Using the Young Journalist Academy to improve pupil attainment in schools

Submission date
17/07/2018

Registration date
24/07/2018

Last Edited
15/08/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Overall study status
Completed

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered

[X] Protocol

[X] Statistical analysis plan

[X] Results

[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Young Journalist Academy (YJA) is an intervention that establishes journalism programmes or 'newsrooms' in primary schools. Primary school pupils, typically in Year 5 (9 to 10 years old), receive training from YJA staff and then develop and lead their own 'newsrooms' in their schools. They produce journalistic outputs in various forms over the course of a school year. These outputs could include print, audio or video content, which are published for the school and on the YJA website for a wider audience.
The YJA has been operating in schools since 2008, with the goals of increasing pupil motivation for learning, improving literacy and writing skills and creating interest in journalism.
This study aims to look at the effects of the YJA programme on improving writing skills within Year 5 pupils.

Who can participate?
Approximately 100 state-funded primary schools in England

What does the study involve?
Schools are randomly allocated to either the intervention or control groups. Schools in the intervention group will participate in the YJA programme, whereas schools in control groups will receive no intervention and continue with "business as usual".
All classes from treatment schools will participate in YJA, but only one class from year 5 will be selected for participation in the evaluation. The YJA programme involves children leading their own newsrooms in schools and writing articles.
The control group will be business as usual.
The evaluation involves tests to assess the writing skills of the children.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The possible benefit to participants is that taking part in cultural learning programmes such as YJA can lead to higher levels of achievement in mathematics and literacy, which can lead to improvement of test scores. There are no known risks to participants in taking part in this study.

Where is the study run from?
Study is run by the Young Journalist Academy, London

Study is run by the UCL Institute of Education (London) and the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) (London)
The schools participating in the study are based in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Rutland, London and Newcastle.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
April 2017 to December 2019

Who is funding the study?
Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (London)
Royal Society for the Arts (RSA) (London)

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

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Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
N/A

Study information

Scientific Title
Using the Young Journalist Academy to improve pupil attainment: A randomised trial in schools

Acronym
YJA

Study objectives
Participation by schools in the Young Journalist Academy programme, which trains pupils to set up a newsroom and produce journalistic content, will improve pupils' writing attainment and idea generation.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
University College London Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee, 26/03/2018, Z6364106/2017/12/54

Study design
Interventional two-armed clustered randomised trial with randomisation occurring at the level of the school

Primary study design
Interventional

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Writing attainment at the end of year 5

Interventions
Treatment: Participation in the Young Journalist Academy programme
Control: Business as usual

All classes will participate in YJA, but only one class from Year 5 will be selected for participation in the evaluation.

Classes will be randomised into either the intervention or the control group. Classes in the intervention group will participate in the Young Journalist Academy (YJA) programme. Classes in the control group will continue with "business as usual". For the randomisation, blocking will be used to improve cross-arm comparability of schools and also to improve precision of estimates.

There will be four blocks, defined on the basis of class composition by English as an Additional Language (EAL) (high vs. low) and class composition by eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) (high vs. low). This approach will help to ensure that our treatment and control groups are well balanced in terms of these characteristics, which are likely to be correlated with our outcome measures (EEF, 2015b). High and low EAL and FSM in these definitions will be defined as above and below by the sample median to ensure that block sizes are approximately equal (which may not be the case if we used population, rather than sample, characteristics).

Randomisation will be designed to achieve an equal number of schools in each arm (i.e. 60 control and 60 treatment). Each school will be assigned a randomly generated number (setting a stable seed for the random number generation). Schools will be sorted by block and random number and will be assigned to the treatment arm and to the control arm in turn. Randomisation will be carried out by UCL in Stata and the code used to carry out the process will be recorded and reported in the final report.

