

The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™  
International Project

# Voices of Children Pedagogy™

*Case Studies from Participating Preschools Worldwide*

Implementation Year 1 · 2025



*Published by the Bright Start Foundation*

# Introduction

This publication brings together a selection of representative case studies from preschools participating in ***The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project***. It captures children's, educators', and families' reflections as the pedagogy is implemented, and demonstrates the significant impact on **children's participation, agency, and learning** when opportunities for expression are embedded consistently within daily pedagogical practice.

**What makes this initiative distinctive is that it is not a one-off project**, but an intentionally ongoing, evolving, and borderless endeavour. The *Voices of Children Pedagogy™* is designed to grow, deepen, and strengthen over time through sustained practice, reflection, and cross-cultural exchange, **translated into concrete, everyday pedagogical steps that support a shared global commitment to listening to and valuing children's voices**.

During *Implementation Year 1 (2025)*, the project engaged **over 1,000 children and educators across 10 countries**, including Brazil, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe. The case studies presented in this volume are representative examples from participating preschools in some of these countries, offering insight into diverse contexts united by a common pedagogical vision.

Grounded in a rights-based approach to early childhood education, the *Voices of Children Pedagogy™* recognises children aged 4–6 as active contributors to meaning-making, learning, and community life. Aligned with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it provides **a clear and practical framework for translating children's right to participation into everyday pedagogical practice**.

The case studies are shared as documented by participating preschools. Children's words, images, and creative expressions are reproduced in their original form, with consent, and without editorial interpretation or comparison.

This year also marks a **historic first**. In September 2025, children's aspirations and wishes emerging from the project were presented during the **United Nations meeting on children's right to preschool education**, ensuring that young children's perspectives were included directly in global policy dialogue.

This volume marks only the beginning of an evolving international journey. The next phases of the *Voices of Children Pedagogy™* will build on this foundation—strengthening practice across diverse contexts, embracing new possibilities, including the responsible integration of AI, and deepening the role of families as active partners in children's learning.

**Dr. Eirini Gkouskou**  
*Bright Start Foundation Board*  
*Associate Professor, IOE – UCL*

# Acknowledgements

The **Bright Start Foundation** extends its sincere appreciation to the **children, educators, families, and participating preschools** who contributed to *Implementation Year 1 (2025)* of ***The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project***. Their openness, creativity, and sustained commitment made it possible to document and share children's voices in ways that are both meaningful and authentic.

Particular acknowledgement is **extended to the educators and school leaders** who intentionally created the time, space, and conditions for children's ideas, reflections, and creative expressions to emerge as part of everyday practice. Their professional expertise, care, and reflective engagement have been central to both the implementation of the pedagogy and its ongoing development.

**Recognition is also given to the families** who supported and encouraged children's participation. Their trust and collaboration strengthened the connection between home, school, and community, reinforcing a shared responsibility for listening to and valuing children's voices.

The Foundation further acknowledges the institutional partners and networks whose support contributed to the development and early implementation of the project, including **University College London (UCL)**, through the *Innovation Network Grant under the ESRC Impact Acceleration Programme*; **King Abdulaziz University** and the **Abdulaziz Bin Talal & Sora Bint Saud Foundation for Human Development (AHYHA)** in Saudi Arabia; and **Montessori Global Education** in the United Kingdom. Their collaboration and shared commitment have strengthened the project's international reach and supported its vision of advancing children's participation and **honouring their right not only to be heard, but to be meaningfully responded to**.

**The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project**

## **Voices of Children Pedagogy™**

**Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Centre – India**

*Healthy Planet TGA Early Years School, Wish Town, Noida*

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**Implementation Year 1 · 2025**



## Project Announcement and Consent Signing



When we introduced the Voices of Children project, it piqued the children's curiosity about their involvement. Their responses to the museum's gallery display were marked by a sense of wonder. Given their young age, it took time for them to fully comprehend the concept of Voices of Children. To facilitate their understanding, we incorporated role-playing activities and circle-time discussions as key instructional strategies.

**The announcement that their artwork would be showcased internationally generated significant excitement** among the students. To enhance their understanding, a large map was utilised to illustrate the geographical locations of India and the UK, allowing them to visualise the journey of their work and its final destination.

During the consent-signing process, children demonstrated enthusiasm and eagerness to participate. Given their developmental stage and limited understanding of written consent, the process was facilitated through handprints, making it both accessible and engaging. Many children expressed their enjoyment of painting, and their ideas for future projects reflected diverse and vivid themes, including nature, animals, and space, with a strong preference for using paints.



**Observations indicated that the children took great pride in their work and exhibited a strong sense of collaboration. Notably, those who were initially reserved became actively engaged after listening to their peers' ideas.** The announcement process not only served as a catalyst for artistic inspiration but also fostered a sense of creativity, pride, and global connection among the young participants.



The launch of the Voices of Gallery at Healthy Planet TGA Early Years commenced with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking the official unveiling of the exhibition. Following this, children enthusiastically explored the VOC wall, where their artwork was prominently displayed.

The exhibition carried a significant message, **emphasising that their creative expressions would extend beyond the classroom.** The display highlighted that their artwork would also be showcased at the UCL Gallery, offering a global audience the opportunity to view and appreciate their work. This initiative not only fostered **a sense of pride and accomplishment among the children but also reinforced the value of artistic expression as a medium for global connection and recognition.**



### **Voices of Children Portfolios and Labs**

The setup of the **Voices of Children Museum and Art Corner in the classroom** was a collaborative process, with children actively participating and demonstrating enthusiasm and engagement. They worked together to organise the space, selecting and utilising a variety of creative resources, including crayons, paper cut-outs, glue, watercolours, chalk, Play-Doh, and collage materials, with particular preference for hands-on, tactile activities.

Beyond fostering creativity, the process encouraged responsibility and teamwork, as children took turns, shared materials, and collaborated effectively. Their excitement was evident through verbal expressions such as, "I want to use crayons!" and "I want to paint with watercolours!" This strong sense of **ownership and participation highlighted** the children's deep engagement in the museum setup, reinforcing their connection to the project and their artistic expression.

The process not only fostered creativity but also instilled a sense of responsibility and teamwork, as **children took initiative in establishing their own rules, taking turns, and sharing materials effectively.** Their ability to collaborate and self-regulate highlighted their engagement and ownership of the creative space.

To further enhance their artistic experiences, the incorporation of natural resources and the periodic rotation of materials could help sustain their interest and encourage continued exploration. Group projects could provide additional opportunities for collaboration and idea-sharing, fostering deeper peer engagement. Additionally, ensuring an adequate supply of high- demand resources, such as paint palettes, would help maintain enthusiasm and seamless participation.

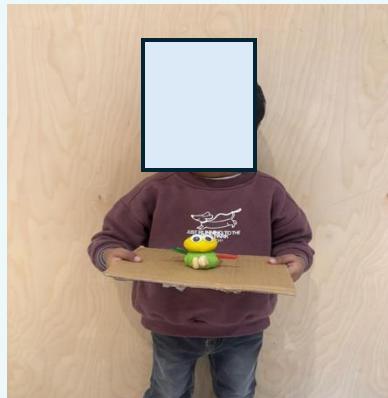
Overall, the children demonstrated **exceptional creativity, teamwork, and a strong sense of ownership, laying a solid foundation for their artistic growth and collaborative skills.**

**The Voices of Children Wall is refreshed every month**, creating an evolving space that showcases children's creativity and self-expression. Each month, new themes and a variety of art materials are introduced, allowing children to explore different textures, techniques, and mediums. From paints and pastels to Play-Doh and natural materials, every display becomes a unique representation of their artistic growth.

This continuous transformation keeps the wall engaging and dynamic, fostering a strong sense of pride and excitement among the children. **They eagerly identify their artwork, pointing it out to their parents and friends, proudly saying, “This is mine!” and “I made it!”** This visible recognition of their work enhances their confidence and motivation, encouraging them to continue exploring and expressing themselves creatively.

### Children's Voices Circles

The Voices of Children Circle Time has been an engaging and creative experience for the children. They eagerly participated, expressing their thoughts through drawing, writing, and verbal communication. Some children consistently explored similar themes—one child, for instance, repeatedly depicted their family using playdough, paint, and collage, showing a deep emotional connection.



**Non-verbal or reserved children gradually began expressing their thoughts visually, bringing their ideas to life on paper. Over time, those who once made only marks have started drawing recognisable shapes and figures, which has been a remarkable transformation to witness.** These sessions have significantly boosted their **confidence, communication, and empathy**. While **quieter children continue to be encouraged to participate more actively, it is incredible to see how much they now have to share about their artwork!**

During the Voices of Children Permanent Exhibitions and Tours, children took great pride in selecting artefacts and actively engaging with their peers' creations. Their curiosity was evident in the thoughtful questions they asked and the discussions they initiated, leading to shared ideas and collaborative learning.

While a few children showed limited interest, most were deeply involved, taking ownership of their work and expressing excitement at seeing it displayed. The entire process fostered creativity, collaboration, and a strong sense of pride in their artistic journey.



## 1<sup>st</sup> Voices of Children International Gallery Launch at Healthy Planet TGA Early Years School, Wish Town



**The first Voices of Children exhibition** was a celebration of self-expression and creativity, **with children taking the lead in welcoming parents and sharing their artwork in their own words**. The event opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by families exploring the gallery together.

The exhibition featured children's artwork displayed at the UCL Gallery **alongside contributions from seven other countries**, as well as 2D and 3D creations made at school. **A short video of children describing their work added a personal touch**. To extend this celebration, the Artathon at Skyfield brought parents and children together in a collaborative art experience, fostering unity, creativity, and shared expression.

### Fostering Open-Ended Thinking and Child-Led Learning Through IEYC and Voices of Children

The IEYC Curriculum provides a broad and flexible framework that encourages open-ended thinking, seamlessly integrating with the Voices of Children (VOC) approach. By fostering inquiry, exploration, and self-expression, the curriculum allows children to engage deeply with their ideas and interests, supporting a child-led learning journey. This approach aligns closely with our Healthy Planet Way, which prioritises learning circles, learning gardens, and learning conversations as essential components of the daily routine. These experiences create meaningful opportunities for children to explore nature, articulate their thoughts, and engage in reflective discussions, nurturing both confidence and creativity. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating this process, being trained to keenly observe, document, and respond to children's evolving ideas, ensuring that each child's voice is acknowledged and valued within the learning environment.

### Intergenerational Learning

'Artathon' during the Voices of Children Exhibition Launch brought parents and children together to create large-scale artwork. This shared experience encouraged creativity, teamwork, and self-expression. **Parents became active participants in their children's artistic journey**, while children gained confidence in sharing their ideas. More than just making art, the event strengthened connections between generations, celebrating creativity and imagination together.

Intergenerational learning has played a significant role in bringing families together, fostering a sense of connection and shared engagement in children's learning. We take pride in creating an environment where families actively participate, celebrate their children's growth, and contribute to their creative journey. **A key initiative has been encouraging families to set up a Voices of Children (VOC) Corner at home, providing a dedicated space for artistic expression. As a result, we have begun receiving artwork created collaboratively by children, parents, and even grandparents.** This has further strengthened the bridge between home and school, reinforcing the idea that learning is a continuous, shared experience that extends beyond the classroom.



## Community Library

Our Community Library extends the Voices of Children initiative beyond the school, creating a space for families, siblings, and cousins to engage with children's artwork. By making the library accessible, we have seen meaningful conversations emerge as children revisit their drawings with pride. Families connect through storytelling and discussions, fostering a deeper appreciation for creativity. This openness has also inspired more children to participate, seeing their work valued in a shared space. The library has also become a dynamic hub where artistic expression and learning continue beyond the classroom, reaching the wider community.



**Updated May 2025**

## The Voices of Children Classroom Conference

Voices of Children (VoC) conference was conducted in the art room. The session saw enthusiastic participation from the children, who were visibly excited to explore the virtual gallery where their work would be displayed. Since this was the beginning of a new academic session, some children were already familiar with the concept of VoC, while others needed a reintroduction to understand it fully.

**The idea that their artwork would be displayed in an international exhibition sparked joy and curiosity in many.**



However, not all reactions were the same. A few children expressed a strong emotional connection to their artwork and were reluctant to choose from the virtual art gallery. One child, in particular, became upset and said, "Please do not send me to London". This led to a gentle classroom conversation clarifying that only a photograph of the artwork would be sent, not the children themselves. Another child asked, "How will our work go to London?" prompting an explanation of the process of photographing their work and sending it via email.

As children moved toward selecting their artefacts, they engaged eagerly with them. Some were keen to submit all their artwork **and questioned why only one piece could be sent and not all**. This led to reflective conversations about choice and representation. The conference overall was an interactive and meaningful experience, where children were not only engaged but also given the space to express their feelings, curiosity, and pride in their work.

### The Voices of Children Cross-Border Zoom Meeting

**The Cross-Border VOC Meeting** was an interactive virtual exchange between a school in the United Arab Emirates and Healthy Planet Schools. This initiative aimed to provide children with an international platform to share their creative expressions, cultural experiences and build cross-cultural friendships.

To prepare for the meeting, inter-classroom online sessions were conducted to introduce children to the concept of video meetings and help them feel comfortable with the format. These practice sessions not only eased their initial hesitation but also sparked excitement. **Children were thrilled to connect with their peers from other classes** over a Zoom video call, adding to their enthusiasm for the main event.



During the Cross-Border Meeting, students from both schools introduced themselves, shared their artwork, and discussed how they created it. Some children displayed a high level of enthusiasm while sharing, while others appeared shy, highlighting the varying comfort levels with public speaking. The platform also allowed students to observe and appreciate the creativity of their international peers, leading to mutual admiration and positive reinforcement.

Additionally, the children presented pictures and descriptions **of famous local dishes and recommended must-visit places in their home countries**.

The meeting provided a platform for children to enhance their confidence and social skills. Introducing themselves and sharing their artwork boosted self-confidence, **with some initially shy children feeling motivated to share after watching their peers**. This highlighted the positive impact of peer influence in building confidence.

The cultural exchange was equally meaningful, as students shared local dishes and recommended famous places in India. This allowed them to appreciate the artistic expressions and cultural backgrounds of their peers, fostering curiosity and global awareness.

However, the session also revealed varying comfort levels - while some were eager to share, others were more reserved. **This suggested the need for more 'Show and Tell' sessions in classrooms to build verbal confidence gradually**.

On Day 1, it was observed that the one-hour duration of the session was quite long for the young participants, making it challenging for them to remain focused and engaged throughout. A shorter session format would have likely been more suitable for their age group.

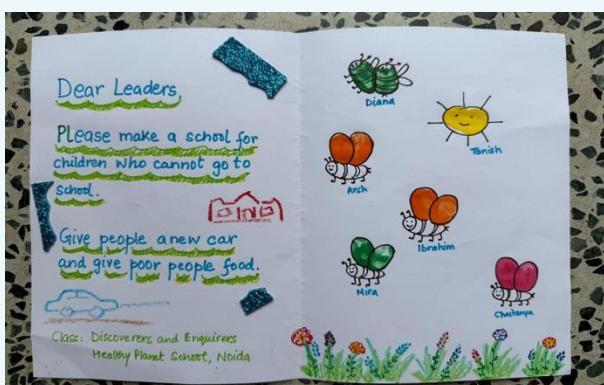
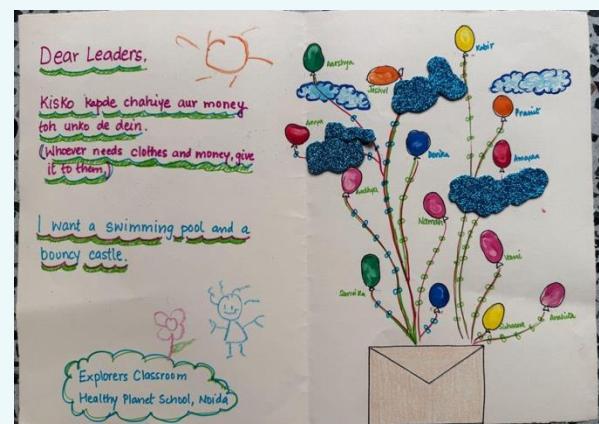
Taking this feedback into account, the session on Day 2 was adjusted to be shorter, which proved to be a positive change. While this improvement did help maintain attention for a longer period, some children still found it difficult to sit patiently beyond 15 minutes. This highlighted the need for further exploration into strategies that could make the sessions more captivating and interactive, ensuring sustained engagement for young learners in future meetings.

Overall, the Cross-Border VOC Meeting was a valuable learning experience, promoting confidence, cultural appreciation, and global connections.



### The Voices of Children - Manifestos for Change

**Manifestos for Change** revealed a wide range of responses from children, ranging from thoughtful and empathetic appeals to imaginative and playful wishes. Older children expressed both social concerns and personal hopes. One message said, “Whoever needs clothes and money, give it to them,” showing a strong sense of care for others. Another child wished for “a swimming pool and a bouncy castle,” reflecting the joy and dreams of childhood. Some messages asked leaders to “make a school for children who cannot go to school” and to “give poor people food,” showing early signs of empathy and fairness.



While some children clearly shared their thoughts, others, being younger, may not have fully understood the concept. Yet, they participated with excitement by adding their fingerprints and contributing to the artwork. Even if they couldn't express messages themselves, they listened closely to what their peers had to say, showing that the spirit of the activity reached every child in its own way.

## Virtual Gallery Screening

The launch of the virtual gallery sparked great excitement among the children. When shown the gallery, they eagerly responded with guesses such as “Art Gallery London,” “Museum London,” and “Paintings,” demonstrating their growing awareness of these spaces. What stood out was their ability to recognise their own artwork; many recalled exactly what they had created and proudly described it. They waited with anticipation for their painting to appear on screen.



Children were especially fascinated by the virtual interface, observing how the gallery allowed movement from one painting to another and from room to room. They expressed pride and joy in seeing their artwork displayed in such a setting.

There was also a strong sense of curiosity and appreciation for the work of children from other countries. They pointed to specific paintings, asked their teacher to zoom in, and commented on the colours and materials used. This interaction not only validated their own creative efforts but also opened a window to global artistic expression and connection.

## Conclusion

The journey of Voices of Children has been a deeply enriching and transformative experience for both educators and children. What began as a project to honour children's voices has evolved into a vibrant tapestry of expression, collaboration, and meaningful engagement across classrooms, homes, and borders.

Through museum setups, creative labs, community libraries, and international exchanges, children have not only developed artistic and communicative skills but have also discovered the power of their own voices. Their evolving confidence, empathy, and sense of agency have been visible in every interaction from their manifestos for change to the joy of seeing their work displayed in a global gallery.

The pedagogy's emphasis on co-construction, reflection, and authentic expression has empowered educators to become facilitators of curiosity and compassion. It has also fostered a stronger connection with families, reinforcing that learning is not confined to school walls but thrives in the everyday moments shared between generations.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to deepening this journey, continuing to create spaces where every child feels seen, heard, and valued. The Voices of Children pedagogy is not just a practice, but a promise to listen deeply, respond thoughtfully, and celebrate the wonder of childhood in all its forms.

The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project

## **Voices of Children Pedagogy™**

### **Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Centre – India**

*Healthy Planet School, New Delhi, India*

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#### **Implementation Year 1 · 2025**





## Project Announcement and Consent Signing

- The **Voices of Children** project captivated students, sparking excitement. They joyfully signed consent, envisioning their artwork travelling globally, inspired their **creativity**, and started to develop a **sense of global connection**.

## Voices of Children Portfolios and Labs

- Children **enthusiastically co-created Mobile Labs**, fostering **creativity, teamwork, and ownership**. They chose materials, set rules, and collaborated, building a strong foundation for their artistic journey, despite minor sharing challenges.

## Children's Voices Circles

- **Voices of Children Circle Time** fostered **excitement, creativity, and collaboration**. Children shared artwork, building **confidence** and **empathy**. The Exhibitions reflected their engagement and ownership, enhancing their artistic journey.

## 1st Voices of Children International Gallery at UCL East in London

- Young learners joyfully **curated artwork** for the **1st Voices of Children International Gallery** in London (November 2024). This exhibition celebrated their **imagination, collaboration**, and the global power of their voices, fostering **happiness** and a sense of **ownership**.

## Growth Mindset and the Co-construction of Ideas

- Embracing **children's voices** transformed teaching, fostering **inclusive, engaging learning**. This empowered young learners, enhancing **communication** and creating child-focused environments.

## The Continuum

- The **Voices of Children** project continues into primary years, fostering collaboration and **co-learning**. Educators will empower **children's voices**, valuing every child's perspective in shaping **discussions and creativity**.

## Voices of Children Pedagogy - A view of the class

Listening to **children's voices** builds their **self-esteem, independence, and communication skills**, nurturing an **inclusive** environment. Educators now employ **student-centred learning**, valuing every child's perspective.

### Autonomy and Decision-Making

The **Voices of Children** project empowered young minds, fostering **creativity, environmental awareness, and confidence**. Children curated their gallery, and celebrating global connections sharing and selecting their work, reinforcing international-mindedness.

### The Environment

Mobile labs transformed the **learning environment**, stimulating **creativity** and **collaborative artwork**. Children enthusiastically engaged in hands-on activities, promoting deeper learning .

### Parents as Partners

Parents became keen partners in the **Voices of Children** project, sparked by the gallery and monthly updates.

### Celebrating as a Group

We anticipate more global **Voices of Children** collaborations, fostering understanding and connection among students.



## Professional Development - Voices of Children Leaders' Forum during the Annual Bright Start International Conference

The **Voices of Children** conference greatly impacted us, especially sessions on **intergenerational learning** and **project-based learning**. We'll now explore **AI for personalised learning** at Healthy Planet, Ghaziabad.

### From May 2025 onwards

New Grade 1 teachers were introduced to the **Voices of Children** project by their Early Years colleagues.

### Kindergarten

#### The Voices of Children Conferences/Cross Border Interactions

**Voices of Children Conferences** enable global art sharing. Children select work, express messages, and discuss creations with international peers, fostering **creativity** and **cross-cultural connection**.

### Conclusion:

This valuable experience boosted children's **creativity, public speaking confidence, and global connection** through art.

## Grade 1

### Voices of Children

#### Introduction

Six students used drawings to express roles, interests, and emotions, connecting globally.

#### Participants and Methodology

Six students (5-7) drew **household roles, interests, and emotions**, sharing these with international peers to foster **cross-cultural understanding**.

#### Findings

Students' artwork depicted **household contributions, personal interests, and emotions**, fostering **cross-cultural understanding** through sharing and discussion of their creations, materials, and techniques.

#### Conclusion

The **Voices of Children** initiative empowers students, using art for **self-expression** and **cross-cultural communication**, boosting their **confidence** and **global connections**.

### Voices of Children International Project

#### From the Classroom to the World: Hosting Conferences and Cross-Border Connections

Our **Kindergarten** and **Grade 1** classrooms, through child-led conferences and cross-border interactions, empowered young learners to express their **identities** and build **global connections** via **art** and **advocacy**.

#### Purpose and Objectives

These events provided platforms for children to share **art** and **emotions**, encouraging **reflection** and fostering **intercultural friendships**. They reinforced that young voices drive meaningful change and global appreciation.

#### 1. Preparing for the Voices of Children Conference

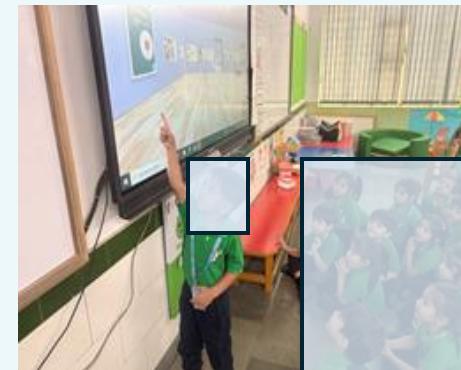
In the lead-up to the classroom event, children were prepared through structured reflection and hands-on involvement:

#### Exploring the Global Gallery

Children excitedly revisited the prior year's Voices of Children Virtual Gallery, sparking excitement and recognition of international peer artwork:

*"They drew flowers like I did!"*

*"Their houses look different from ours!"*



**Children embraced their global creative community, realising art and messages transcend borders, deepening their cultural awareness and appreciation.**

**Setting the Stage** - A ceremonial date transformed the classroom into a **gallery**, displaying student artwork and portfolios for review.

**Explaining the Purpose** - Students selected artwork for the **Voices of Children International Gallery**, sharing their voice globally.

**Encouraging Reflection** - Prompts helped students deeply reflect on their **art's message** and desired impact.



## 2. Hosting the Classroom Conference

**Group Introduction** - A circle discussion affirmed children's voices; seeing the online gallery motivated thoughtful art choices.

**Presenting and Selecting Art** - Students confidently chose and presented **artwork** from their portfolios for the **global gallery**.

“This shows my family helping each other.”

“This one has bright colours because I felt happy.”

**Creating Personal Messages** - Students wrote messages reflecting their art or hopes, adding **emotional depth and intention**.

**Documentation and Signatures** - Children signed their art; teachers **photographed** and **catalogued** global gallery submissions.

## 3. Preparing for the Cross-Border Zoom Interaction

After the conference, children were prepared for a live international session where they would meet and interact with peers from a different country.

### Building Context

Using globes and discussion, children located the country of their Zoom partners and talked about what they knew and hoped to learn about that place.

### Confidence-Building

Students practiced introducing themselves and speaking clearly about their artwork and interests.

### Art & Message Preparation

Children revisited their chosen artworks and rehearsed how to explain them using prompts such as:

“*What story does this tell?*”

“*What do you want your friend to learn from your drawing?*”



## 4. During the Zoom Interaction

### Warm Introductions

Educators from both countries welcomed students and encouraged children to greet each other with smiles and simple words. Icebreakers helped ease nerves and build rapport.

### Art Sharing & Cultural Exchange

Students presented details of their artwork with confidence and listened attentively as their peers shared theirs. Educators highlighted unique aspects of their country, from traditional foods to local landmarks.

### Dialogue & Reflection

Guided questions helped spark thoughtful interaction:

*“What’s something new you learned today?”*

*“How is their school different from ours?”*

*“What would you like to show them if they came here?”*

### Friendship & Keepsake Moments

A group screenshot was taken to remember the session. As a follow-up, students created postcards or drawings for their new international friends.

## 5. Reflections and Lasting Impact

These experiences—viewing global galleries, presenting art, and speaking across borders left a deep impression on our young learners. They helped children:

Recognise themselves as global citizens, connected by creativity and shared values.

- Value their identity and express confidence in their ideas.
- Strengthen communication skills and develop empathy through dialogue.
- Understand the power of their voice, knowing it can reach hearts and minds far beyond the classroom.

