

The International Child Art Foundation

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Founded in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the International Child Art Foundation (ICAF) serves American schoolchildren as their national arts organization that cultivates creativity and mutual empathy worldwide through the universal language of art.

ICAF calls for students to identify as creative empaths so they can work together to improve the world. Developing self-identity shapes personality and character and directs one's thoughts and life purpose. Developing cosmic identity is a more difficult task, requiring a holistic education that integrates STEM disciplines with art for imagination and sports for teamwork. ICAF uses STEAM education in its programs and its quarterly magazine, *ChildArt*, for cross-cultural understanding, cross-disciplinary thinking, and global competencies.

Creative Development

Creativity is a salient human quality for critical thinking that shifts paradigms. Research shows that 98% of five-year-olds exhibit creative divergent thinking, compared to only 2% of twenty-five-year-olds. This discontinuity in human development is attributed to the “fourth-grade slump” in children's creativity, discovered by E. P. Torrance. ICAF's flagship program, the Arts Olympiad, empowers youth to overcome this slump by becoming “artist-athletes” with a creative mind and healthy body. Students' self-image as artist-athletes solidifies when they depict themselves as such in their artwork. As the number of artist-athletes grows, the school becomes a more integrated and healthy community.



Delegate from Japan showing her Arts Olympiad artwork.

World Children's Festival

ICAF organizes the World Children's Festival (WCF) every four years at the National Mall as the Olympics of children's imagination. The WCF is curated as a transformative experience to develop mutual empathy among the Arts Olympiad winners

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from schools across the U.S. and participating countries. Since the students come from diverse backgrounds, the WCF program includes activities and training for the activation of mirror neurons responsible for empathy. In a setting of global community, students are inspired over three days to become creative empaths. The following is a detailed

description of the WCF three-day experience:

1. Health & Environment Day

The WCF begins with emphasis on common concerns and the sharing of personal visions to lay the foundation for empathy. Children collaboratively produce murals that demonstrate harmony between public health, human industry, and a pristine earth.

2. Creativity & Imagination Day

Students become the focus on the second day, with emphasis on self-discovery, originality, and ideation by invoking the American spirit of entrepreneurship, invention, and innovation. Students depict their collective visions in artwork.

3. Peace & Leadership Day

On the final day, students learn that it is their responsibility to be compas-

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