The intervention group of the study will participate in the YJA programme. At the set-up meeting with the entire school staff, the school leadership team identifies a teacher who will take the lead on guiding the YJA over its five-phase implementation stage. In the first phase, the YJA staff come to the school for four days of training in order to 'build the newsroom', providing general training in print, audio and video journalism for all pupils. This occurs within the classroom of the lead teacher, with the entire class taking part. During this time, they select a core team of up to 15 pupils, based on an application process, who will serve as the editorial staff. This core team receives additional training during the second phase of the programme. During phases three to five, the pupils run the newsroom and produce journalistic content. YJA staff return at the halfway point of the school year and at the end of the school year during these phases to monitor progress and provide any additional support to the newsroom. These visits each last four days and include appraisal for the core team of pupils and discussions of how to carry the programme forward into the next school year.

Content that is produced by the pupils during the course of the school year is sent to the YJA team and they publish it on their website, which receives 20,000 visitors per month.

This is done through a rigorous process of remote moderation and editorial support. All work is sent via school (never by pupil directly) and feedback is provided if required before publication. Any amendments required from an editorial point of view, must be actioned before publication can happen. The delivery team engages with editorial responsibility and ensures that speedy 'live' responses happen to keep momentum.

Establishing the school based newsroom - first phase of the programme - sets up an in school quality assurance process before work is submitted. This checking and editorial process prevents en-masse submissions and promotes the role of editing and professionalism within the production process.

The control group receive no intervention and will continue as usual.

The total duration of the intervention is one school year (year 5). Follow-up measures will be collected at the end of the school year.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Writing attainment, assessed using the Writing Assessment Measure (WAM) at the end of the Year 5 school year in 2019.

Key secondary outcome(s))
Writing self-efficacy, assessed using the Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) (adapted to ensure age appropriateness) at the end of the Year 5 school year in 2019.

Completion date

31/12/2019

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Located in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Rutland, London or Newcastle
2. Agree to provide student data in order that it is possible to apply for data from the National Pupil Database
3. Identify a lead teacher from Year 5 (all pupils in this teacher's class will participate)
4. Cooperate with the project and evaluation teams during the trial (further details of these requirements are outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with Schools)

Where possible it will aim to recruit schools that have larger populations of individuals receiving Free School Meals (FSM) than the national average of 15.3 per cent of pupils aged 5-10 (DfE, 2016).

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

2137

Key exclusion criteria

Parents may choose for their child to not participate in the study; their data will not be collected or processed.

Date of first enrolment

01/01/2018

Date of final enrolment

31/07/2018

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
UCL Institute of Education
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Study participating centre
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Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type
Not defined

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, Education Endowment Foundation | London, EEF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Funder Name
The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Current IPD sharing statement as of 15/08/2022:
The datasets generated and analysed during the current study have been archived in the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)'s data archive, and will be available from this data archive in the future, on application to the EEF. Consent for this archiving and administrative data linkage was obtained from participants as part of the study. At the time of writing, access is not yet possible and the timing of access being made available is dependent upon the EEF, rather than the project team. The data archived includes all variables used as part of the analyses reported, named in line with a consistent data specification provided by the EEF (see appendix 3 of their policy on data archiving: https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents /evaluation/archiving-evaluation-data/Archiving-evaluation-data-analysed-in-the-SRS-Project-completion-and-archiving-form_v2.pdf). Application for access to the EEF data archive is contingent on providing detail of the public benefit of the research to be carried out, in line with the EEF data archive privacy notice: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-the-eef-data-archive; this will be assessed by the EEF as archive data owners, rather than the project team. Archive data are held and shared within a secure environment (UK Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service; ONS SRS), for which applicants must meet relevant requirements (including application for recognition as an accredited researcher from the ONS), as mitigation against potential identifiability risks.

Previous IPD sharing statement:
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a non-publicly available repository: UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service (SRS) (https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/requestingstatistics /secureresearchservice)

Researchers need to follow ONS guidance and become accredited researchers (AR) before they can obtain access. Guidance is available here: https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo /statistics/requestingstatistics/secureresearchservice/becomeanaccreditedresearcher

The data was archived following Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance. Consent was obtained from participants and data was anonymized. The following privacy notice for the archive is available: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-the-eef-data-archive

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in non-publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results		07/09/2021	13/09/2021	No	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol (other)		09/04/2019	10/08/2022	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan		05/02/2019	10/08/2022	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes