

BUILDING LIFELONG *Learners*

Impact Report 2025

• • • •

©Lead By Design Foundation 2025

ABOUT LEAD BY DESIGN

A Section 8 nonprofit empowering educators, young adults, and children to solve real-world challenges building India's next generation problem solvers through play, design and Sustainable Development Goals.

Follow us @Lead_by_Design



Additional information available at www.leadbydesign.in

Contact: reachus@leadbydesign.in

Photography : Ramabhadran Sundaram, Sorna, Nivedhan & Lead By Design archives

Design & Illustration : Namami Venkatraman

BUILDING LIFELONG *Learners*

Impact Report 2025
• • • •





THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

ALL THE EDUCATORS, *who believe in the creative potential of children,*

ALL THE CHILDREN, *who continue to showcase to us their ability to change the world,*

& ALL OUR SUPPORTERS, *who have believed in our mission to bring Creative Problem solving to all children in the country.*





Cutter

Handle

Collection Drum
or compost

Created by students of Anjuman
Matriculation Higher Secondary School,
Chennai

Welcome to Lead by Design ⁰⁵

Our Vision & Mission 07

Letter from the Founder 09

Stories of *transformation*

The girl who found her voice through a pencil 11

The boy who dreamed in circuits 13

Where will I go? 17

Project: ZERO WASTE 21

Why we exist 25

Our solution 27

How we bring CLLs to life! 29

Impact measurement 33

Impact data 35

Our resources 39

Sustainable fellowship 41

Creative Climate Collective 45

2024 in context 47

Goals for 2025 49

Partners and supporters 50

Team 51



OUR JOURNEY BEGAN WITH A PROFOUND QUESTION:

How do we create an equitable, resilient & thriving future with all?”

Through years of experience, we've discovered that the answer lies in collaboration and innovation, working directly with people from diverse ages & different backgrounds.

We're a movement that ignites the potential within every young individual. Our mission is to empower students to unlock their creativity, guiding them to identify challenges and design solutions that resonate within their schools & communities. Our approach cultivates not only problem-solving skills but also a sense of ownership & responsibility for the world they'll inherit.

Featured in our journey is the inspiring art work conceptualised and created by 8 & 9 year old children. This art work symbolises the power of hands on experiences where young minds use their voice and creativity towards real world challenges.

Join us in this exciting endeavor, as we lead by design. Together, we'll unlock the creative potential of young minds and build a world that's sustainable, resilient, and thriving—for all.

WELCOME TO

Lead by Design 



Students of grade 3 & 4:

Visaka, Sadhanaa, Rana,
Yogasri, Angelina, Jeeva,
Tamilarsi, Deena, Shalika,
Agasthiya, Ajay, Sadaf,
Samyuktha, Yogamithran,
Pranav, Dhanalakshmi,
Krithika, Basmiya, Syed, Sai,
Siddharth, Abimanyu,
Kishore, Raghavan, Sana,
Sanjana, Nithish & Niranjan

TITLED:

Where will I go now?

VISION

Young people will unlock their creative potential to build sustainable, resilient & thriving future WITH all.

Lead by Design's Core Values



Radical Collaboration ■

When diverse perspectives and skills come together, we can be more impactful.

Inclusive ■

We are driven by creative, thoughtful solutions and thrilled to support ideas from our community.

Empowering ■

Lead by Design strives to be a place where ideas can be turned into action leading to impact.

MISSION

We are on a bold mission towards empowering educators and young adults to enable children to take action towards sustainable developmental goals by building 21st century essential skills

High Impactful ●

Impact comes in different forms - behaviour, mindset to tangible progress in the world.

Sustainable ■

Each of the solution that is designed to be implemented is long lasting and feeds into circular economy.

Love ●

High impact solutions can be created only when there is understanding of the other person(s) & their perspectives are observed and respected and heard.

DEAR SUPPORTERS,

I'm writing to you today not just to share what we've built at Lead by Design, but to let you into the heart of why we exist — and why your support means more than words can say.

When I founded Lead by Design, it was out of a simple but profound belief - Every child deserves the chance to think creatively, solve real-world problems, and imagine themselves as powerful contributors to the future.

In too many classrooms across India, especially in under-resourced communities, creativity and critical thinking are not given the space they deserve.

Education becomes about survival — not about hope, imagination, or agency.

I knew we had to change that. What we've seen since has only strengthened that belief.

When children are trusted to tackle real-world challenges, they don't hesitate — they lean in with heart, energy, and brilliant ideas.

They begin to see themselves not just as students, but as changemakers.

One story stays with me: a group of students, often overlooked in academics, got the opportunity to present their project at the National Institute of Design — standing shoulder to shoulder with students from top-tier schools.

They proved what I've always known: Potential isn't determined by birth lottery. It's unlocked through opportunity.

It wasn't a matter of privilege, pedigree, or even perfect scores.

It was creativity.

It was courage.

It was the belief that they belonged on that stage.

At Lead by Design, we are building a world where every child gets that chance — to be seen, heard, and celebrated for who they are and what they can create.

Our vision is big, and it's only just getting started. We are training more educators, reaching more communities, and refining our programs to meet children where they are — and lift them higher.

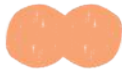
With your continued support, we can bring this opportunity to thousands more.

Together, we are changing what education can mean in India — one child, one spark, one breakthrough at a time.

Thank you for choosing to travel this journey with us.

With love & gratitude,

DR. SOWMYA LAKSHMINARAYANAN
Founder and CEO, Lead by Design



When we trust children to
tackle real-world challenges,
they don't hesitate —

they
lean in **with**
heart,
energy
& **brilliant**
ideas

The Girl Who Found Her Voice Through a Pencil

Grade 3 Student



At the edge of a noisy classroom sat Vishakha, silent, unnoticed, and often forgotten. She came to school every day, listened to her lessons, finished her homework, and returned home without a word. To her, this was school. And life. Nothing more, nothing less.

