

# Roots of Empathy Instructor Role, Responsibilities, and Commitment

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## What is Roots of Empathy?

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program that has shown significant effect in reducing levels of aggression and bullying among school children while raising social and emotional competence and increasing empathy. The program reaches elementary children from Kindergarten to Grade 8. In Canada, the program is delivered in English and French and reaches rural, urban, and remote communities including Indigenous communities. Roots of Empathy is also delivered internationally in New Zealand, the United States, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Costa Rica.

Roots of Empathy's mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults. The focus of Roots of Empathy in the long term is to build capacity of the next generation for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting. In the short term, Roots of Empathy focuses on raising levels of empathy, resulting in more respectful and caring relationships and reduced levels of bullying and aggression. Since 2000, there have been many independent evaluations of the effectiveness of Roots of Empathy. Results have shown a significant decrease in aggression and increase in pro-social behaviour in Roots of Empathy classes compared to classes of children who have not participated in Roots of Empathy, and that these improvements in behaviour are maintained, or continue to improve, at least three years after program completion.

## What does the Roots of Empathy program look like?

At the heart of the program is a neighbourhood infant and parent who visit the class every three weeks, for the family visit, over the school year. The Roots of Empathy Instructor also visits the week before and the week after each family visit (pre and post visits) to prepare and reinforce teachings using a specialized lesson plan for each visit.

The Roots of Empathy Curriculum consists of:

- a copyrighted curriculum specifically designed for four age ranges: Kindergarten, Primary (Grades 1-3), Junior (Grades 4-6) and Senior (Grades 7-8) and includes Roots of Empathy knowledge base and philosophy, reference materials, lesson plans and handouts
- lessons which are divided into nine themes with three classroom visits per theme: a pre-visit, a family visit and a post-visit

During the training, Instructors are given all Roots of Empathy learning materials necessary to deliver the program. Throughout the first year, Instructors are supported by a Mentor through phone calls, email messages and a classroom visit.

## Who can become a Roots of Empathy Instructor?

Roots of Empathy Instructors are community volunteers who have an openness to understand and embrace the mission, goals, philosophy, and values of Roots of Empathy and an enthusiasm and ability to work in an interactive way with children in the program. Expertise and knowledge in the following areas is an asset:

- Experience with children in a classroom setting/Kindergarten to Grade 8
- Infant development/child development
- Parenting education/support
- Community development and/or cultural sensitivity

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Instructors often have backgrounds or experience in the some of the fields listed below.

school guidance counsellors/ school psychologists	education assistants	domestic violence counsellors
recently retired teachers	early childhood educators	family support workers
principals/social workers	recreation counsellors	youth and child welfare workers
school & public health nurses	speech/language specialists	police & firefighters

**Note:** Educators not assigned full time to a classroom of students, such as guidance counselors, special needs workers, speech/language specialists, etc. may deliver the Roots of Empathy program in their schools. Educators/classroom teachers who have responsibility for a classroom of children will not be trained and may not deliver the Roots of Empathy program to their own students or other classrooms.

## What is the role of the Roots of Empathy Instructor?

Instructors are trained to deliver all aspects of the Roots of Empathy program to children in the classroom. Using the curriculum and philosophies of Roots of Empathy, Instructors guide the children in the experiential learning that happens around the green blanket, helping the children to observe and reflect on the baby's feelings, then their own, and those of their classmates, friends and family. Instructors set the tone in a Roots of Empathy classroom, creating a risk-free learning environment where children can share their thoughts and feelings without judgment. This begins by building respectful relationships with the participating family, classroom teacher and of course, the students.

## What are the responsibilities of the Roots of Empathy Instructor?

- Using the Roots of Empathy Curriculum manuals as specified without introducing additional materials or concepts
- Delivering 27 classroom visits over the course of a school year (30-40 minutes per class)
- Preparing lesson plans and teaching materials as required including, but not limited to photocopying, laminating, cutting and pasting (30 – 60 minutes per lesson)
- Scheduling an information session with school principal and classroom teacher to introduce and outline the program concepts and secure their commitment
- Establishing ongoing communications and scheduling visits with the classroom teacher
- Establishing ongoing communications with the Roots of Empathy family and preparing the parent for their visits over the course of the year
- Engaging in ongoing communications with assigned Roots of Empathy Mentor, scheduling a classroom visit observation or arranging to record video of a classroom visit as requested
- Completing and submitting annual program information forms and facilitating the completion of year-end feedback forms from students, teachers and participating parents

## Instructor certification and commitment

To become a certified Roots of Empathy Instructor you agree to:

- Complete the online Roots of Empathy Instructor application form, participate in a telephone interview, and be accepted for training
- Attend a mandatory intensive Roots of Empathy training (Initial Training and a one-day Mid-Year Training) which includes full attendance and participation
- Successfully complete a written, open book certification test (part I & II). A test result of 75% or greater is required.
- Provide a current and clear Police Screening in advance of the Initial Training
- Sign the Instructor Agreement and commit to delivering the program for a minimum of two years
- Successfully deliver the curriculum over the course of a full school year
- Participate in professional development opportunities as a certified Instructor

The cost of training and support for Roots of Empathy Instructors is a substantial investment, and therefore communities expect certified Instructors to **commit to a minimum of two consecutive years of instruction**. Instructors deliver one program in their first year, but may deliver more than one in their second and subsequent years.

**Please visit our Roots of Empathy website for further information: [www.rootsofempathy.org](http://www.rootsofempathy.org)**