

Title

An Evaluation of the Implementation of Elephant's Tea Party in a Local Authority Mainstream Secondary School

What did we ask? (Research Questions)

The pilot study aims to provide an evaluation of the implementation of Elephant's Tea Party in a local authority mainstream secondary school. The evaluation was based upon predetermined learning objectives outlined by Child Bereavement UK (CBUK). They were as follows:

1. Raise understanding and awareness of the life cycle ranging from birth to death by using elephants and the way in which they interact with each as a metaphor for learning.
2. Learn about the importance of memories for elephants.

The following research questions were asked:

- Is Elephant's Tea Party a valuable program at providing young people at a universal level (for all children) with the skills necessary to cope with death both now and in the future?
- Does the outcome data from the implementation of Elephant's Tea Party provide evidence to support the importance of death education at the universal level within schools?
- Do staff feel Elephant's Tea Party is an effective way in which to provide young people with death education at a universal level?

What is the evidence base?

Poverty can be defined and measured in various ways. Within this local context, a disproportionate representation of children and young people live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2. This equates to 42% of primary aged children residing in these deciles. The relationship between poverty, attainment and achievement is well characterised across Scottish education and within West Dunbartonshire evidence suggests an equality gap remains to exist between the most and least deprived.

Links between poverty and bereavement operate in several ways; children who live in poverty are more likely to experience bereavement and often experience multiple bereavements in childhood, bereavement is a route into child poverty and bereavement in childhood increases the chance of poverty in adulthood (Child Bereavement Network, 2014). It is estimated that in the UK each day around 111 children under the age of 18 are bereaved of a parent. It is thought 1 in 29 children are bereaved of a parent or sibling, which equates to one child in each classroom (Child Bereavement UK, 2017).

Health and wellbeing is now embedded within the national curriculum. Through offering curricular activities surrounding bereavement, such as Elephant's Tea Party, a bereavement education event developed by Child Bereavement UK, schools are proactively building the resilience of children and young people to cope with bereavement now and in the future. Elephant's Tea Party uses creative exercises, lesson plans and fun activities underpinned by support, experience and guidance. It gives staff resources to explore the subject of bereavement in an age appropriate accessible way (Child Bereavement UK, 2017).

The Educational Psychological Service (EPS) continues to work with schools and our colleagues from other agencies to develop support for children and young people affected by bereavement, separation and loss. The Educational Psychologist (Probationer) (EPP) understands factors relating to implementation science and has knowledge of a range of evidenced based interventions.

What did we do?

In total, 13 S2 pupils were included in the pilot study. The pupils were sampled due to convenience i.e. they were part of the class teacher's health and wellbeing class.

Qualitative research methodology was used to gather data on the implementation and effectiveness of Elephant's Tea Party in achieving the intended outcomes of the program. A within subjects, repeated measures approach was employed. Information was gathered through participants completing a pre and post intervention questionnaire (13 pupils completed the pre-questionnaire, 8 completed the post-questionnaire). The EPP also interviewed three pupils post intervention in order to enrich the data. The interview schedule was based on exploring the intended learning objectives of Elephant's Tea Party as specified above. The EPP scribed the young people's responses. In addition, both pre and post intervention the class teacher who facilitated the implementation of the project met with the EPP; this allowed the EPP to consider factors related to implementation, delivery and resources.

In order to enrich the gathered data further anecdotal information was reflected upon by the EPP. Anecdotal evidence refers to evidence gathered by informal and/or casual means; it relies heavily on personal experience.

What have we found? 200 words

The qualitative data obtained was analysed using template analysis, a form of thematic analysis where data is coded under *a priori* themes (Brooks, McClusky, Turley and King, 2015). Overall the gathered data demonstrates that Elephant's Tea Party resulted in the young people having a more nuanced understanding of how they could respond to and cope with bereavement both now and in the future. The identified learning outcomes were on the whole achieved. This suggests

Elephant's Tea Party is a valuable resource at providing young people at a universal level with the skills necessary to cope with death both now and in the future.

In addition to the aforementioned findings anecdotal evidence suggests pupils valued Elephant's Tea Party demonstrating the importance of some consideration being given to death education at a universal level within schools. Teaching staff report the universal intervention to be accessible and that it fitted within the wider health and wellbeing curriculum demonstrating the program is an effective way in which to provide young people with death education at a universal level. Methodological considerations which merit consideration moving forward include the following: use of focus group methodology to enrich data gathered in relation to pupil views, organisational readiness for change including leadership to ensure sustainability of program implementation, the role of the EP and time constraints.

What do we plan to do next?

The following next steps were identified during discussions with the lead class teacher who implemented Elephant's Tea Party:

- Consideration to be given to the roll out of Elephant's Tea Party across appropriate year group.
- Working group to be developed to review schools policy in relation to bereavement/ loss. This will include the school considering how they support young people to cope with bereavement across the following three levels: individual, targeted /group and universal/whole school.

In addition, the EPP considered how she could support the secondary school further in relation to their knowledge and understanding of evidenced based programmes and action research. This could potentially ensure sustainability moving forward and would have allowed upscaling in terms of the implementation of Elephant's Tea Party (Blasé et al, 2012).

References

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