When Creative Learning Lab (CLL) classes started, she didn't expect much to change.

But there, at least, she could draw.

No one stared, no one judged.

That small freedom was enough. Until the day her teacher called on Pratham to share his story with the class.

Something shifted.

Vishakha felt a twist in her chest. "I could also tell a story like that", she thought. Why didn't the teacher choose me?

The next CLL class, she came prepared. She listened closely, worked quietly, and finished early. For the first time, she raised her hand. Her teacher came over. As Vishakha read her story aloud, she watched the teacher's face change from curiosity and then to admiration.

Then came the biggest moment of all.

She walked to the front of the class. Her legs trembled. Her hands tightened around the page. But when she began to read, her voice rang clear. No stumbles. No shyness. Just the quiet strength of a girl who had finally found something to say.

And the class listened. For the first time, they really listened.

That day, something changed in Vishakha. She wasn't just a student anymore. She was a storyteller.

In her reflection group, she shared her experiences confidently and asked others to share too. The once-silent girl was now helping others find their voice.

Still, that wasn't enough. Each CLL class became a new challenge. She pushed herself to write better, speaking louder, crafting deeper stories. Her English improved. Her confidence grew.

Then came a strange request.

"Vishakha," her teacher said one day, "this is beautifully written. Since you're done, why don't you help the others?"

She grumbled but turned to Nikhil, who was working on a story about a boy and a girl exploring a mysterious island.

"I really like this girl you've drawn," Nikhil said. "Can you draw one for me?"

Vishakha picked up her pencil. As she sketched the girl, something clicked. What if...?

From that moment, every child who wrote about a girl came to her. She drew dozens, each with different clothes, hairstyles, and expressions. These drawings weren't just art. They were conversations, glimpses into her classmates' stories. And through each story, Vishakha collected ideas, characters, and dreams.

So when the final CLL project was announced—a storybook with the theme fish—Vishakha knew exactly what she was going to do.

She worked meticulously, reflecting on all the girls she had drawn, all the conversations she had had, and the journey she had taken. She wrote slowly, beautifully. Every letter was carefully formed, every page filled with purpose.

On the day of the showcase, she was unrecognisable from the quiet girl she used to be. She stood tall, confident, smiling. She waved people over with joy.

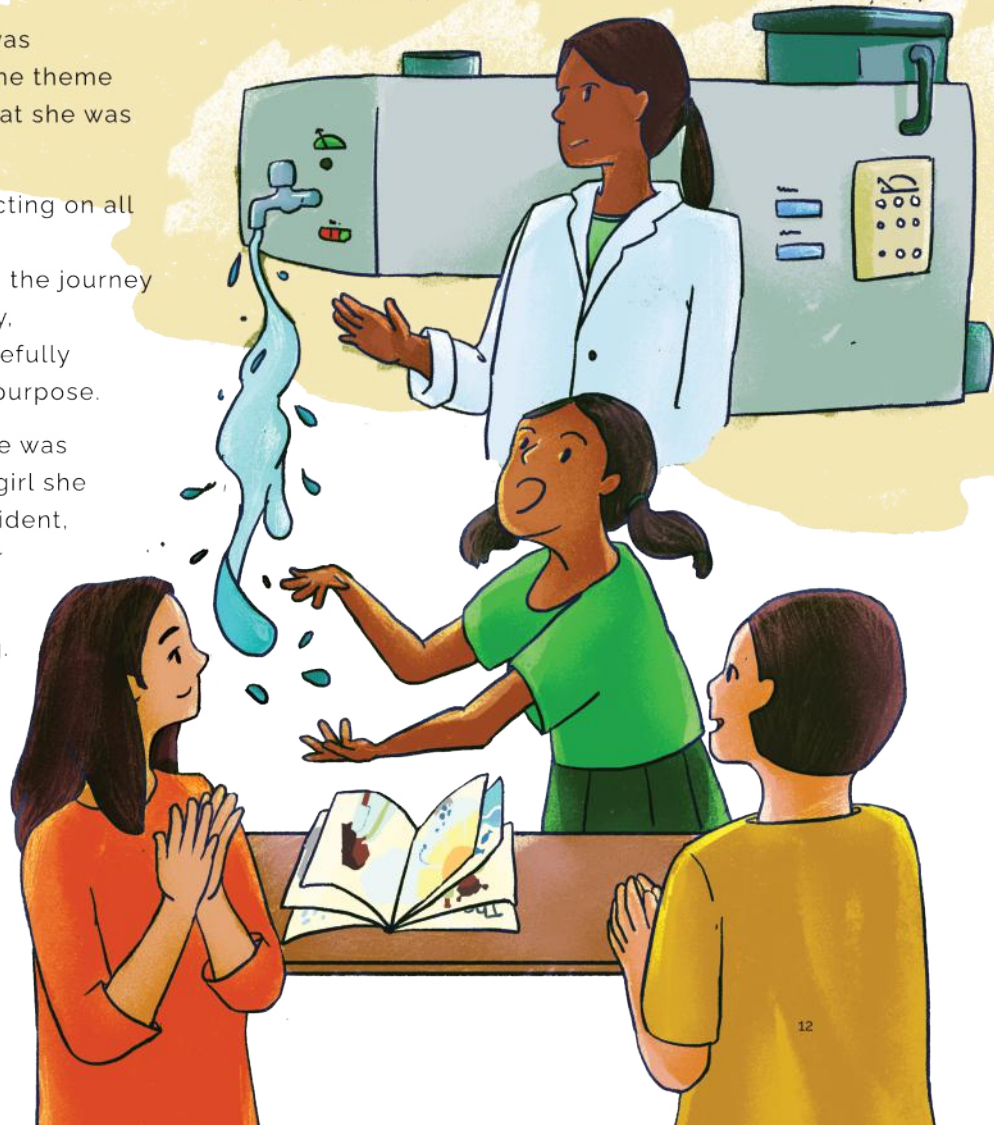
"My story's name is Overcoming. It's about a girl who..."

