

# Welcome to Seeds of Empathy

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## 1. An Overview of Seeds of Empathy

### Seeds of Empathy

Seeds of Empathy is designed for Early Childhood settings to foster social and emotional competence and early literacy skills and attitudes in children 3–5 years of age while providing professional development for their educators (in this document, we refer to these settings as Centres).

### Seeds of Empathy Elements

There are three elements to Seeds of Empathy:

#### 1. **Early Literacy Program – Literacy Circles**

An interactive Curriculum based on children's literature is delivered by Literacy Coaches (staff trained from the Centre).

#### 2. **Social and Emotional Competence Program – Family Visits**

A curriculum based on experiential learning from a neighbourhood infant and parent is delivered by a Family Guide (a staff person trained from the Centre).

#### 3. **Professional Development – Workshops for Early Childhood Educators**

Beyond the first year, a series of interactive workshops in specific areas is offered to the staff at the Centre to support their ongoing learning and reinforce Seeds of Empathy values and principles.

### Our History

Seeds of Empathy grew out of Roots of Empathy, a program for elementary school-aged children from Kindergarten to Grade 8. It is the younger sibling of Roots of Empathy and brings the messages of that program to 3-to-5-year-olds.

### Our Mission

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



## Our Goals

### **For Children 3-5 Years of Age:**

- To foster the development of empathy and emotional literacy
- To build social and emotional understanding
- To reduce aggression and increase pro-social behaviour
- To develop positive attitudes towards and competencies in early literacy

### **For Early Childhood Educators:**

- To increase their knowledge base of early childhood development and skill sets in working with 3-to-5-year-olds
- To help them promote empathy in Early Childhood settings

## *II. Introducing Seeds of Empathy*

Seeds of Empathy takes place over an eight-month period. Seeds of Empathy is designed to deliver its first two elements concurrently (Literacy Circles and Family Visits). The curriculum for both elements is developed around 10 Themes, and each theme works on a three-week cycle.

### **Weeks 1 and 2:**

#### **The Literacy Circles (Early Literacy Program)**

During the first two weeks of the three-week Theme cycle, the Literacy Coaches follow a curriculum. This curriculum supports interactive learning (i.e., music and movement, art, drama, and discussion) based on children's literature. A group of up to eight 3-to-5-year-olds gather on or around a lavender blanket to have a book read to them and participate in a Literacy Circle. We hope that children will be a part of a Literacy Circle four times for each Theme.

### **Week 3:**

#### **The Family Visit (Social and Emotional Competence Program)**

During the third week of the three-week Theme cycle, the Family Guide follows a curriculum. This curriculum supports experiential learning based on Family Visits. The Family Guide delivers the Family Visit, where a baby (2–4 months old at the beginning) and his or her parent(s) visit the Centre for up to half an hour. All the 3-to-5-year-olds, and the staff who work with them, gather around the lavender blanket and together they observe the baby. The Family Guide coaches the children to observe the





developmental milestones and read the baby's cues (which tell them how the baby is feeling). Over the eight months, the children come to understand and respect the baby as an individual with his/her own unique temperament and feelings. This leads the children to better understand their own uniqueness and feelings, and the feelings of others.

## The Seeds of Empathy Themes

1. *Baby and Me*
2. *Crying*
3. *Feeling Loved*
4. *Feeling Angry*
5. *Sleep*
6. *Feeling Grumpy*
7. *Friends*
8. *Who Am I?*
9. *Feeling Scared*
10. *Getting Bigger/Goodbye*

## III. Professional Development Workshops

Seeds of Empathy aims to build the capacity of Early Childhood Educators in the Centres to work in a connected way towards common goals. Seeds of Empathy offers six professional development workshops for Centre staff, starting the year after their initial training. The workshops include:

- Play-Based Problem Solving/Neuroscience
- Working with Temperament
- Mathematical Thinking/Numeracy
- Art and Heart
- Music and Movement
- Empathic Listening and Responding to Children



## IV. People

The following people comprise the Seeds of Empathy team:

### **Seeds of Empathy Family**

The chief criterion that identifies a Seeds of Empathy Family is that they have a baby who will be 2–4 months old at the time of the first Family Visit. Families should commit to visiting the Centre once every three weeks over eight months. They should be reliable so they won't let the children down.

We seek families who live in the community, so that they reflect the cultural, racial, and linguistic tone of the neighbourhood. In addition, this helps create a bond between the children in the Centres and the Family, which is reinforced when the children see the parent(s) and baby in the neighbourhood and rush over to ask how "their baby" is doing.

It's important that the adult in the Family be a parent. Mothers and/or fathers are equally welcome to participate, since we focus on the parent-infant bond. Other adults (caregivers, grandparents, elders, etc.) may not substitute for the parent, but are welcome to observe a Family Visit.

### **Literacy Coaches**

In Seeds of Empathy, at least two staff who work with 3-to-5-year-olds are trained to become Literacy Coaches. Literacy Coaches deliver the Early Literacy Program through the Literacy Circles. They are powerful models of literacy for the children, and help the children develop positive attitudes towards and competencies in early literacy.

### **Family Guide**

In Seeds of Empathy, we train two staff members as Family Guides; one is designated the Family Guide; the other is a stand-by. It's important that the Family Guide be the only person who delivers Family Visits. Should the Family Guide be unable to come to the Centre one day (because of sickness or weather, for instance), (s)he should inform the Family and the Centre and reschedule the Family Visit. Only if the Family Guide leaves the Centre permanently should the stand-by deliver all the remaining Family Visits.





The Family Guide encourages the children to observe, comment on, and draw conclusions about what they see during a Family Visit. (S)he gives the children a vocabulary for describing the growing attachment and attunement between parent and baby, the baby's feelings, needs, likes and dislikes. Thus (s)he gives 3-to-5-year-olds a basis for a working vocabulary to describe their own feelings. In Seeds of Empathy we call this a "literacy of feelings" which builds a strong base for social and emotional competence.

## **Administrator**

The Administrator is the liaison between the Provincial Manager and the Centre. The Administrator is responsible for ensuring that the schedule of Literacy Circles and Family Visits is maintained and that the Literacy Coaches and Family Guides fulfill their roles. The Administrator attends the Family Visits and when possible participates as a Literacy Coach. In addition, the Administrator forwards reports from the Family Guide and Literacy Coaches to the Provincial Manager, and also submits an Administrator Report every month.

## **Mentor**

The Mentor liaises with the Family Guide and Literacy Coaches and makes an annual visit to offer support and address any delivery issues. The Mentor reports to the Provincial Manager.

## **Provincial Manager**

The Provincial Manager liaises with the Administrators of the Centres and is responsible for any logistical, administrative, and other issues.

## **National Office**

Our National Office is responsible for overseeing Seeds of Empathy across Canada and internationally. Support from National Office is provided in such areas as community development (i.e., fundraising), professional development, curriculum development, communications, research, and evaluation.

*Please see the following page for contact information.  
For more information about Seeds of Empathy, please contact:  
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