### Signing the Voices of Children Manifesto for Change

#### Introduction

**The Voices of Children Manifesto for Change** empowered Kindergarten and Grade 1 learners to express their rights, hopes, and thoughts through art and dialogue. This initiative amplified the voices of young people for global change.

#### Participants & Methodology

Children from Grade 1, aged 5 to 7, participated in the session. The activity was divided into two parts:

## Art for Change

Children created individual art tiles using colour, shapes, symbols, and words to represent their rights, dreams, and messages. These tiles were then combined into a large mural symbolising collective action. Each child signed his/her tile to show ownership and solidarity.

## Reflection for Change

In small group discussions and circle time, educators guided children through reflection questions.

**Their responses were recorded in their own words**

### Young Minds, Big Ideas

As part of the **Voices of Children Manifesto for Change**, young learners reflected on preschool, sharing honest thoughts about **what school means to them**. Their heartfelt responses captured learning and dreams for a valued future.

#### What new things do you do and learn now that you are at our preschool?

“I am learning about shapes, understanding different feelings, and exploring plants, fruits, and vegetables.”

“I have already learned several skills, and I am currently learning others as well.”

#### 2. How do you feel our preschool helps you become a big kid?

“I learn to talk with others, dance, and draw. Taking part in annual productions helps me grow. We also play, enjoy stories, and get help with learning.”

#### 3. If you could invite all the children in the world to preschool, what would you tell them about it?

“My school is a wonderful place. We have lots of books to read and enjoy!”

“My school is green and full of trees. It’s a place where you learn to work, talk, and express yourself.”

#### 4. What would you say to a friend who has never been to preschool? What should they know?

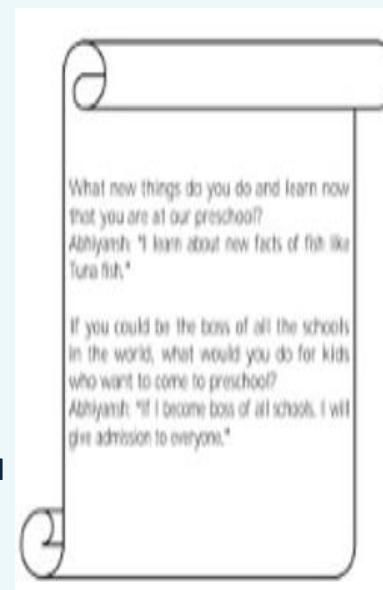
“My school is great! The classrooms and teachers are wonderful. The building is well-structured, and we have comfortable furniture. There are smart boards in the rooms, and number lines are even marked on the floors.”

#### 5. Do you think every child should have a chance to come to preschool? Why?

“Yes, everyone should get a chance to attend preschool because every child deserves the opportunity to shine.”

#### 6. If you could be the boss of all the schools in the world, what would you do for kids who want to come to preschool?

“If I was the boss of the schools, we would keep our bags in cubbies so that no books need to be taken home.”



**7. What do you want to see more of in our preschool?**

*“More storybooks and clay.”*

*“I want a garden to plant flowers.”*

## The Art Mural & Manifesto Signing

Grade 1's mural symbolized unity and hope, featuring dreams and rights. Kindergarteners' "Ocean Treasures" art advocated for education, nature, and national care.



## Impact & Conclusion

The Voices of Children Manifesto empowered students to express thoughts, build leadership in global dialogue, learn civic values, and collaborate creatively. It fostered reflection, connection, and amplified their voices globally.

## Teacher Reflections and Case Study Documentation

Following the Voices of Children International Project, teachers created case studies documenting each child's emotional, social, and cognitive growth. These highlighted art as expression, voice and reflection, confidence and participation, and individual messages for the world, showcasing young learners as global citizens.

## Reflections from the Educators

## **Educator 1:**

*“I saw children transform during this project. Some who rarely spoke in class were the first to raise their hands to share their drawings and ideas. They felt proud of being heard—not corrected, not tested—but simply listened to. That sense of value is something every child deserves to feel.”*

## **Educator 2:**

*“The cross-border Zoom interaction was eye-opening—not just for the children, but for us teachers too. Watching six-year-olds ask questions like ‘Do you have trees like ours?’ or ‘What games do you play in your school?’ reminded me that curiosity and empathy are deeply human traits, even in the youngest learners.”*

### **Educator 3:**

*“When the children signed their artwork and shared their messages for the manifesto, they understood that their words would be seen by people beyond the classroom. It gave them a new sense of agency. They began to see themselves not just as learners, but as leaders of ideas.”*

#### **Educator 4:**

“This project bridged many gaps. Children with different communication abilities all found a space in this program. Some expressed through colours, others through stories, and some through just a few powerful words. It reminded me that every child has something to say—and every voice matters.”

#### **Looking Ahead**

These teacher reflections and documented case studies are not just records—they are tools to inspire future learning. They have been compiled for:

Submission to the **Bright Start Foundation** and the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

Showcasing in school exhibitions and global citizenship programs.

Sharing with families to highlight children’s development and engagement.

By taking time to reflect and write, teachers have added depth and continuity to a powerful, child-led movement—one that connects art, voice, learning, and hopes.

#### **Conclusion: A Journey of Voice, Vision, and Global Connection**

The **Voices of Children International Project** transformed young learners into **global citizens**. Through **art, conferences, and advocacy**, **Kindergarten** and **Grade 1** students demonstrated profound **growth, confidence**, and the power of their voices to inspire global change. This is just the beginning.

The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project

## **Voices of Children Pedagogy™**

**Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Centre – Brazil**  
*OLM - Our Lady of Mercy, Rio de Janeiro*

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**Implementation Year 1 · 2025**



## **Reasons for joining the Voices of Children Project**

Our School follows the International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC), a child-centered approach that values curiosity, agency, and inquiry. It encourages children to ask questions, explore their interests, and engage in meaningful, hands-on experiences that deepen their understanding of the world around them. As educators, we see our main role as nurturing independence, resilience, and a love of learning, while also observing each child's progress and adapting activities to their individual needs.

When we learned about the Voices of Children Project, we were eager to join, as it offers children the opportunity to share their perspectives, appreciate diversity, and engage with global issues. Its aim to empower children as agents of sustainable change aligns perfectly with our mission and vision as a School.

## **Project Announcement and Consent Signing**

A pre-intervention survey conducted among OLM Pre-School parents highlighted both strengths and opportunities. While parents recognized the developmental benefits of creative arts, many were unfamiliar with the concept of child advocacy. This presented an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of amplifying children's voices in both educational and social contexts.

The introduction of the Voices of Children project at OLM Pre-School was met with enthusiasm. The announcement and signing of consent forms marked the beginning of an inspiring journey for the children, teachers, and families.

The children were excited and curious when the project was introduced. **"Their eyes lit up as they brainstormed ideas, asked questions, and celebrated the chance to share their artwork globally."** For many, this was their first exposure to the concept of a virtual art gallery. Personal reflections such as "I liked seeing the paintings of the children from Japan" and "My artwork will be shown at an exhibition here in our city" expressed both pride and excitement for local and global participation. Despite some initial confusion over logistics—"Will we fly to Europe?"—their enthusiasm grew as the project was explained, creating an atmosphere filled with creativity and anticipation.

The children's questions reflected their eagerness to understand and contribute to the project, which focused on three main themes:

- Art Creation: Questions about materials, creative processes, and the types of artwork they could create (e.g., drawings, clay, and local landmarks);
- Global Participation: Curiosity about the involvement of other countries, whether they could travel to see their art, and the global reach of their creations;
- Understanding the Concept: Inquiries about the virtual gallery, logistics for displaying their art, and whether exhibitions would also be held locally.

These questions highlighted the children's excitement and aspirations, including their desire to make beautiful art for others to see and dreams of becoming famous for their creations.

Of the 106 children, 95 demonstrated high levels of engagement, participating enthusiastically. The remaining 11 children showed moderate engagement, with occasional distractions, suggesting a need for more tailored activities to maintain their interest.

**The signing of consent forms was a significant milestone for the children.** Of the 106 participants, 78 children eagerly signed, fully understanding the importance of the project, while 28 children needed further explanation to ensure they felt included and comfortable. **This process helped foster a sense of pride and importance, marking their formal entry into the project.**



The children's excitement was also reflected in the ideas they shared for their artwork, including:

Depictions of their surroundings in Rio de Janeiro, such as trees, animals, and local landmarks;

Playful and imaginative ideas, such as drawings of ice cream, chocolate, and colorful creations.

The introduction of the virtual museum further fueled their motivation, inspiring the children to express themselves creatively and connect with a global audience. This initial announcement and consent signing created a collaborative, community-focused atmosphere, with the children eagerly sharing ideas and supporting one another.



## Voices of Children Portfolios and Labs

The Voices of Children Lab was set up collaboratively in classrooms, involving both teachers and children. The children were thrilled to help establish the lab and frequently visited it throughout the day. They actively contributed to creating the art lab rules, with their first suggestion being, "We need to be respectful."

The lab space was designed to be colorful, creativity-driven, and equipped with accessible materials like paints, markers, watercolors, crayons and other art supplies. It quickly became a central hub for creativity, with children visiting multiple times a day to experiment and create.

One favorite activity among the youngest children was finger painting, and they became excited whenever given the chance to try something new. Older children offered suggestions on keeping the area organized. For example, Miguel emphasized the importance of sharing materials fairly to ensure no one felt excluded, while Amir suggested cleaning brushes and workspaces after use to keep the space tidy. Bernardo emphasized that everyone should have the opportunity to experiment without disturbing others, and Helena suggested respecting others' artwork, especially if someone's project was still in progress.

The children naturally gravitated toward collaboration, helping each other with their projects. **Notable interactions included Oliver sharing popsicle sticks with Benício**, who needed more for his construction. Miguel and Leonardo worked together with recycled materials, with Miguel asking for help cutting leaves, and Leonardo offering advice on placing them in their robot creations

While the children were highly engaged in the lab, challenges arose when they encountered motor skills they had not yet mastered for certain art forms. In these instances, we guided them through the learning process. Overall, the children gave positive feedback, describing the Voices of Children Lab as "special and cool" and wishing they could spend the entire day there. They were excited to know that people from around the world would see their drawings and paintings in the virtual gallery.



The Voices of Children Labs have successfully fostered creativity, collaboration, and engagement. **By involving children in setting up and creating rules for the space**, the labs have become **shared environments of ownership, agency, and pride**. Positive behaviors, high levels of participation, and feedback from the children demonstrate the labs' impact as hubs for artistic exploration. Moving forward, we will continue to expand resources and refine routines to keep the labs dynamic and inspiring.

### Children's Voice Circle

Most children are fully engaged during the Voice Circle sessions, whether in the morning or at the end of the day. This structured time allows them to share their ideas, reflect on experiences, and connect meaningfully with their peers. One child said, "**I like when we use the talking ball because everyone listens to me**," and another expressed, "Can we have more time to talk about our drawings? I have so much to say!"

Tools like the talking stick or ball create an engaging and dynamic environment. As one educator noted, "**When we use our talking stick, the children pretend it is a microphone, creating a fun 'talk show' atmosphere as they discuss their artwork.**" This approach not only encourages participation but also helps children develop a sense of ownership and pride in their creations.

To continue enriching the experience and ensuring inclusivity, we plan to incorporate visual prompts, expand topics, and continue to schedule both morning and afternoon sessions.



## Examples of Children's voices and choices

### 1. Nursery: What comes from the heart ...goes to the heart!

As a Catholic school, our mission is to foster individuals who contribute positively to their communities and society. We frequently organize campaigns that encourage students to take an active role in making a difference.

One such initiative, the 'Generational Love' Campaign, was launched at the start of the school year with the goal of alleviating loneliness among the elderly in local nursing homes. Middle school students were being invited to write and send letters to the elderly. Upon seeing the campaign poster, we were inspired to involve our Pre-Schoolers in some way. We wondered: What if they could meet the elderly and share the beautiful songs they are learning? Could the children also create special artwork to brighten their day? We were convinced that the little ones would be excited to participate and the results proved we were not wrong.

We organized a virtual meeting that allowed the children to connect with the elderly residents, where they introduced themselves and sang a few songs, some of which are beloved by multiple generations in our country.

Following this, the children created beautiful artwork along with heartfelt messages, thoughtfully considering what might bring joy to the elderly. Ideas like 'jelly beans' and 'a boat with a special room for grandma' were among their creative contributions. **Needless to say, the elders were overjoyed to receive such heartwarming gifts. It was a simple yet deeply meaningful project, creating lasting memories for both generations.**

Now, the children are excited to create more beautiful artwork to share with their own grandparents and **have expressed a desire to invite them to the School as guest readers**. They can hardly wait to have grandpa or grandma (or perhaps even both) tell a story to the whole class!





### 1. Senior Kinder: 'What is essential is invisible to the eye'

Our Senior Kinder children were excited to explore 'The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and discuss some of its key messages. Together, the teachers and the children talked about the importance of nurturing creativity, seeing the world with wonder, caring for others with respect, maintaining curiosity, and, above all, understanding that the most important things in life are felt with the heart, not just seen with the eyes.

As passionate planet-lovers, the children were pleased to learn that the Little Prince came from a small planet, Asteroid B-325, which he took great care of. They were even more surprised to discover that he eventually left his home to explore six other planets, including Earth. Along the way, he met a variety of fascinating characters—both human and animal—who challenged his views on life. The Little Prince soon taught us a thought-provoking lesson: children and adults see the world differently, with children being more capable of appreciating the beauty and value in simple, important things like flowers.

Inspired by the story, our five and six-year-olds decided to create their own planets, imagining that the Little Prince might visit those and learn about what truly matters in the world. Some children thoughtfully incorporated the IEYC personal learning goals, viewing these as valuable lessons for the Prince. The result was a series of unique planets, each reminding us that beauty can be found in a single cotton candy cloud, happiness in watching the rain (especially when hearts fall from the sky), and wonder in gazing at the stars:

- Julia Ferreira, 6 yrs: 'Everyone respects nature, and when it rains, it's ice cream! It's always cold, like a giant candy land.'
- Bernardo Soares, 5 yrs: 'Love Planet is a place where love never ends. Trees grow candy, the rain is made of hearts, and everyone is always kind and loving!'
- Livia Gélio, 6 yrs: 'My planet is called *Bala*. When it rains, candy falls from the sky. The sea is made of white chocolate, and the fish are blueberries. Everyone is respectful, and all animals are treated kindly!'

**Our little artists were thrilled to see their artwork displayed in the permanent Voices of Children Gallery, and they are looking forward to leading guests through the gallery to showcase their work.**



## 1. From Italy to India: Junior Kinder's Unique Adventures in the Voices of Children Project

As part of the IEYC Going Places unit, our two Junior Kinder groups embarked on an exciting journey around the world. This unit encouraged curiosity and exploration, allowing children to discover new cultures, places, and traditions. While both groups shared the same adventurous spirit, they chose to follow unique paths to deepen their learning experiences.

Junior Kinder A children took advantage of having an Italian boy in their class and decided to explore Italy. This provided a wonderful opportunity to learn firsthand about Italian culture, language, and traditions. The children engaged with authentic materials, set up their own Italian restaurant where they served delicious playdough pizzas, and even learned simple Italian phrases, bringing their journey to life in a personal and meaningful way:

"This drawing is me eating pizza because I really like eating pizza" - Gianluca, 5 Yrs

"The Vatican is the Pope's home" - Antonio Pedro, 4 Yrs

Meanwhile, Junior Kinder B children dove into the vibrant culture of India. They explored Indian landmarks, traditional foods, and customs, **sparking excitement and curiosity about this rich and diverse country**. Through stories, music, and creative activities, the children developed a deeper appreciation for India's heritage, fostering empathy and global awareness from a young age:

"People love to dance in India. Their clothes are very colorful" - Mariana, 5 Yrs

"There are elephants in Indian weddings. This one is at night, so people are wearing scarves"- Antonia, 5 Yrs

"Some flowers and a big bee from India" - Celina, 4 Yrs

This project beautifully showcased the importance of children's voice in their learning journey, allowing them to follow their own interests while exploring diverse cultures. Through their choices, the Junior Kinder children actively engaged with their environments in meaningful ways, fostering curiosity and **respect for global traditions**. This hands-on, child-led approach **not only deepened their understanding of different cultures but also nurtured international mindedness in their early years—encouraging a lifelong appreciation for the world's rich diversity**.



### Voices of Children Galleries

Our children's creativity and ideas took center stage in a vibrant celebration of learning, showcased both **locally in our School Auditorium and globally in a virtual exhibition**. They joined peers from Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, Qatar, the UAE, and the UK in a shared space that honored their unique perspectives and artistic expressions.

Families were delighted to explore an inspiring array of 2-D and 3-D artifacts, thoughtfully presented with accompanying narratives **that made the children's thinking visible**. The diversity of materials used—from paint and clay to recycled objects and textiles—created visually stunning and meaningful displays.



## One parent reflected:

"The project makes children feel proud of what they do and encourages them to share with their families. **They feel respected, valued, and cared for. It is just wonderful!**"

The galleries not only filled the children with pride over their artwork but also brought immense satisfaction to the teachers who supported and guided them throughout the creative journey. Witnessing the children's ideas come to life and their confidence flourish was a deeply rewarding experience for everyone involved.