Her story unfolded over 12 pages of vivid illustrations and heartfelt writing. It told the tale of Thangu, a little girl from a fishing village. Thangu

was gifted—able to catch fish better than anyone else her age. But as she grew, she was expected only to cook and clean. While her friends went to school, she taught herself to read & write in secret.

One day, she left her village to study. Years later, she returned—not just educated, but determined. With her new knowledge, she helped her village thrive again, improving fish catches and building a new, better life for everyone.

When Vishakha finished reading, the room erupted in applause.



The Boy Who Dreamed in Circuits

Child of Grade 5

In the quietest corner of the classroom, sat Rhitik, his head bent low, hands carefully fixing the wires inside a friend's broken toy. When the teacher entered, she barely noticed him.

He packed away his tools without a word.

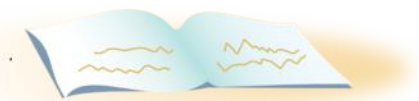
Another school day had begun and for Rhitik, it would be just like any other.

He was never a troublemaker. His homework came in on time. He spoke when spoken to. He blended into the background, never too much, never too little. That had always been enough.

Until the day of the Creative Learning Lab (CLL) class.

The prompt was simple: Create a storybook about your dream for the future.

The class buzzed with excitement. Rhitik picked up his pencil. He liked machines,



picked up his pencil. He liked machines, electronics, wires and switches. So, of course, his story would be about robots, ones that cleaned, cooked, and maybe even did homework. But as he sketched, an idea sparked in his mind.

What if... I could actually make it?

For the first time, he looked up from his page and scanned the room, searching for his teacher. It took him a while to gather the courage and walk up to her.

"I want to make a robot," he said quietly, eyes firm.



His teacher blinked in surprise. Rhitik had never spoken to her this way. Could he build a robot and finish his book on time? She hesitated.

But something in his voice convinced her to say yes.

And so, he began, with scraps of cardboard from behind the classroom.

It didn't take long before other kids noticed. Curious faces peeked over his shoulder. Some brought him broken toys and told him to keep the parts.

Rhitek, who had always been invisible, was suddenly the centre of attention.

The pressure was heavy. He started working after classes both on his book and his robot after classes and at any spare time he could find. Slowly, his project started coming together.

On the final day, his hands moved with practised ease, carefully fixing the last wires, adjusting the sensors. There was no rush now, only excitement.

It was his turn.

His classmates cheered him on. He passed his friend Hafezur, who gave him a thumbs-up. Rhitek nodded and stepped forward.

"H-hi... good morning, ma'am, and everyone," he began. "My name is Rhitek, and today, I'm presenting the book I wrote. It's called 'William the Robot'."

He told them about his dream: a robot that could help clean his city's waste dumps, the ones near his school, the ones near his home. His robot would eat plastic, recycle it, and return something useful.

But there was a twist. William could detect recyclable plastic. If the wrong kind was fed to him, the lights turned red and the mouth snapped shut.

To demonstrate, Rhitek pulled out some plastic wrappers he



had collected. He fed them to William. The lights blinked green. The class gasped as a small recycled spoon came out of the robot's belly.

Cheers erupted. Rhitik's face lit up.

At the year-end showcase, the classroom had transformed into an exhibition hall. Colourful storybooks lined the tables. But Rhitik had a crowd.

With pride, he told his story over and over. His robot stood beside him—buzzing, blinking, performing. Strangers listened, laughed, and applauded.

And that's when he saw him. A tall man, standing quietly, admiring William.

"You made this?" the man asked.

"Yes," Rhitik replied, his voice steady.

"I had the same dream once," the man said. "And I've been working on it too." He pulled out his phone and showed a video, a real recycling robot. A giant machine swallowed plastic and spat out recycled material.

Rhitik's eyes widened. It's real. Someone is building it. He could be that someone.

The next day, he couldn't sit still. He paced, thinking, dreaming, questioning.

