



Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy is an evidence based program founded by Mary Gordon (kindergarten teacher from Toronto) in 1996. It is a program utilized throughout the world in many classrooms and in many different languages from K – grade 8.

Goals of Root of Empathy:

- To foster the development of empathy (the ability to see and feel things from another person's perspective).
- To reduce levels of bullying, aggression and violence in children's lives and build peaceful societies.
- To increase knowledge of human development, learning and infant safety.
- To prepare students for responsible and responsive parenting.
- To teach emotional literacy.

All of the goals are accomplished through the involvement of a community family who is willing to visit the classroom with their infant (usually two to four months of age to start). The program is divided into nine themes – each theme involves a pre visit, family visit and a post visit. During these weekly times throughout the year, students are provided with, and explore information about EMPATHY, NEUROSCIENCE, TEMPERAMENT AND ATTACHMENT, EMOTIONAL LITERACY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION. The facilitators connect the goals of Roots of Empathy to curriculum pertinent to the grade level.

The Roots of Empathy program has been provided to both Horace Allen and Isabelle Sellon Schools since 2004-2005. The program has had tremendous support from families willing to participate, as well as the willingness of the schools to assist the program and facilitators. Roots of Empathy has received funding from Family and Community Support Services, and Parent Councils within the schools. Some funding has also made available to the program via government support.

Currently, the program is offered to both Kindergarten and Grade One classes at Horace Allen School, and both Grade Four classes at Isabelle Sellon School.

It is important to recognize the dedicated, consistent facilitators who have provided the program to the schools – Kim Lewis, Family Violence Prevention Counselor from the Woman's Resource Center, Tracey Linderman – a past school employee who has continued with the program as a community member due to her belief in the program, and Bonita Bourlon, Family School Liaison Counselor for both schools. Most important to the success of the program are the families and their willingness to share their child to assist in the teaching of our future generations of citizens.

For further information about Roots of Empathy, please contact Bonita Bourlon, FSLC @ 403-563-0633.