



# News Release

## From Seattle Public Schools

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### **Seattle area is the first in the nation to launch the award-winning Roots of Empathy program**

On Thursday, November 15, Seattle Public Schools will showcase this award-winning classroom-based program designed to reduce bullying and promote positive social behavior. As the first major school district in the United States to implement this internationally-recognized program, Seattle Public Schools will provide an opportunity for media to see this unique program in action 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m., Thursday, November 15 at the John Stanford International School, located at 4057 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE.

Roots of Empathy is now in 10 classrooms from grades 1 – 6 in regional schools, including four Seattle Public Schools (Dearborn Park Elementary, Sacajawea Elementary, John Stanford International School, and West Seattle Elementary) as part of a three-year commitment by local philanthropists. The program will expand to 20 classrooms in 2008 and 30 in 2009. Other local area schools participating in the Roots of Empathy program are Emerald Park Elementary from Kent School District and Westside, a private school.

Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson said, "A program like Roots of Empathy can change the course of a child's - and a community's - life. At Seattle Public Schools, we understand that an excellent education involves the whole child. We pay a great deal of attention to indicators of how our children are doing academically, and the research is clear about how fundamental a child's emotional well-being is to academic success. We know that the benefits of Roots of Empathy will spread from the classroom into the overall learning community, as children themselves model how we start with understanding ourselves so that we can understand, work, and live well with others."

Created in Toronto in 1996 by educator/author Mary Gordon, Roots of Empathy (ROE) uses the power of the relationship between parent and baby to help students understand their own feelings and those of others in order to develop empathy. Media will be able to see a family visit with a Seattle mother and her baby in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. By understanding the perspective of the baby and learning to label the baby's feelings, students become literate in describing and understanding their own and others' feelings. Research shows that the benefits of this program endure in the learning environment for at least three years.

"We're thrilled to be able to bring Roots of Empathy to the United States," said educator/author Mary Gordon. "It's a pleasure and an honor to work with Seattle-area schools and Seeds of Compassion organizers to help in creating a more civil, caring society by building empathy among schoolchildren."

(more)

Roots of Empathy is being brought to Seattle as a part of the broader Seeds of Compassion initiative, promoting evidenced-based programs that successfully build the foundation of learning and compassion in children and youth. Since its inception, the Roots of Empathy has reached more than 150,000 children in more than 6,000 classrooms across Canada, Australia, New Zealand and now the United States.

In addition to a demonstration of the program's techniques, the event at John Stanford International School will feature Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, Ph.D., Mary Gordon, Founder/President, Roots of Empathy, John Sabol, philanthropist supporting Roots of Empathy and Kelly Aramaki, Principal of John Stanford International School.

Media are invited to the event on Thursday, November 15 from 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. at the John Stanford International School, 4057 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98105.

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