages of infant safety: SIDS, FASD, second hand smoke and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

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History and Reach

• Founded 1996 by educator, author, and Order of Canada Member Mary Gordon
• 2006/07 offered in nine provinces in more than 6,200 classrooms
• Has reached more than 156,000 children
• Programs in Australia, New Zealand, and United States
• Offered in both English and French, in urban and rural communities
Growth of the Program

Number of children reached each year
Observation of and labelling baby’s emotions

The baby is crying because her mom is gone.
Emotional Literacy

Observation of and labelling baby’s emotions

Reflecting and identifying own emotions

I felt proud when I learned to ride my bike. I felt proud when I learned to read my back.
Emotional Literacy

When my friend is scared of the slad I will help him.

Observation of and labelling baby’s emotions
Reflecting and identifying own emotions
Understanding the emotions of others (empathy)
Observation of and labelling baby’s emotions
Reflecting and identifying own emotions
Understanding the emotions of others (empathy)
Comfort in discussing emotions

Try not to get mad at a baby because he might learn to be mean when he grows up.
Curriculum Evaluation

"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."

~Curriculum Services Canada
(Leading standards agency for evaluation of educational resources)
The most dangerous thing that can happen to a baby is: 

neur siak
o Bear.
Curriculum Connection
Experiential Learning

Writing
Art
Curriculum Connection
Experiential Learning

Writing
Art
Math & Science
Independent Research

- University of British Columbia (*five studies starting 2000*)
  - all showed a significant decrease in aggression and bullying, and an increase in pro-social behaviours among children who participated in the Roots of Empathy program compared to children who did not.

- Government of Manitoba (*2004-2007 follow-up study*)
  - found significant improvements in behaviours in Roots of Empathy children immediately after the program, and that improvements were maintained three years later.
Independent Research

• Australia (2005)
  – found increases in pro-social behaviour and decreases in aggressive behaviour in Roots of Empathy children

• New Zealand (starting 2007)
  – research underway on two-year study by Government of New Zealand, with results expected in 2009
Program Evaluations

• Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (2005)
  – Roots of Empathy is an effective program for developing social and emotional learning, based on scientific research on child development and the personal and professional experience of leading educators and health practitioners

• Berkowitz and Bier, University of Missouri St Louis, (2005)
  – report on character education programs
  – Roots of Empathy met their criteria for scientific merit and showed significant effects of character education
  – particularly strong evidence of support for Roots of Empathy in reducing violence and aggression, and increasing emotional competencies
Who is the Roots of Empathy Instructor?

- Public Health Nurses/Social Workers
- Police Officers
- Child Welfare/Youth and Family workers
- Early Childhood Educators
- School-based instructors:
  - Psychologists
  - Guidance counselors
  - Speech pathologists
  - Principals/Vice-Principals
  - Unassigned classroom teachers*

* The Roots of Empathy program may NOT be delivered by a teacher in his/her own classroom.
Role of the Teacher

Research tells us that the teacher’s support and involvement in Roots of Empathy has a significant impact on positive outcomes for the students.

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Teacher Commitment

• Help set-up schedule and notify Instructor of changes
• Participate actively in all lessons and assist when needed
• Take photos during Family Visits
• Help maintain classroom management
• Allow class time to complete ROE work
• Collect student permission forms
• Provide space for and maintenance of bulletin board
• Complete teacher evaluation form

Teacher Liz Papathanasakis, with Baby Amari, Winchester Public School, Toronto, March 2004
Principal Commitment

- Strong understanding and support of the program
- Finding an enthusiastic classroom teacher to host the ROE program
- Welcome and support for ROE family
- Occasional use of school photocopier and paper
- Occasional use of school laminator
- Use of school digital camera or purchase of film and developing of photos
- Willing to be involved in media events or coverage, evaluation or research

Principal Annie Lee, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, and Mary Gordon at an ROE classroom visit in Toronto at Winchester Public School, April 2005

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Recognition

In October 2006, Mary Gordon, Founder/President of Roots of Empathy was invested to the Order of Canada.

In September 2006, Mary Gordon participated in the Vancouver Dialogues to launch the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education and engaged His Holiness on her concept of empathy ethics. Ms. Gordon wrote a chapter in the commemorative book for this event.
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