One particularly delightful moment was discussing ideas for the project 'My Rights, My Voice' with our three-year-olds. **It was astonishing to realize how much they already understand about what truly matters**, even at such a young age. Helena, who recently welcomed a baby brother into her family, expressed it simply and powerfully: "Every child has the right to have a family and a brother like mine." Meanwhile, Rafael, who had just turned four, made it clear with a heartfelt conviction, **"Every child should have toys — then they would never feel sad."**



These moments remind us how essential it is to listen to children's voices and honor their perspectives. Through creativity and conversation, **they not only share their dreams but also teach us about hope, belonging, and the fundamental rights that every child deserves.**

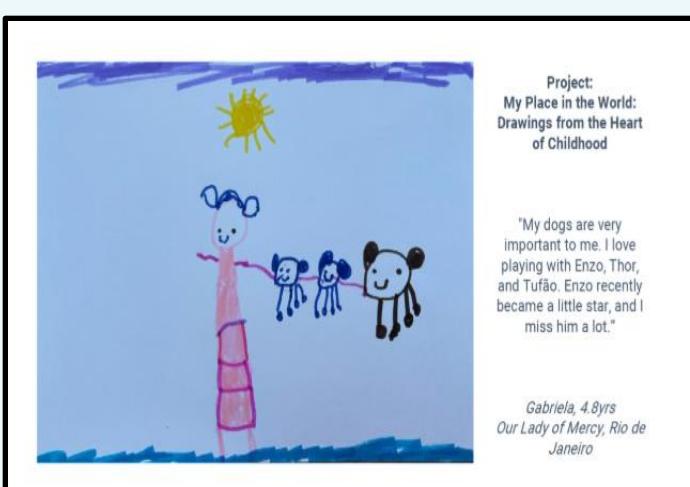
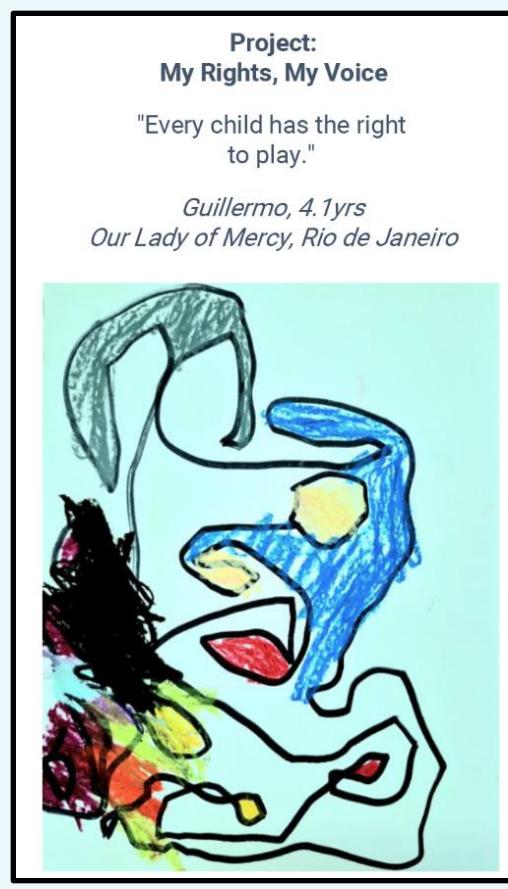
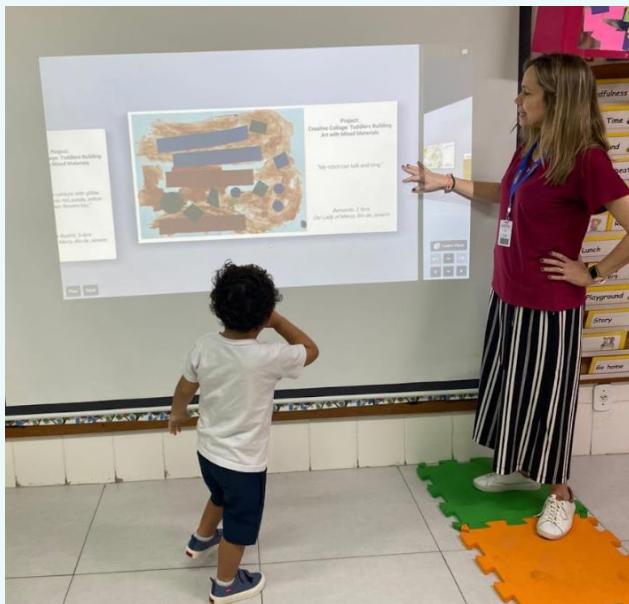
Children were especially enthusiastic as they navigated the virtual gallery. **They marveled at the creativity of their peers around the world, asked thoughtful questions, and made personal connections:**

"Children in Germany were very imaginative! They used all sorts of objects and materials to create their projects."

"Wow! A Mexican girl drew Frida Kahlo. We know this artist!"

"Saudi Arabian children have a different language and alphabet!"





## A Milestone Moment: Children's Manifesto for Change and Certificates

The Manifesto marked a milestone moment where our children took an active role in shaping messages for change. Through collaboration and open discussion, they explored the importance of Pre-School education for young children. They reflected on what they enjoy, what they are learning, and what they believe should happen so that all children can access the same opportunities.

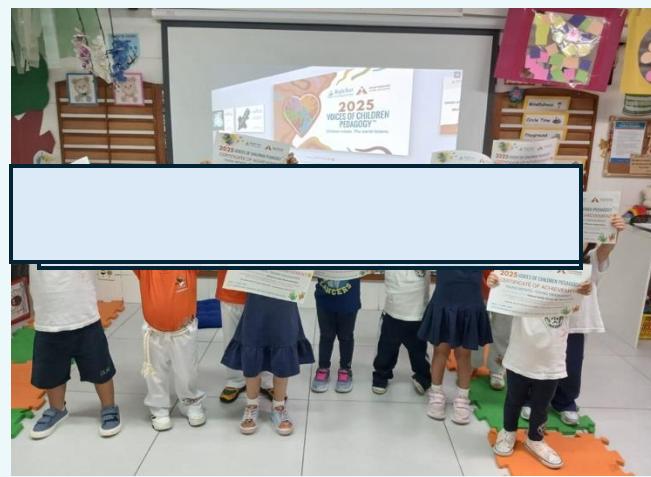
The children were also informed of a powerful fact: nearly 50% of children worldwide are not enrolled in any form of Pre-Primary education — 175 million children are missing out on Pre-School education. Teachers encouraged the children to think deeply and share their ideas. “We all need to help by sending a strong message to the people who make decisions for our world,” they said. “Your answers will be shared with the United Nations—a big organisation where world leaders come together to help children and families everywhere.”

Great thoughts and inspiring ideas emerged. Even the youngest voices showed compassion and creativity. As one five-year-old put it:

“If the school is distant, children should be provided with transportation.”

This meaningful moment concluded with teachers presenting certificates to the children—celebrating their enthusiasm, thoughtful contributions, and active engagement throughout the project. It was a joyful way to recognize their efforts and the wonderful opportunity to amplify their voices on such an important global issue.





## Cross-Border Interactions

Our Senior Kinder children were thrilled to learn they had been invited to connect with peers from Rushbrook Primary Academy in Manchester. Excited by the opportunity, they began thinking about the kind of artwork they wanted to share with their new friends in the UK. They chose one of their 2D artworks previously displayed in the Voices of Children galleries, and also created new posters designed to introduce their hometown and country:

“I’ll draw a big football pitch because Brazilian children love football.”

“I’ll make the Brazilian flag.”

“We must remember to talk about food: *pão de queijo e açaí*.”

During the interaction, the children introduced themselves and eagerly explained the stories behind their artworks—their inspirations and the choices of art supplies. What delighted them most was **talking about their own country and learning about England as well**. It was a wonderful opportunity to cultivate international mindedness and curiosity. **The highlight of the conversation was the free exchange at the end, when the children shared which artworks they liked best and what they would want to see if they ever visited their friends’ country.**

**This experience was not only joyful but rich in educational value.** It supported the development of global awareness, empathy, and communication skills. The children were **especially proud to express themselves in English and to be understood by their international friends**. Moments like these help young learners see themselves as part of a larger, interconnected world. They are already looking forward to new opportunities to connect with children around the globe, building friendships through art, language, and shared curiosity.





## Looking Ahead: Empowering Young Voices

The Voices of Children project has been a meaningful journey in our Pre-School, giving young learners the opportunity to express their ideas, emotions, and perspectives through art and dialogue. It provided a platform for children to have their voices genuinely heard and valued—fostering creativity, confidence, and a sense of belonging within a broader global community.

Throughout the project, children engaged in rich discussions, explored a wide range of materials, and used artistic expression to make sense of their world. **They developed curiosity, imagination, and international mindedness** as they shared their experiences and connected with peers both within and beyond their own classrooms.

For educators, the project highlighted the importance of listening attentively to children's thinking and nurturing their sense of agency. It also inspired a re-evaluation of our learning environments, particularly the selection and use of art supplies and recyclable materials and reinforced the value of documentation as a tool for making learning visible.

### Next Steps:

As we continue the Voices of Children project into the next school year, we aim to strengthen our approach by:

- Building individual portfolios from the very beginning of the year to better capture the learning journey of each child;
- Involving children more systematically in curating their work—encouraging them to reflect on their creations and actively select what they wish to showcase in the galleries;
- Further expanding opportunities for cross-cultural connections and collaborative work, deepening their understanding of themselves and others as global citizens.
- This ongoing work reaffirms our commitment to creating a learning environment where children's ideas and voices are respected, celebrated, and shared.