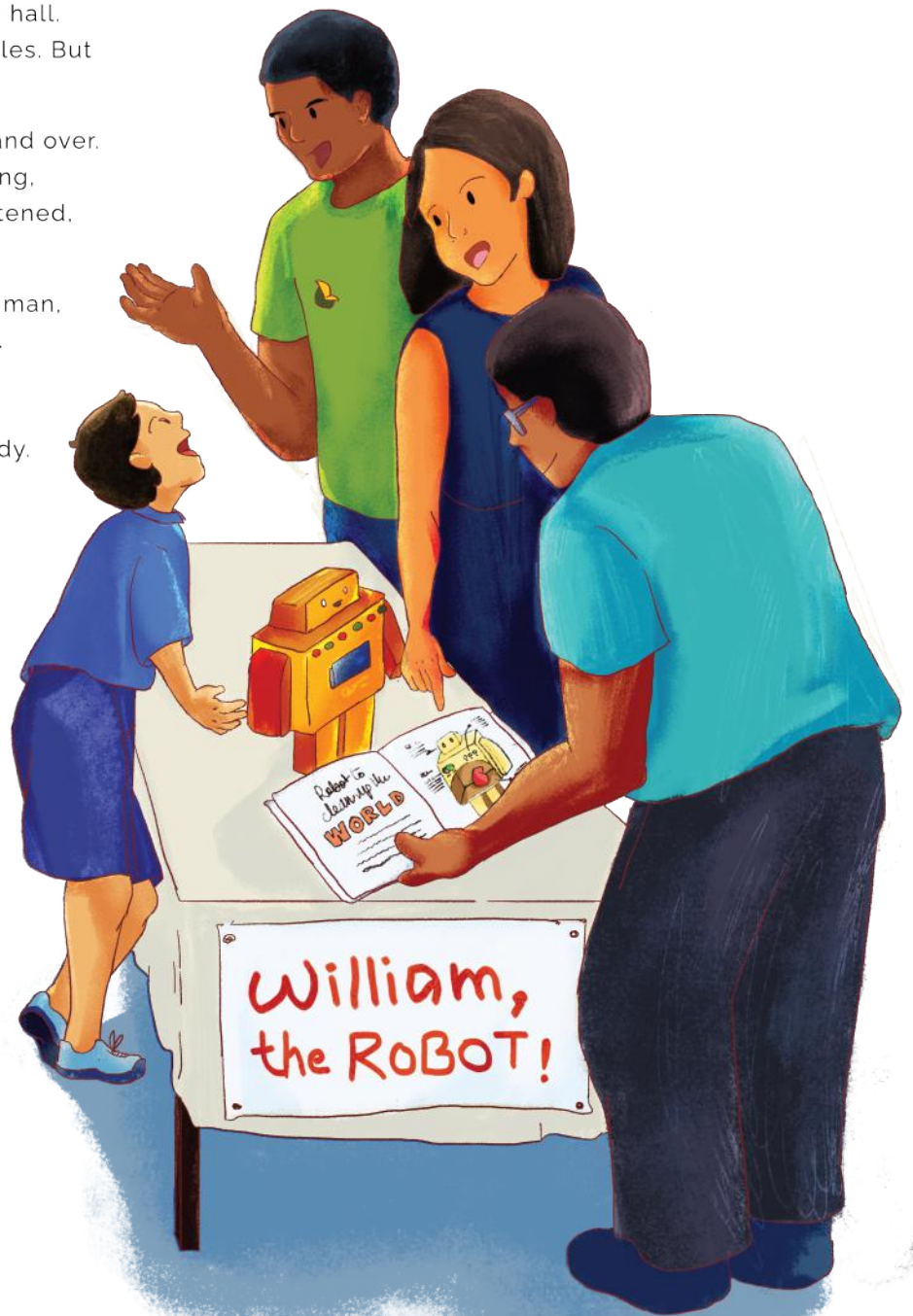
Finally, he turned to his teacher.


"Ma'am, How can I learn to make more robots like that?"

She smiled. One word was enough.

"Robotics."

That's how Rhitik's real story began.





I used to be very shy, and I didn't talk to many boys in my class because they were noisy and used bad words, which I don't like. I like to be kind and quiet. In our CLL class, we made storybooks. I got an idea about robots and made a small robot model. Everyone liked it, and I felt happy. After that, I became more confident.

Before, I didn't speak any English. But now, I try to speak with help from my friends and teacher. I even introduced myself & my book in English.

I want to become a scientist and build real robots.

Where will I go?

A Grade 3 Class

The teachers of Jayanti School could never have believed that in a couple months, the naughtiest third grade class would turn into a group of enthusiastic and disciplined kids.

Today was no different. It was CLL class and each child was absorbed in their work. One would have mistaken them for adults from the conversations running through the class.

"What do you think about my work?"

"Arya, can you help me with this drawing?"

"Madhu, I need some of your pens!"

Yet, with all the activity, 5 children sat unmoved, thinking so hard, you'd wonder what the problem was. But it was simple. They wanted to create a painting for their class exhibition. On the theme of, *water...*

They thought deeply.

"What about the beach?"

"Marina beach! Elloit's beach!"

"I went there for a day with my family, it was really fun. There's lots to do in the water there."

"But even then. The water is so dirty."

"I know someone who does turtle walks on that beach!"

"What if we write a story about turtles in the water?"

"But the water is so dirty."

"Hmm, how do all the sea animals survive in the dirty water?"

"What would all the sea animals do?"

Maybe the turtle would go inside its shell...

The fish could hide inside a sea plant...

The octopus would shut himself in a cave...

"But, What about a whale?"

A Whale is is huge!"

"I heard it's the biggest animal in the sea!"

The children had found their hook. The largest animal they knew and its struggle



for survival. In a sea as polluted as they knew their local beach to be it seemed almost impossible. All of them imagined different things and yet,

What would it do?

Where would the whale go?

On that question, they turned to their drawing sheets. Wondering in their minds what whales would be doing in water as polluted as the nearby beach.

How could the whale breathe in the polluted sea?

