



**Roots of Empathy**  
**Racines de l'empathie**

**Roots of Empathy**

**2019 Annual Program Evaluation Report**

**Ontario**

**“Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to control your feeling and so people don’t get frustrated and start harming people”**

*- Grade 5 Student, St. David Catholic Elementary School Hamilton*

**“I think it could help the world because it teaches students to care and notice other people’s feelings. I think it could literally stop war... I am very grateful it began and I got to be a part of it”**

*- Grade 5 Student, Kingsville Public School, Kingsville*

**“The children were able to relate/reflect on their own lives feelings and experiences to the baby. The children shared personal experiences of bullying and how it made them feel.”**

*- Grade 1/2, St. Peter's Elementary School, Cambridge*

**“96% of teachers feel that the Roots of Empathy program supports the school’s curriculum”**

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



## Ontario Annual Program Evaluation Report: 2018-2019

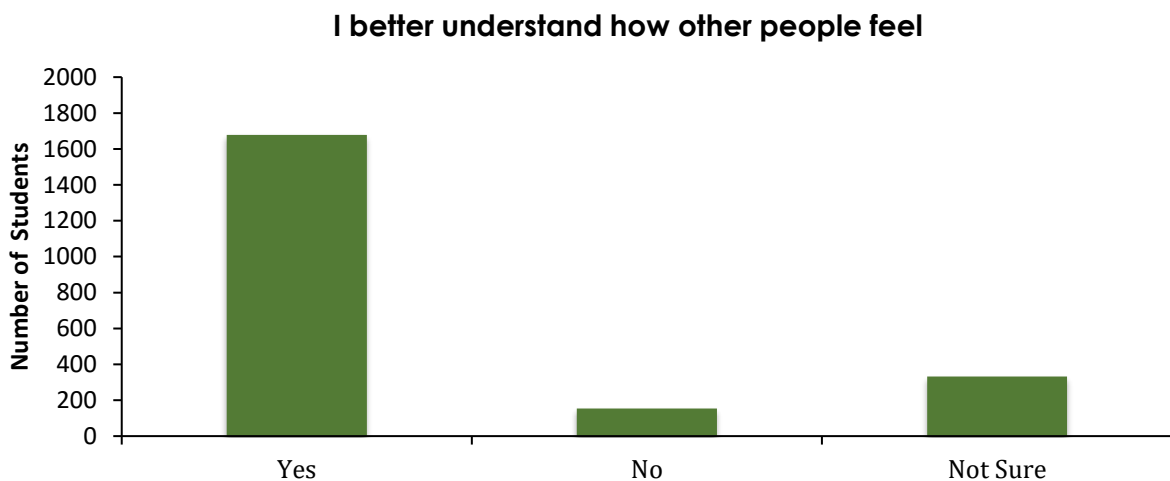
This report is a summary of the annual program evaluation data collected from students, teachers, Instructors and volunteer parents throughout Ontario for the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers, Instructors, and volunteer parents were asked to provide their perceptions of any changes in behaviour in students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