The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project

## **Voices of Children Pedagogy™**

**Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Centre – United Kingdom**

*Rushbrook Primary Academy School, Manchester*

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**Implementation Year 1 · 2025**



## Introduction

At Rushbrook, the perspectives and voices of children have consistently been central to our practice. The children demonstrate enthusiasm for engaging with continuous provision and readily share their ideas with peers and teachers during their activities. Parental engagement is also a key principle of our approach; we regularly invite parents into the classroom to interact with their children and to contribute to their learning experiences. We anticipated that participating in this project would further enrich the educational opportunities we provide. We were interested to see how the project would improve our teachers' pedagogy and the children's involvement in the project and their responses to it.

## Project Initiation

Following the receipt of parental consent, the project was initiated, and 132 children were invited to participate. Parents and staff were immediately involved by being invited to support the collection of resources for our "art labs." **The children expressed considerable excitement about contributing materials to these spaces**, taking pride in informing their peers and teachers about the items they had brought. They also assisted teachers in arranging and organising the materials within the art labs.

## Implementation in the classroom

While the Early Years classrooms already included areas for free artistic exploration, this initiative represented a distinctive development: **children were able to influence the selection of materials, resulting in a rich and stimulating environment for creative engagement**. Teachers in each class facilitated circle-time sessions to formally introduce the art labs. During these discussions, it was explained that children could access the art lab freely, provided that they adhered to existing classroom rules and expectations associated with continuous provision.

During the implementation process the International project encouraged us as a school to strengthen our connections with our high school feeder school which is part of our multi academy trust. During the 'Voices of Children' project we developed even stronger relationships with leaders across the high school that enabled Early Years Reception children to visit and observe their high school students Art Gallery and their artefacts, including their photography room and participate in organised Art workshops. **The children were wowed and in awe at the artwork displayed around the high school and children shared their views. This positively impacted children's current aspirations and expectations and inspired them to be 'artists' themselves.**

## Art Expression

Children were given the opportunity to produce artwork of their own choosing, drawing inspiration from both the texts studied within the classroom and the thematic topics under instruction. To further stimulate creative thinking, images of prominent artists were displayed in proximity to the art lab as an additional source of inspiration. On a daily basis, children engaged in the production of artworks using a range of media according to their individual preferences. They consistently demonstrated **a strong sense of pride in their creations and expressed enthusiasm in sharing their work with parents, teachers, and peers.**

Children were invited to **create any piece of art of their choice**. Inspiration was drawn from the books they were reading in class and the topics that were being taught. Pictures of artists were also placed on display near the art lab for inspiration. Children created pieces of art each using which media they preferred. They were always very proud of their pieces of work and loved sharing their work with parents, teachers and friends. We made an art gallery around school and children were delighted to see their work on display. During parents evening we invited the parents to come in and see their work. **The parents were very impressed and loved hearing the children tell them all about their work and what they had used to create their piece of work.**

## Parental/family engagement

In order to celebrate and showcase these achievements, an art gallery was established within the school, enabling pupils to view their work in a public forum. During parents' evening, families were formally invited to view the exhibition. Parents expressed high levels of interest and appreciation, frequently commenting on the quality of the children's output and engaging in conversations with them about the materials, processes, and inspirations underpinning their work. Children were given homework tasks during the space topic to create a 2D or 3D rocket, we encouraged parents to discuss the process with the children. **Parents fed back that they enjoyed listening to their child who explained what they were making and how they were going to make it.**

## Outcomes – General observations

At the outset of the project, **educators observed with some surprise that many pupils lacked the skills and confidence to use the resources in the art lab independently.** For example, some children poured glitter directly onto paper and appeared puzzled when it failed to adhere. Through guided intervention, **educators recognised that this uncertainty stemmed from insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage autonomously with a range of artistic materials.** Art lessons had typically been delivered through teacher-led demonstrations at various points throughout the term and year, but these sessions were not frequent or sustained enough to enable children to consolidate and internalise their learning through independent practice. When given the opportunity to **freely access a wide range of materials to create both two- and three-dimensional artwork, children expressed delight at the absence of restrictions on what they could use or produce.** Initially, their engagement was largely exploratory, often characterised by the enthusiastic but unstructured use of resources such as glitter and collage materials without a clear artistic intention. To support the development of purposeful creative expression, educators began initiating conversations with pupils, asking questions such as, "What are you going to make?" This prompted children to reflect more deliberately on their artistic choices. As many pupils were initially unsure, educators incorporated more structured discussions during circle time to encourage collective idea generation and planning.

In the early stages, children rarely verbalised their artistic intentions or reflected on their work. Educators therefore employed targeted questioning to scaffold language use and critical thinking, using prompts such as:

"What are you going to make or draw?"

"What materials are you going to use and why?"

"Can you tell me about your artwork? How does it make you feel?"

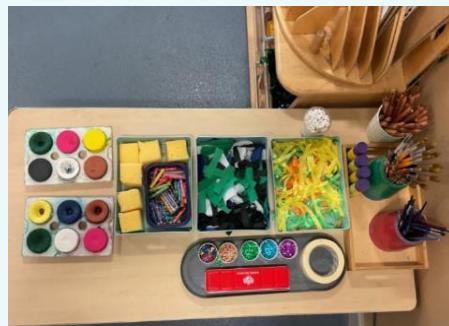
They also helped children by given them sentence stems such as:

I have drawn/painted/created a.....

I have used .....

It makes me feel .....

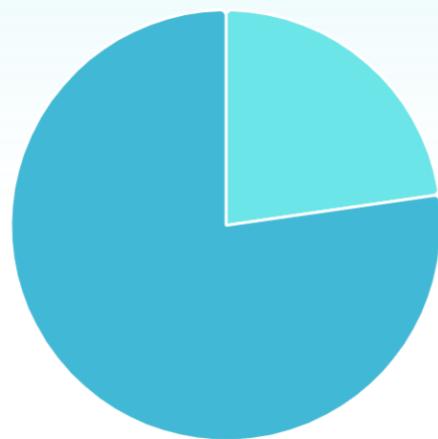
**Over time, educators observed a marked improvement in pupils' language development. Children began articulating their ideas with greater clarity, forming more complex sentences, and engaging in meaningful discussions about their creative processes. These advances extended beyond the art lab, with pupils demonstrating enhanced communication skills across other areas of learning. They showed increased ability to follow instructions, explain their reasoning, and draw upon prior knowledge during lesson times, reflecting a broader impact on their cognitive and linguistic development.**



This enhanced communication skills really supported the children when they came to speak to Rio de Janeiro. Children where able to describe their chosen piece of work to the children in Brazil. At first they were a little bit shy but as soon as they received praise for their work they loved sharing their artefacts and were enthusiastic to talk about it. **All children shared their work. SEND children continued to be given sentence stems to start them off. Educators were surprised at how confident and talkative the children were.**

## Conclusion

Educators reported that the **project significantly enhanced the children's speaking and listening skills**. At the outset, many children were unable to articulate their thoughts or describe their creations. However, over time—and through consistent practice and the use of sentence stems—their ability to communicate improved markedly. On reflection, the **international art project significantly enhanced children's communication and language skills by widening their experiences, encouraging them to learn new vocabulary, describing their work and expressing themselves creatively through art**. It was evident through **practitioner observations and Wellcomm communication and language assessments that the majority of children in one particular class were able to explain their artistic choices by building their vocabulary and verbal expression**. At least, **76% of the children in a Reception class moved up one section and in turn developed their vocabulary and understanding**. The **5 children that stayed the same already had a significant delay in communication. However, still made small steps in progress by using a wider range of vocabulary**.



In addition, practitioners were able to ask open ended questions to foster this development and learn about a child's thoughts and feelings. This was particularly evident **when neurodiverse children would find it difficult to regulate their feelings or emotions and children would find accessing the 'art lab' therapeutic and calming**. Overall, practitioners found that the art project positively impacted most of the children's behaviour and that it promoted enabling a calm and stimulating environment.

**Educators also observed that the children became increasingly independent in their creative processes, generating their own ideas and taking greater ownership of their work.** The project further supported the **children's social and emotional development**, as they learned to express how the images made them feel. Additionally, working within the art lab environment **contributed to their ability to self-regulate and manage emotions effectively**.

The international project encouraged practitioners to be more reflective and prompted educators to note down and observe wow moments and reflect on the impact each step of the project had on children's learning and development, whilst also encouraging them to evaluate their own practice. For instance, one practitioner discussed **how she felt the project highlighted that teachers can over scaffold when it comes to creative art areas and having a pre-planned desired outcome leaves little opportunity for children to develop critical thinking or problem-solving skills and limits their creativity and independence**.

### Future Plans

All staff members intend to continue the project in the following academic year and hope to extend participation to the wider school community. They believe that the children will continue to advance their communication skills and that educators are now better equipped to nurture this development.

Overall, staff consider the project to have been a **highly positive experience for the children. In addition to enhancing their speaking and listening abilities, it has fostered creativity, independence, and emotional growth**.

The Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project

## Voices of Children Pedagogy™

**Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Centre – Saudi Arabia**  
*Little Andalus International schools, Jeddah*

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### Voices of Children Mentor:

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**Implementation Year 1 · 2025**



## Project Announcement and Agreement Signing

### Announcement of the "Voices of the Classrooms" Project

When we announced the "Voices of the Classrooms" project, we used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the idea to the children. The presentation included drawings by famous artists along with their pictures. Then, we showed the children their own pictures while painting together.

