

## *Information Card for:*

# There's a Panda in my Seat!



### Context:

For this activity, a toy panda, which represents the ill child, is taken into the classroom and acts in their stead. The panda has a backpack which can be used to hold notes or photos from friends or work from the teachers. It can also hold things like tablet computer or memory stick, or a basic camera for the children to be able to record messages and take photos. The parents take the panda to and from school to the ill child on a regular basis. The Panda kit will also include a leaflet to help the teachers explain to the other students the reason why their classmate is not in school.

This works very well with younger children (aged 3 – 11), who maintain their presence in the classroom via the representative of the Panda. It works best if there is only one panda in a classroom as it may be confusing if there is more than one. It also requires the willingness of the school to be involved, and the parents to act as couriers for the panda.

It is based on “Monkey in my chair”, which is a USA-based organisation set up to help children specifically suffering from cancer to stay in touch with their classmates (<http://www.monkeyinmychair.org/>).

However, this is only for USA-based children who suffer with cancer, it is not possible to use the program in this case for LeHo.

## What do teachers need to implement the activity?

1. Use a suitable soft toy panda (or any soft toy will suffice as it is to be used as a representation for the child who is not at school) and also source an appropriate “backpack” that can hold notes, pictures and memory sticks (for recorded messages). For an example see: [Panda soft Toy](#)
2. It would be good to get a pack together for the child that contains paper notepads, pencils, memory sticks (possibly, but not essential) and other items to go in the backpack.
3. Recording facilities and some software to transfer recorded messages (voice and video) onto devices so that the pupils can see them (this can be done via mobile phones, tablet computers, school computers or laptops and memory sticks).

## Training

School teachers will need information and training on how to use the Pandas (or other soft toys) appropriately.

Teachers may also need to have information about the nature of the illness of the child to be able to explain why the panda is present and why the pupil is on hospital.

## What do teachers need to do?

1. Identify the children for whom this approach would work and would be suitable (most likely younger children who spend quite a long time in hospital, or who are regularly in hospital for chronic conditions)
2. Liaise with schools, parents (and hospitals if appropriate) to make this work
3. Shared their experiences with an appropriate audience within their own community (possibly via a dedicated Facebook page, or a YouTube video, for example: <https://youtu.be/DcylgZRI6wA>)
4. Evaluated the process and impact on pupils, and provide feedback following the trail of this activity via Survey Monkey (see the last page for links).

## Timescales

Identify pupils and schools where pandas/toys could be used: 2 weeks

Place pandas/toys in schools, and staff and pupil training in how to use the pandas: 3 weeks

Share experiences with appropriate audiences: over 5 months

## Additional Notes

Teachers may choose to share any films they make during their project on the LeHo YouTube channel:

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMD5zSd3x4VqoBwDUVK7n4w>).

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## *Evaluation of the activity*



Evaluation of how this activity worked for you in the field (Fieldwork Experience) is via a short questionnaire on Survey Monkey.

Questionnaires are available in English, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, German and Arabic as follows:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoFieldwork>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoItalian>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoSpanish>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoCatalan>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoGerman>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LeHoArabic>

Please select your language of choice and leave your feedback. Many thanks.



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Panda in my seat Information Card (2016) by [Suzanne P Lavelle](#), [Children's Hospital school](#), Leicester, UK.

Source for Panda Image: <https://openclipart.org/detail/89233/chair,panda>