- 78% of students reported better understanding how other people feel

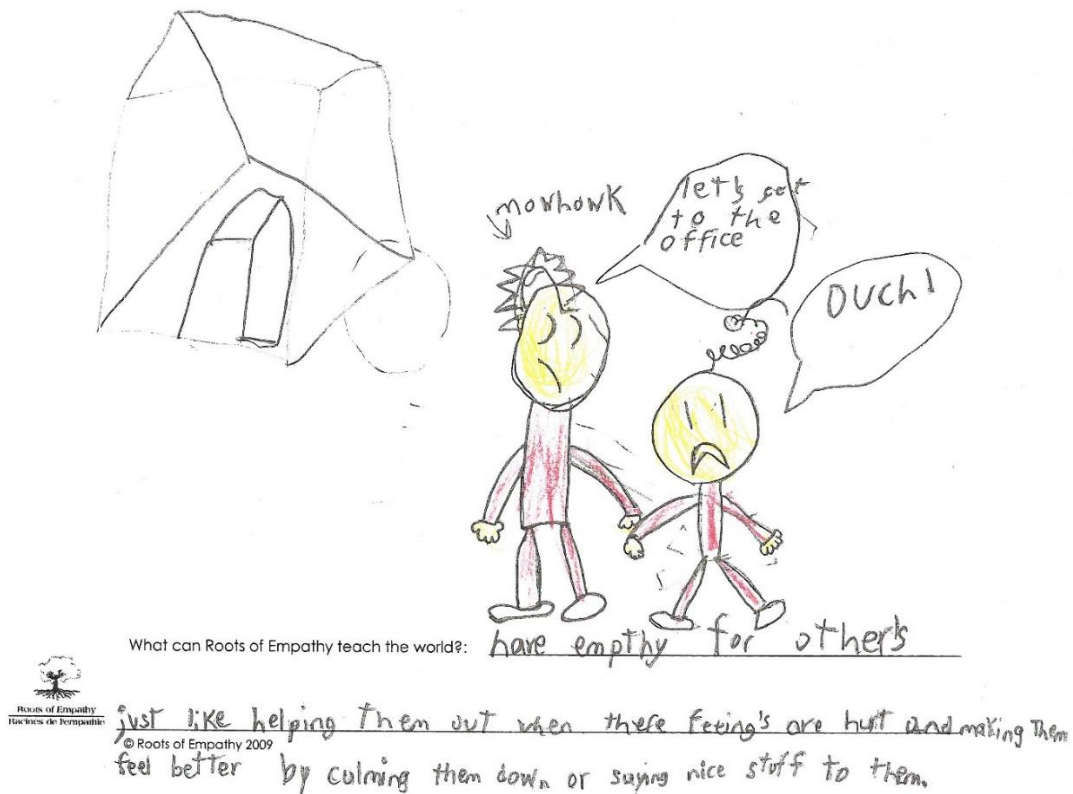


#### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 90% 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
- 91% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are more empathic to one another

Across Ontario, Roots of Empathy students in the primary grades provide age-appropriate feedback through artwork. We have included samples of children's artwork throughout the report.

## Development of Empathy



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? "have empathy for others just like helping them out when [their feelings] are hurt and making them feel better by [calming] them down or saying nice stuff to them"

- Grade 2 Student, Sarnia

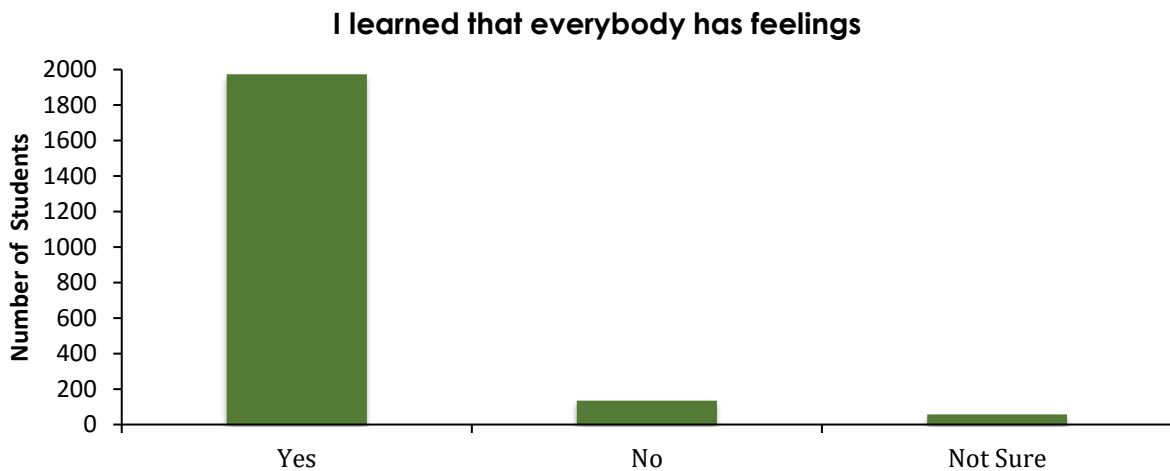
The development of empathy is well underway with this little boy from Sarnia. He has understood emotion regulation and has practical advice on how to be helpful when someone's feelings are hurt. We could benefit from having more children like this seven-year-old from St. Anne school.

## 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

- 91% of students reported learning that everybody has feelings
- 92% of students reported learning to recognize how the baby is feeling



### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 92% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students talk more about their feelings
- 90% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students have increased their vocabulary of feeling words

## Development of Emotional Literacy

Schools are experts at teaching traditional literacy – reading and writing. We have yardsticks to measure every stage and assign grades, and huge amounts of teacher time in ensuring success for all children. It is becoming increasingly accepted at the United Nations (UN) that as important as it is to learn to read, it is equally important to learn to relate. Emotional literacy is the language of relationships. Roots of Empathy for 22 years in Ontario has successfully taught children emotional literacy.

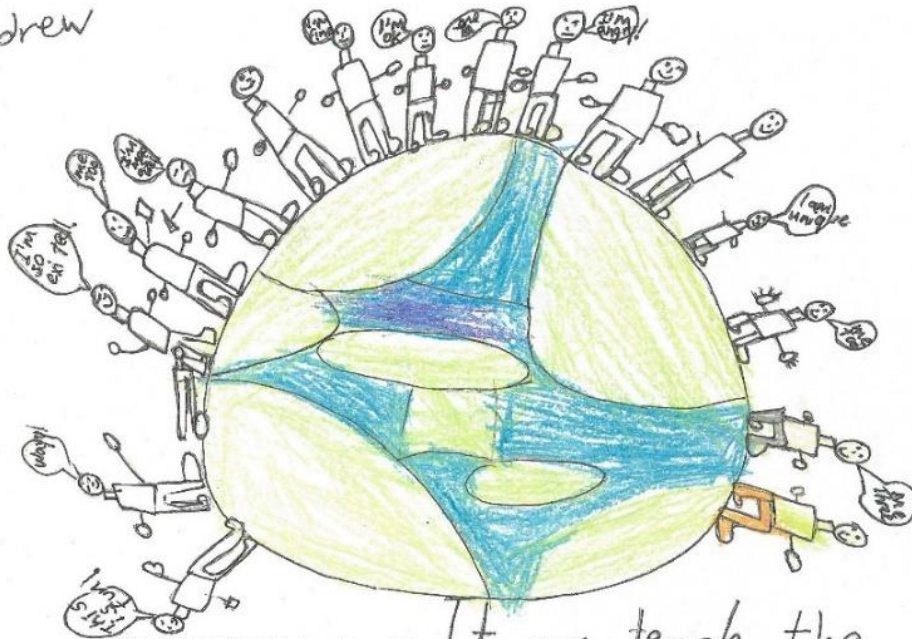


What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “it [teaches] us we are all important.”

- Grade 2 Student, Mississauga

This seven-year-old child is already a good citizen of Ontario and well on her way to becoming a good global citizen. She has understood that the message of Roots of Empathy is that every person regardless of age, background, race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status has intrinsic worth. For Ontario to become an inclusive and proud province, we need more children to think like this seven-year-old from Mississauga.

Andrew



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world?:

It can teach the world to understand that we are all are unique and we all have the same feelings.



© Roots of Empathy 2009

What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “It can teach the world to understand that we are all unique and we all have the same feelings.”

- Grade 1 Student, Toronto

Not only has Andrew drawn an exquisitely detailed and sensitive picture, but he has shown conceptual development beyond his years. He has interpreted the human rights messages in Roots of Empathy, acknowledging that every person is unique and worthwhile. He also has internalized and represented the emotional literacy he has learned in the program.