At the end, we gently said to them: "You are the little artists of Andalus! Are you happy?"

Excitement and pride were evident on their faces as they saw their pictures alongside those of famous artists.



### Consent Forms:

The children felt a sense of responsibility and great confidence as we presented them with an agreement that gave them the opportunity to express themselves through their drawings.



### Artistic Ideas:

The most common themes in the children's drawings were expressions of their families, the word "Hello", and some of their favorite places.



### Most Drawings Reflected the Children's Attachment to Their Families

The majority of the drawings showcased the children's deep attachment to their families. This was evident through their use of hearts and flowers, as well as the way they depicted their parents with larger proportions in their artwork.

### Motivation and Interaction

We felt a great sense of appreciation and responsibility, and it was truly wonderful to experience this journey with the children. We witnessed their engagement and creative motivation firsthand. This experience provided a special opportunity to hear their inner voices and boost their self-confidence.



One of the most beautiful stages of introducing the idea to the children was their visit to the art exhibition held at Andalus International Schools, in the presence of the visual artist Taghreed Al-Basri.



It was a wonderful experience, as the children were amazed by the displayed paintings and deeply influenced by the artist, which led them to ask many questions with enthusiasm and curiosity.



### One of the Most Beautiful Drawings

One of the most remarkable drawings was created by a little girl who was not yet three years old. She drew the exhibition she had visited and depicted herself standing beside the artist, adding many beautiful details.



## Children's Voices Labs

Use of Space: A designated and decorated corner in the classroom.



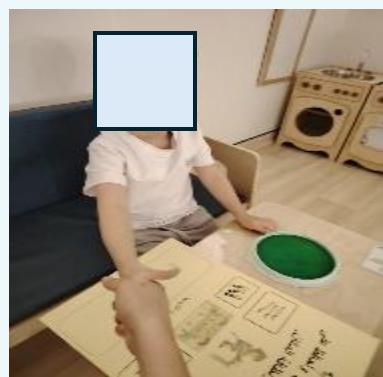
With Children's Participation, Expressing Themselves Freely

Children's Role in Setting Rules: They actively participated and signed the rules with their fingerprints.



Established Rules

We then agreed on the rules for the art corner in the classroom. We explained the importance of maintaining their safety, using the tools properly, returning them to their place, and keeping the area tidy after finishing their work in the art corner.



- Use materials carefully and return them to their place
- Respect and share with friends
- Keep the area clean
- Wait for your turn
- Ask for help when needed

## Participation and Engagement

Visit the area frequently (1-2 times a day)

Very enthusiastic and highly involved

Regularly cooperate, share materials, and exchange ideas

Follow the rules with occasional reminders

## Observed Behaviors

Positive: Creativity, teamwork, sharing, and respect.

Challenges: Some needed teacher support to resolve conflicts and struggled with cleaning up.



## Children's Files:

Each child has a special file; they are reminded several times a week to add their artwork.



"I love drawing more than playing with toys."

## Teachers' Reflections:

Seeing their work boosts confidence and encourages creativity.

Teaching new artistic techniques can further enhance their experience.

## Permanent Exhibitions in the Classroom

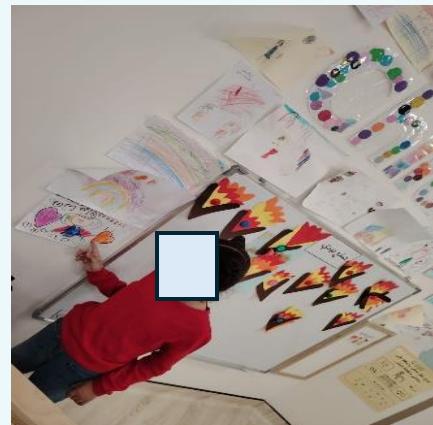
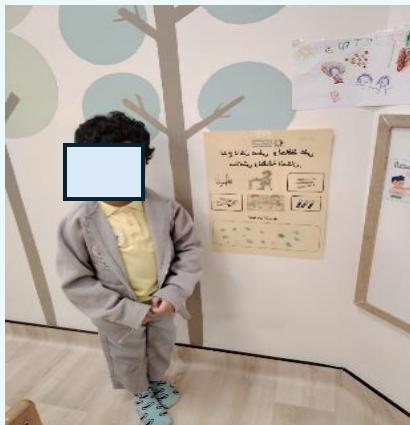
Establishing permanent exhibitions in the classroom was a very special idea. It delighted the children and gave them a sense of pride as their artworks were displayed permanently for everyone to see. This encouraged them to visit the art corner regularly.



## Visitors' Attendance and Confidence Building

The presence of visitors at the permanent exhibition and the children's participation in answering questions about their artworks enhanced their self-confidence. **They spoke about their drawings with pride and assurance.**

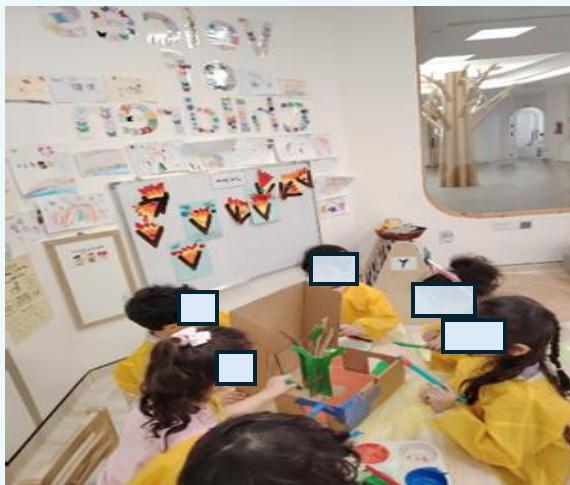
**Teachers' Reflections:** Interaction with an audience gave the children courage to express themselves.



## Creativity with 3D Art and Recycling

Our children excelled in using recycled materials to create wonderful 3D artworks. This activity was enjoyable for them and instilled a spirit of teamwork and collaboration.

**Teachers' Reflections:** This activity reinforced the concept of teamwork and nurtured creativity.



## Wishes Session and Voting

Another remarkable activity was the dialogue session with the children to hear their wishes. They agreed **on a single wish through voting and everyone signed it.** Their ideas were sincere, beautiful, and reflected their needs and feelings.

**Teachers' Reflections:** The session highlighted the children's voices and dreams.

## Selecting Works for the Virtual Exhibition

The children selected their drawings for the virtual exhibition. They felt very happy knowing that their works would be displayed globally, giving them a sense that their voices would be heard worldwide.

**Teachers' Reflections:** Allowing children to participate in decision-making strengthened their self-confidence.



## Joy of Global Art Display

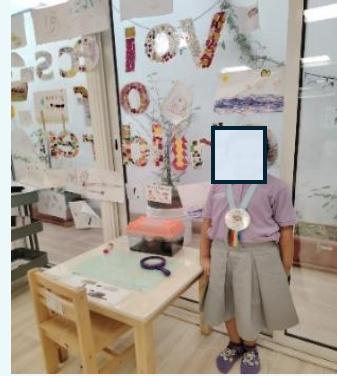
When the children saw all their drawings and comments displayed in the virtual exhibition, **they were filled with joy and pride knowing their achievements reached the world.**

**Teachers' Reflections:** The experience gave the children a sense of global accomplishment.

## Distribution of Certificates and Medals

At the end of the year, the children received certificates recognizing their continuous creativity, and we presented them with medals as a memorable reward that will accompany them for life, creating an unforgettable experience.

**Teachers' Reflections:** Honoring the children created a strong motivational boost.



## International Virtual Exhibition

It was wonderful at the end of the academic year to see our children's works in the virtual exhibition alongside works from children around the world. This was a truly joyful experience that brought great happiness to our children.

**Teachers' Reflections:** This experience broadened the children's horizons and connected them to the world.

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# Looking Ahead: Next Phase and Key Milestones

Building on the foundations of *Implementation Year 1 (2025)*, the ***Evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project*** enters its next phase as an ongoing, collaborative, and borderless initiative—deepening pedagogical practice, thoughtfully leveraging AI, expanding global reach, and strengthening connections between education, research, and policy.

## **Expanding Global Reach**

Scaling implementation across new countries in partnership with the ***Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN)***.

## **Research–Practice Partnerships**

Strengthening collaboration between researchers and educators, with selected case studies contributing to a planned ***2026 special publication in the Journal of Early Childhood Research***.

## **Voices of Children International Galleries**

An annual global celebration each November, showcasing children's creative expressions across countries and continents.

## **Voices of Children Pedagogy™ Awards of Excellence**

Launching annual international awards to recognise and honour educators' exceptional contributions.

## **2026 Bright Start International Conference**

The annual global platform bringing educators, researchers, and policymakers together to share practice, exchange insights, and shape the next phase of the evolving Voices of Children Pedagogy™.

# Further Information

Further information about the project is available at:

Voices of Children Pedagogy™ International Project  
<https://voicesofchildren.brightstartfoundation.org/>

Annual Bright Start International Conference  
<https://conferencebrightstartfoundation.org/>

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