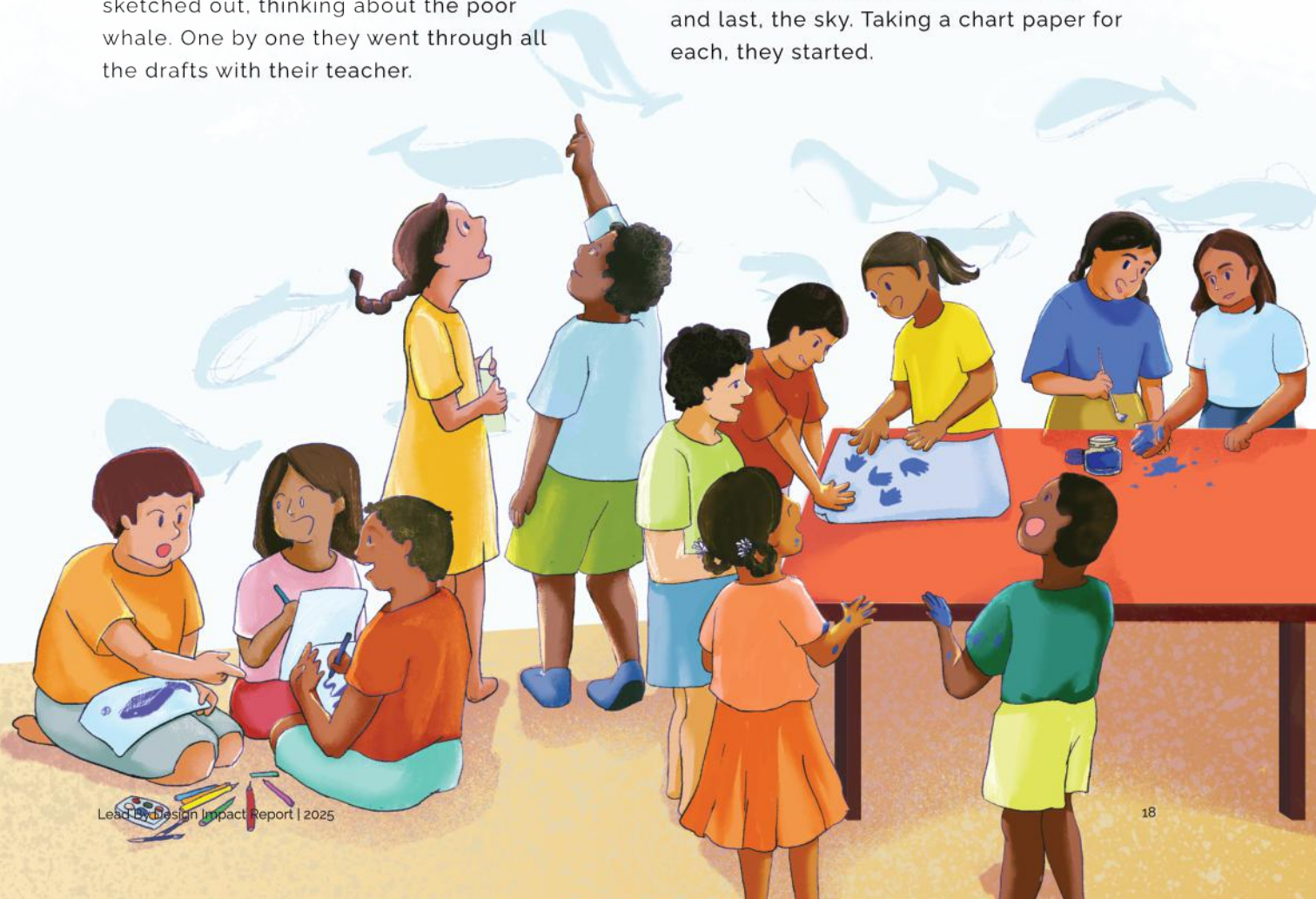
Yes, that was it! But, at that moment, their teacher was upon them. As she called, all of them brought out all the ideas they had sketched out, thinking about the poor whale. One by one they went through all the drafts with their teacher.

"Oh! Look at that one!" Sanjana pointed. Aryan's whale had literally jumped out of the water to breathe. It moved them like the first question had.

Thus, they got started. A painting of a whale had to be big. A single sheet of drawing paper would not do. But as they brought the chart papers out, a problem appeared. How would they all paint it all?

The painting job was so big, they put down their brushes and decided to colour it with their palm impressions. Everyone would get a fair chance.

To handle it all, they divided into groups. One handling the sky, another the whale and last, the sky. Taking a chart paper for each, they started.



And so, with many shades of blue, they started making the ocean. Everything was ready and the kids were roaring to go... well, who would go first? A loud argument that could have been was dissipated when the usually shy Meena gathered all the supplies and told them all. "If you want to paint, form a line in front of the chart paper and we will all take turns."

The children stood, the line formed, and with each hand impression, the chart looked more like the ocean's blue. But how would they make it polluted?

That was Ankit's cue. The naughty kid had a broad grin as he showed them all his collection of thrown-away, waste plastics. Until then, it was just him and his friends who had been using them in their projects so far, but now, they could all use his collection for something bigger!

Breaking the plastics into smaller pieces, they covered their pristine sea with them.

Ready!



Next, they started work on the huge whale, jumping out of the sea for air. This was followed by the sky, where the sun was setting in shades of yellow and orange.

Over the next CLL classes, that was all that occupied them. Until finally, the day came. The pieces were all ready. All that was left was the assembly. Gingerly, all the parts were brought out.