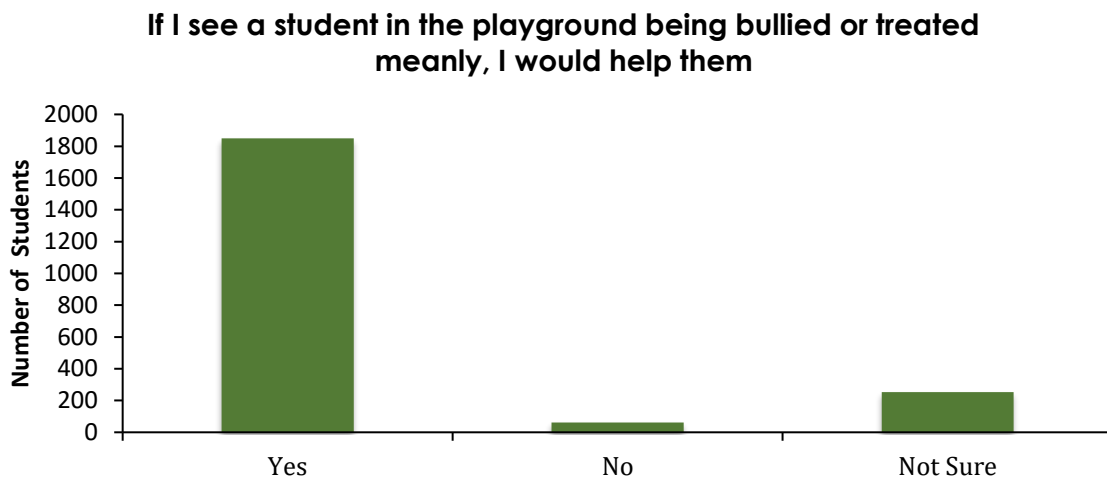
### Goal #3: To Reduce Levels of Bullying and Aggression and Promote Children's Prosocial Behaviours

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 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.

#### Feedback Results: Students

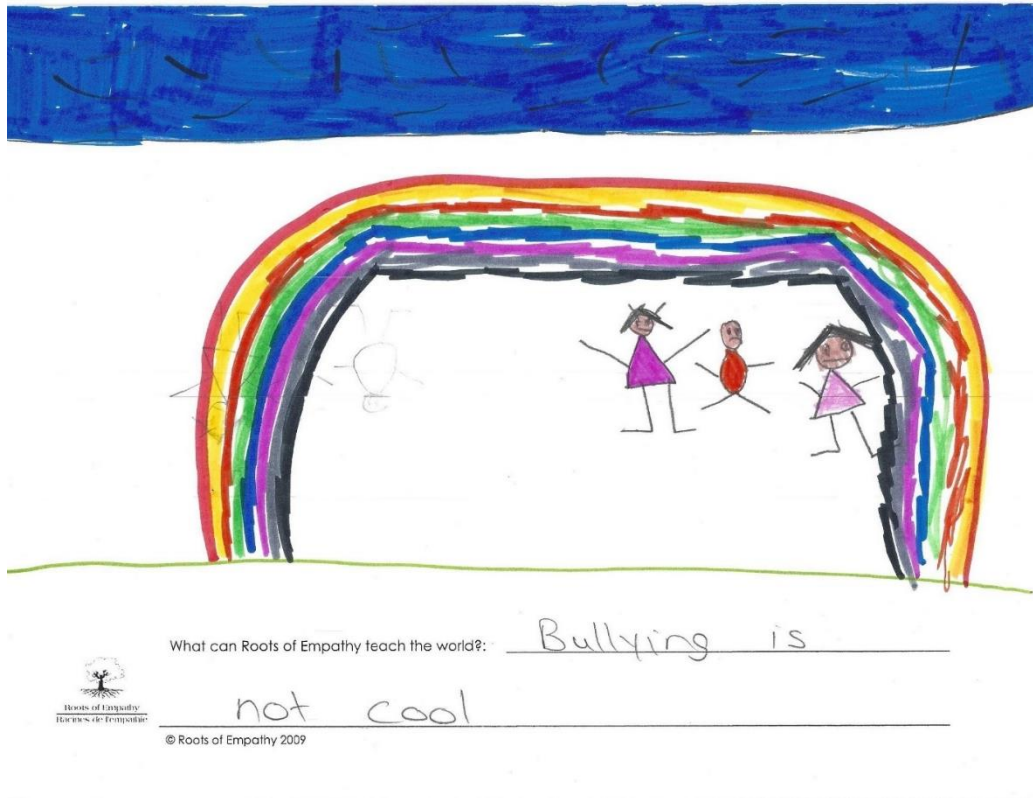
- 93% of students reported that if they saw a friend being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them
- 85% of students reported that if they saw a student in the playground being bullied or treated meanly, they would help them



