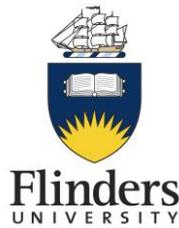


FLINDERS UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA



Flinders Human Behaviour & Health Research Unit

Releasing Children's Shining Potential

**Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of
primary school children through Journeywork**

Journey into Schools Report
August 2010

**Results: Practitioner Voice on the Implementation of
Journeywork and Impact on the Children**

Jill Beattie
Suzanne Dowd
Susan Leeder-Morale
Cecile George
Jan Henderson
Amanda Carne



ISBN 978 1 920966 21 8

Copyright © Jill Beattie, Performance Enhancement Consultancy

This work is copyright. You may download, display, print, and reproduce the material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your own organisation. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights, or comments on this publication, should be made via email to Dr Jill Beattie, Performance Enhancement Consultancy ~ jbeatti@bigpond.net.au

How to Cite this Reference:

Beattie J, Carne A, Dowd S, Leeder-Morale S, George C, Henderson J. (August, 2010). *Releasing children's shining potential. Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of primary school children through Journeywork. Journey into Schools Report*. Flinders Human Behaviour and Health Research Unit, Flinders University of South Australia and Jill Beattie Performance Enhancement Consultancy, Victoria. Website: <http://www.emotional-wellbeing.com.au>

Contents

Chapter 9	4
Results: Practitioner Voice on the Implementation of Journeywork and Impact on the Children	4
9.1 Risk factors impacting on children’s social and emotional wellbeing	4
9.2 Enablers to implementation of Journeywork.....	5
9.3 Barriers to implementation of Journeywork	6
9.4 Chapter summary.....	6

Chapter 9

Results: Practitioner Voice on the Implementation of Journeywork and Impact on the Children

Field notes were kept by the practitioners throughout the study to document their reflections around implementation of Journeywork in the participating school. In addition, a focus group of the 4 participating practitioners was held on completion of the program to discuss what enabled and what hindered implementation of the program. Analysis of the field notes and results of the focus group are reported below.

9.1 Risk factors impacting on children's social and emotional wellbeing

During group Journeywork sessions the children were invited to share their happy and sad emotions with the group. During the group *Journey Classroom Process* (Appendix 2) however, practitioners are not usually aware of the individual issues or concerns of the children. In contrast, when practitioners are working with children during one-to-one sessions they are often aware of the child's issue(s) or concern(s). From analysis of the practitioners' field notes following the conduct of individual sessions, issues around safety, trust, self-esteem, anger and fear were identified as risks impacting on the children's wellbeing. Examples of individual experiences that caused the children concern were:

- Getting lost in shops or parks (a common experience for many of the children)
- Feeling they are loved less by parents than their siblings
- Fighting with other siblings at home and with other children at school
- Being bullied by siblings or other children
- Being "yelled at", "told off" and punished by parents
- Loss of loved ones e.g. relatives and animals
- Being witness to crime: e.g. seeing others breaking into a car
- Changes in family dynamics e.g. separation of parents
- Sight, hearing and psycho-motor problems making learning difficult, with feelings of appearing "dumb" at school work
- Friends not playing with them anymore.

As reported by the practitioners, individual Journeywork sessions helped to resolve many of these issues. Examples of field notes following sessions are provided below.

In his process a bullying issue surfaced. We worked on his ability to speak up. After the process we made an appointment with the wellbeing officer. When I met him for his next session, he was able to tell the wellbeing officer about the bully and what has been happening in the playground for a long time. The school dealt with it in the right way and he was happy to tell me that the bully had stopped.

Before the process she told me how upset she was that she was the only one in her class who didn't have her pen license. Her motor skills are behind. In her process she tuned in to the communication messages in her brain. When I

saw her for her next session, she was proud to tell that she did get her license.

Remembered a time with a friend; when the friend had met new friends. Felt angry and got aggressive with the others because he didn't want to share his friend. During the process, forgave friend and self, and accepted the changes in friends at that moment in time.

During the process expressed that Pa [grandfather] had recently died; spoke to him at the campfire, realised Pa still loved him; also expressed self-love; felt much better.

9.2 Enablers to implementation of Journeywork

An important enabler to entering a school to conduct the Journey Program was recognition by the school that although they did have wellbeing strategies in place, they needed new program ideas, skills and assistance with particularly challenging children. Thus, the Principal and Wellbeing Coordinator welcomed the program and supported the practitioners throughout the study. In addition, the class teaches supported the children in attending Journeywork sessions by organising their own sessions so that the participating children could attend.