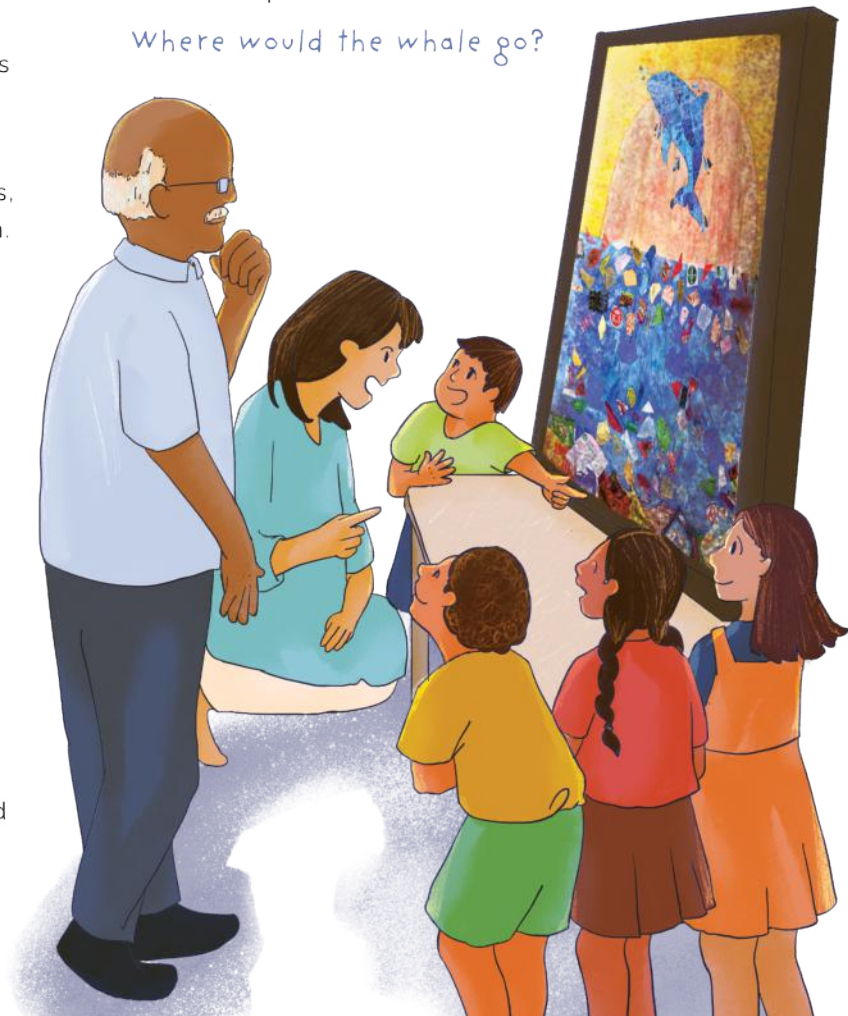
Meena slowly unwrapped the parts and, with everyone, layered them together and


glued. Their hard work of so many days had finally come together.

It was so big! Their whale now looked tiny in comparison!

On the day of their exhibition, the guests were far more stunned. To think, children this tiny created this huge painting. Not only big, the painting was beautiful in its details, the way each part had come out. As they looked, the children, only too eager, chipped in, "Sir, I made that sea", "Angel and I created this wave pattern", "Rohit and I were the ones who put together all the plastic". The guests were amazed, but what couldn't and wouldn't leave them was the children's question.

Where would the whale go?





Before the Creative Learning Lab, I was scared to talk in class. I thought my ideas were not good. But in the lab, we made things, shared stories, and worked in teams. My friends listened to me, while **my teacher cheered for me.**

Now, I feel brave to speak and share my ideas with everyone

Project: ZERO WASTE

Grade 5 Classroom

"Aya ma! Ayama! Where are you?" the children called out playfully, expecting her usual warm smile.

But today, something was different.

There she was at her usual spot. But with tears streaming down her face.

"Did you all finish your food today?" she asked, her eyes fierce, her voice trembling.

The kids went quiet.

"I had to throw away a tanker's worth of food today," she said. "Then I went to clean

the washroom... and there was even more wasted food. Is food a luxury to you children?"

They hadn't thought about it that way.

Whenever lunch was too much, too spicy, or not to their taste, they simply threw it away. It was just something they did.

They had never stopped to wonder what happened after.

But today, Ayama's tears stung. Something had to change.

The next day, things were different. The children returned to class and told everyone what had happened.

Their classmates were shocked. Angry, even. No one wanted their dear Ayama to cry, especially not because of them.

At lunch, everyone took only what they could finish. Not a grain more. But despite their effort, the sadness in Ayama's eyes didn't go away.

They knew now a single day's effort wasn't enough.

The change had to last.

So they asked themselves: Why was food being wasted? Why weren't kids able to finish their meals? What needed to change?

That's how they began.

Immanuel

Immanuel had seen Ayama cry. And it moved something deep in him. He didn't want a quick fix. He wanted a real solution. And he knew they'd have to do it together.

He stood up in front of the class, something he had never done before and led a



discussion. Quiet as he had always been, his voice was steady. He organised everyone into small groups, pairing friends and strangers together based on what he had quietly noticed about each of them.

The problem was clear. Now it was time to get to work.

Rohit

To Rohit, Ayama had always been like family. He hadn't seen her cry, but he knew something was wrong. When he went to speak to her, Imanuel's call brought him back.

Rohit was a ground-level person. He believed in doing.

So he started observing. Every day after lunch, he walked around the school, checking corners, dustbins, basins.

Quietly, he and his group collected data, day after day.

Dhanusha

Dhanusha usually kept to herself. But this time, she knew it wasn't enough for just their class to act. **The entire school had to be involved.**



With a group of friends, she walked through the corridors, asking questions, especially to the younger kids. Why were they throwing food away? What did they think? She listened.

Some said they were served too much. Others said they didn't like the food. Bit by

Who was wasting food?
What kind? How much?
Why?



bit, she pieced together the puzzle. She brought those stories back to class.

And so, the pieces came together.

They gathered their insights and shared what they found.

Dhanusha started: "The younger kids want to waste less food, but they're served more than they can eat. And sometimes, they just don't like the food."

Someone added, "We should put up the weekly meal plan in every classroom. That way, kids can choose when to eat at school or bring food from home."

"And we should tell Ayama to serve smaller portions," Dhanusha said. "That way, we reduce waste before it even starts."

Rohit's group stepped in: "There are specific places where kids throw food away—near the basins, under staircases, even behind classrooms."

"What if we had food monitors—one from each class—who could help kids finish their meals, monitor waste, and support those struggling?"

Heads nodded.

The class came alive with energy.

Rohit drew a map of the school and marked the food-waste hotspots.

Immanuel's group designed colourful weekly meal charts for each classroom.