#### Feedback Results: Teachers

- 92% 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
- 90% 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...)
- 73% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of Roots of Empathy, students are better able to resolve conflicts

## Reducing Aggression and Bullying



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? “Bullying is not cool.”

- Grade 1 Student, Cambridge

Even at six years of age, this little student at St. Peter’s in Cambridge has a fine sense of social justice. He is like so many other children who experienced Roots of Empathy, a child who helps rather than hurts.

### Goal #4: 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

- 98% of students reported learning that babies do better when they are loved and cared for
- 97% of students reported learning that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work



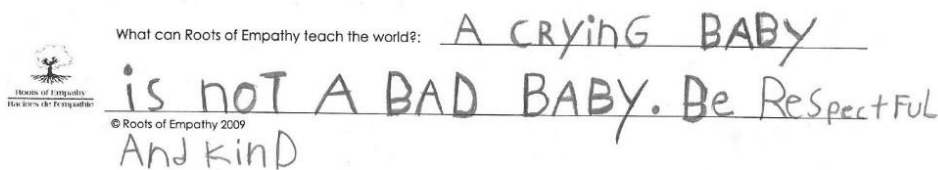
## Goal #5: To Increase Knowledge of Human Development, Learning, and Infant Safety

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

- 94% of students reported learning that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she can harm her baby
- 91% of students reported learning that it is dangerous to shake a baby

### Understanding human development



What can Roots of Empathy teach the world? "A crying baby is not a bad baby. Be respectful and kind."

- Grade 2/3 Student, Cambridge

Every year in Ontario babies are shaken to death, or shaken into paralysis, blindness, or into having severe learning challenges by parents who are exhausted, isolated, or have mental health or addiction issues. They don't understand that babies cry not just for physical reasons, but that they have emotional needs. Roots of Empathy children will break generational cycles of poor parenting because they understand human development and have respect for life at all ages.

## **Additional Findings:**

### **Curriculum Expectations**

- 96% 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:**

"ROE (Roots Of Empathy) can teach and help kids learn in the whole world. For example, they could teach kids more about how smoking, drinking and drugs affect the baby greatly. Teach them that the baby could not develop and that the brain and spinal cord be damaged."

- Grade 5, Winston Churchill Public School, Kingston

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to take care of each other. Roots of Empathy will prepare children for when they grow up and this program will teach the world how to be fantastic parents whether you are one now or you are still a child"

- Grade 6, Baxter Central Public School, Baxter

"Roots of Empathy can teach the world how to care for not only babies but grown people too. It can help show that we all have feelings and wants. It helped to teach me how to be a better friend by teaching me how to feel more empathy and then act on it. If everybody on this earth got a chance to experience Roots of Empathy wars would end and we would all be able to just understand one another without violence and hatred."