Having parents who recognised the need for specific wellbeing programs and consented to their children participating in the program also enabled the implementation of Journeywork. In addition, the children themselves consented to participation in the program and attended a most of the sessions.

An adequate resource in the form of the appropriate number of Journey Accredited Practitioners was important to ensure successful conduct of the program. For example, with 24 children, at least three to four practitioners are required to ensure the children are well supported. Ensuring alternative practitioners were available to cover sick leave and annual leave was also important.

Leadership and teamwork were important enablers for the practitioners themselves. One of the practitioners took the lead role in ensuring the sessions were designed to meet the needs of this group of children. Regular communication and practitioner meetings ensured that debriefing and feedback was shared, and where needed, adjustments to subsequent sessions were made. It was also important for the practitioners themselves to ensure their own wellbeing was maintained. To ensure this, the practitioners practised Journeywork processes and strategies themselves throughout the study (e.g. mindfulness, introspection, and drawing on internal resources).

In relation to conduct of the Journey sessions themselves, a number of strategies worked well in engaging the children and enhancing integration of the Journey tools:

- Ensuring the sessions were as interactive and as varied as possible
- Being present to the current context of the children. For example, when there had been a fight in the school yard which was continued into the classroom, the practitioners adapted the sessions to deal with issues around hurt, acting out, forgiveness and letting go etc

- Briefing and debriefing with the Wellbeing Coordinator to gain a better understanding of the participant children and issues already recognised by the school
- Breaking into smaller groups when there were larger numbers in attendance
- Stillness exercises (e.g. meditation, use of candles) to bring the children to a place of quiet and calmness.

9.3 Barriers to implementation of Journeywork

The main barrier to the full implementation of the Journey Program was the difficulty in engaging the classroom teachers, other school staff and parents so that they could learn the strategies and tools to reinforce with their children as well as adopt for their own wellbeing. While the practitioners invited the teachers and parents to Journey sessions, and also made themselves available to conduct group or individual sessions at a time convenient to teachers and parents, this offer was not accessed. The teachers for example reported that they already had too much they needed to do.

Particular challenges to conducting the Journey sessions themselves included the following.

- The lack of attendance by some of the children when there were conflicting priorities and other sessions to attend.
- Gaining the attention of all of the children to commence Journeywork sessions. As already highlighted, this group of children were particularly restless and often experienced attention problems. Dividing the larger group into smaller groups assisted in alleviating this problem.

9.4 Chapter summary

Findings from the individual Journey sessions held with the children revealed that the risk factors impacting on the children's' social and emotional wellbeing were getting lost, feelings that they are loved less than their siblings, friends not playing with them anymore, fighting, being bullied, and being "told off", loss of loved ones, being witness to crime, and change in family dynamics. In addition, some of the children reported visual, hearing and psychomotor problems making learning difficult and engendering feelings of appearing "dumb" at school.

Through working with these issues during Journey sessions, children were able to address some of these risk factors. For example, one child who was being bullied at school agreed to finally approach the Wellbeing Coordinator, and the bullying was resolved. Another child who experienced a psychomotor problem preventing her from achieving her competency in using a pen, accessed an area of her brain during the Journey process and soon after, successfully gained her pen competency. Further, a child whose grandfather had died in previous months was able to talk with him during the Journey process, which resulted in her being able to talk to her mother about it, grieve and let him go.

Findings from an analysis of the field notes and focus group revealed that enablers to implementing Journeywork in primary schools included recognition by the school that they needed new program ideas and assistance with challenging children. In addition, parents who supported their children attending wellbeing sessions were important, along with the children actually attending these sessions. In addition, adequate numbers of trained practitioners were important in supporting larger groups of children, especially where the children were more emotionally challenged. Leadership and teamwork among the practitioners, with regular debriefing, feedback, and practising the Journey skills themselves, enhanced success of the delivery of the program.

Identified barriers to the implementation of Journeywork included difficulty in engaging teachers and parents to learn about Journeywork and therefore use the tools to enhance children's resilience. On occasion, the children were particularly restless and gaining their attention during the session presented challenges. It is important to note, that when people commence Journeywork and become more aware of their feelings, they can meet resistance from the mind; this is normal and can be brought to the attention of participants.