Some girls created "Food Monitor" badges—something fun but official, to make sure the job was taken seriously.

But Dhanusha's task was the biggest.

She walked up to a door she had passed every day, but never dared to open.

The principal's office.

She knocked, nervous.

"Come in," came the voice.

"Ma'am," she began, "Our class is worried about the food being wasted in our school."

"Oh?"

"We've been working on some plans. But we need your help."

She spoke clearly, boldly. She told the principal about the meal plans, the food



monitors, the waste hotspots, and the excitement among her classmates.

"So your class wants to do all this?" the principal asked.



"No, ma'am," Dhanusha smiled. "We've already done it. Now we just need the school's help."

The principal was silent for a moment. Then she nodded.

Two days later, at the morning assembly, something new happened.

The very same teacher who had often scolded them about wasting food now stood on stage, celebrating them.

Food monitors were announced for every class. The meal plans were displayed proudly on noticeboards. And for the first time, every child felt part of something bigger.

The first few days were cautious. The kids were learning the new system.

Some forgot. Some resisted.

But slowly, new habits formed. They began to choose how much to eat.

They began to ask if they could take less. And soon, wasting food felt strange. Unnatural.

Ayama noticed it first. The dustbins stayed empty. The washrooms stayed clean.

And one day, a child walked up to her & said, "Please serve me just a little less. I want to finish everything."

Ayama didn't cry this time.

But her eyes sparkled.



why we EXIST

EDUCATION IS SUPPOSED TO INSPIRE

and equip young people for the challenges of work, livelihood, and global problem-solving. Yet, it is not fulfilling this essential duty. The problem lies in today's mainstream public education, which stifles creativity and fails to prepare youth for life's demands adequately.

A staggering 80% of Indian children lack hands-on experiential learning opportunities, leading to boredom and skepticism about the value of schooling. Additionally, 75% of Indian children struggle to apply their classroom knowledge to real-life situations. Traditional education, ill-suited for today's rapidly evolving landscape, falls short in preparing children for the future. Notably, data from the World Economic Forum suggests that 65% of jobs awaiting today's primary school students are yet to be created.



3 out of 4 children struggle to apply their classroom knowledge towards real-life problems

Furthermore, only 27% of teachers worldwide feel sufficiently equipped to integrate sustainability education, which bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. UNESCO data reveals that nearly 81% of primary schools globally do not have access to comprehensive SDG education. These trends—substandard education, an explosion in the working-age population, and ever-more-urgent challenges facing the world—puts India on a collision course for the future. However, there is a path forward.

Experiential learning that puts an emphasis on creativity, exploration, and

73% teachers worldwide can't close the gap between classroom learning & sustainability education



collaboration—the very same qualities that young people need to thrive, that India needs to boost its economy, and that the world needs to address the urgent challenges of disease, violence, inequality, and climate change.

■ *At Lead by Design, we envision young people unlocking their creative potential to build equitable, resilient and thriving communities with all.*

We understand the urgency of accelerating progress towards the SDGs and we believe that by **engaging children in meaningful dialogue and action around these challenges early on, we lay the groundwork for a sustainable future**, empower them to drive positive change within their communities and beyond, while developing 21st century essential skills in the process.



our
Mission is
to empower

1 Million children by 2030 to take action towards
SDGs by bringing play based learning experiences.

children



OUR CURRENT METHOD

Enabling educators & partner organizations to bring 21st-century education through Creative Learning Labs

Lead by Design partners with organizations and educational institutions to bring Creative Learning Labs to bring 21st-century education inside the classrooms. In this current model, we train educators from partner organizations and educational institutions to undergo a 50-hour rigorous in-person and online training program throughout the year.

In addition to the training program, the educators also have access to the educator's manual, which contains the session plans, observational manual and monitoring and evaluation rubrics, all of which provide consistent support to the educators, to bring effective and rigorous Creative Learning Labs.

During the in-person training program, educators develop and practice the skill of bringing play-based learning experiences into the classrooms through the three development stages, Ignite, Innovate & Inspire.

Post the training, the educators bring 60 hours of play based learning sessions with children spread across 1.5-3 hours per week. Lead by Design provides support to these educators in monitoring and evaluation.

1 Ignite

Enabling the child to understand their own creative potential

2 Innovate

Developing their creative problem-solving through a mock real-world challenge

3 Inspire

Children identify a real world challenge and apply the techniques learnt from the first two phases



Ready to Transform Your Classrooms?

Let's co-create a system where children imagine, build, and lead for a sustainable future.

Partnering with Lead by Design:

Our goal is to empower 1 million children by 2030 to take action toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by nurturing 21st-century skills like creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication through play-based learning.

CLL is a one year cohesive and transformative experience for children, educators and schools. Every year, new schools join us on this journey and we work alongside them through the year to implement grounded, action driven curriculums to bring about creative learning and community impact.

CLL creates

1

Educators who become Creative Facilitators confident in guiding 21st-century skills

2

A cost effective, high-impact, scalable model that works

Creative Learning Labs sparked collaboration, creativity, and empathy in my students, **even those who struggled with attention. It helped them imagine, build, and solve real-world problems together** with newfound joy and focus.

• **Niharika**

Grade 3 Teacher

3

Empowered children who can design real solutions to real-world challenges

4

Classrooms filled with joy, curiosity & problem-solving

How we bring Creative Learning Labs to life!

Step 2: Training Your Educators

Educators undergo an 80 hours blended training program and learn facilitate and drive children to work on projects related to real world challenges Training includes designing play-based learning to foster the 4Cs (Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration)



Step 3: Access to the Educator Toolkit

Every educator receives a ready to implement structured toolkit, The Educator's Manual. It includes 60+ hours of plug-and-play session plans; Observation & reflection tools to deeply understand children; Rubrics to monitor and evaluate child learning & SDG impact



Step 1: Partnership Onboarding

We begin by onboarding your school or organization with a clear implementation plan. All teachers will be supported and trained to bring play-based learning to life in their classrooms.