- Grade 7, Holy Cross Catholic Elementary School, Georgetown

"It can teach people to understand feelings. It can stop bullying. Roots of Empathy tells people to stop by-standing"

- Grade 3/4 Student, Bedford Public School, Stratford

"How people can react. If they are mad they can yell, scream, or crunch their fists. It helps control our anger."

- Grade 4, Armour Heights Public School, Peterborough

"Some people have a lot of trouble knowing what people are feeling, if they wanna be left alone or if they need to talk to someone but can't or even they say they're fine but really they're not. Roots of Empathy is a new way of learning emotions, how our bodies are acting at this age etc."

- Grade 7, Saint Paul Catholic Secondary School, Trenton

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

"The feedback not only from the students but their families was very positive as the students eagerly and excitedly discussed the growth milestones and changes of their baby at home and informed their parents of the day that she was coming for visits. They considered themselves as siblings and spoke about how lucky she was to have so many siblings to care for her! I had to promise reunions in the years to come!"

- Grade 5, Clearmeadow Public School, Newmarket

“My kindergarten students are way more accepting of others and understanding of individual needs. I have noticed my students are more comfortable talking about their feelings and can empathize with others.”

- Kindergarten, Highbush Public School, Pickering

“I see the program helping students to better understand each other and themselves. It also helps them to express themselves to communicate better with their peers and families.”

- Grade 4/5, Queen Victoria Public School, Lindsay

“I see more empathy and recognition from my students towards each other. I know many parents had to schedule appointments around Roots days as my students didn’t want to miss a moment!”

- Grade 3, Monsignor Lee Catholic School, Orillia

“Certainly, the children can appreciate and grasp what empathy means when learning about it through the lens of a baby that is even younger and more fragile than they are... This program, if used to promote good moral lessons, can have positive lasting effects on children, their families and communities.”

- JK/SK, Mariposa Elementary School, Oakwood

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

“The teacher informed me about an incident that took place between two of her students. They had been arguing about an issue on the playground and the teacher spoke with them about it afterwards. She brought up my son, Noah, who at the time was about 9 months old. She asked them how they would feel if someone was being unkind and using hurtful words towards Noah. Their perspective on the situation changed instantly and they expressed feelings of hurt, sadness and fear. They went on to say that they would never want anyone to be unkind towards Noah, they were very protective of him and understood that their actions and words towards each other were wrong. The program helped the students be more aware of others' feelings, situations, strengths and gifts. They became the caregivers and absolutely showed a great deal of empathy towards my son, and each other throughout the program.”

- Grade 2, R.J. Lang Public School, Toronto

“The children involved in our Roots of Empathy program were always very caring toward my son. I feel they really showed an understanding of his growth and the changes he had made at every visit. They showed a lot of excitement around seeing what his new skills were and started to demonstrate a realistic understanding of his capabilities for his age. They were able to show a lot of respect toward him and use good boundaries (only touching his face, not crowding him, not making loud noises or doing things that may scare him) - these things can be very difficult for children at the kindergarten age! This is my second time doing the Roots of Empathy Program (My daughter and I did the program in 2015/2016) and we all loved it very much! It was a wonderful experience and will be a cherished memory for my whole family!”

- Kindergarten, Ridgewood Public School, Kawartha Lakes

“This program was amazing. I watched there socialization and awareness increase so much. They were so empathetic to my daughters cue of how she was feeling that day, what has changed for her,

her development and temperament change. The children were so happy to always see her and my favourite part was to watch the bond grow”

- Grade 4, Corpus Christi Catholic Elementary School, Hamilton

“It’s never too early or too late to have a positive impact on the children. Human connection is fundamental and interaction with a tiny new human is a charming and warm way to learn meaningful lessons. (Qu’il n’est jamais trop tôt ni trop tard pour avoir un impact positif sur les jeunes. La connexion humaine est fondamentale et l’interaction avec un nouveau petit humain est une façon charmante et chaleureuse pour l’apprentissage de leçons profondes.)”

- Kindergarten, École élémentaire Gabrielle-Roy, Toronto