Ignite

Discover their creativity and voice



Innovate

Solve real-world-inspired challenges through creative thinking

Step 4: Classroom Implementation

Educators lead Creative Learning Labs with children aged 6–12.

1.5–3 hours/week × 1 year = 60 hours of hands-on learning per child

Children go through 3 transformative stages, called Ignite, innovate and inspire.



Inspire

Taking action toward local SDG challenges by building real world solutions

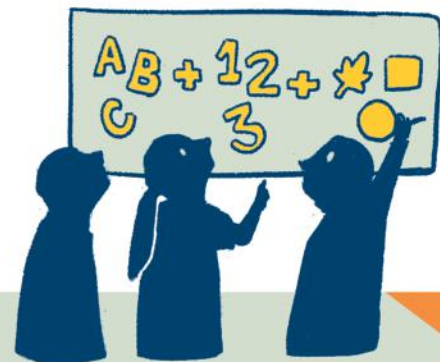
Step 5: Ongoing Support & Impact Tracking

Once onboarded, educators will receive support via monthly check-in & 1:1 coaching, peer learning circles with other educators and a platform to showcase their success stories.



Step 6: Integrate Across your School System

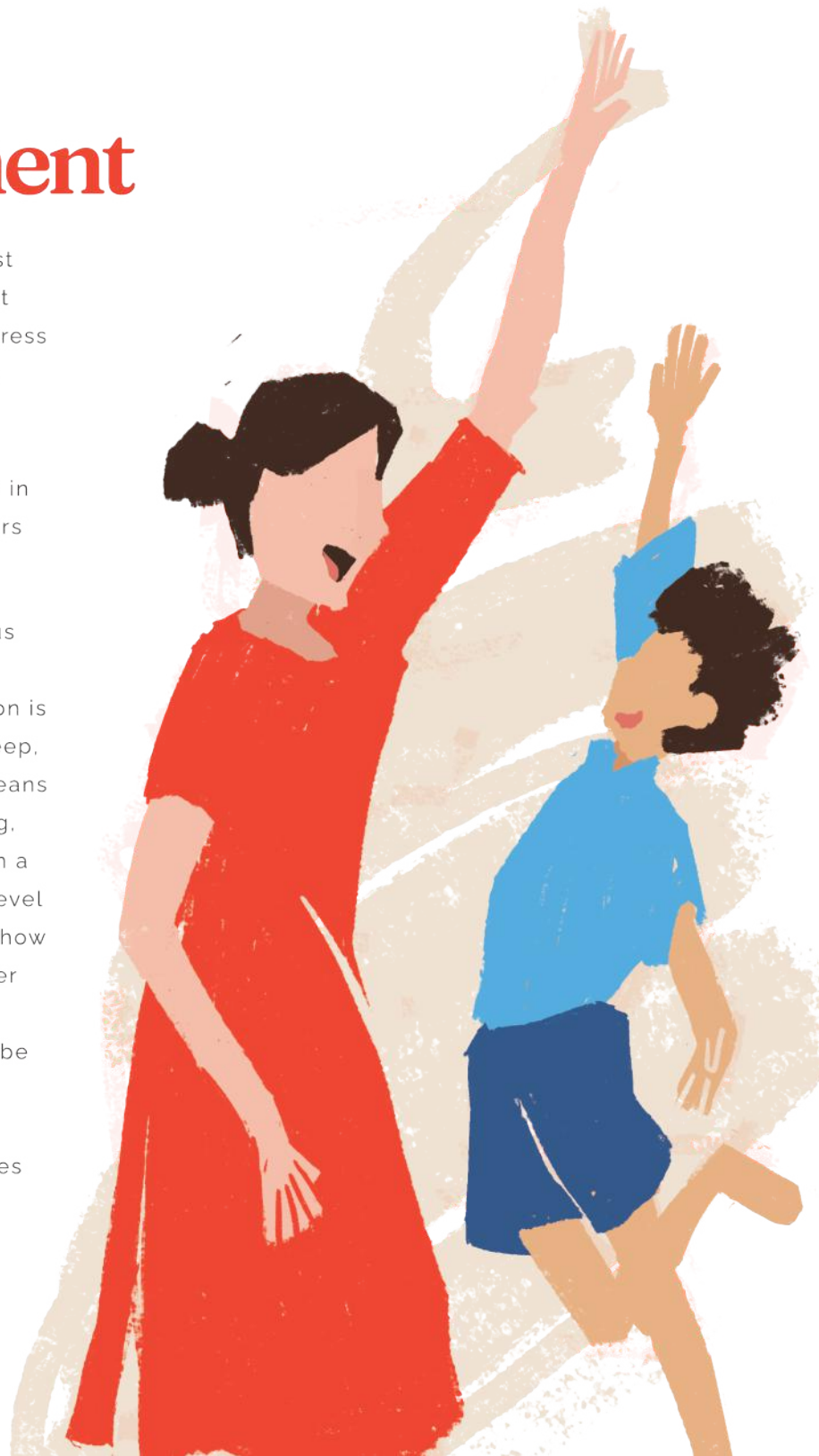
We enable and support to systematically embed 21st-century skills into math, science, social science, and language classes achieving student agency and academic goals across everyday lessons.



Impact Measurement

Lead by Design has developed robust and effective rubrics and assessment methods to measure classroom progress concerning the skills developed. The Skillsbuilder partnership program accredits our method of impact measurement. Currently, this is done in different stages by both the educators and Lead by Design team.

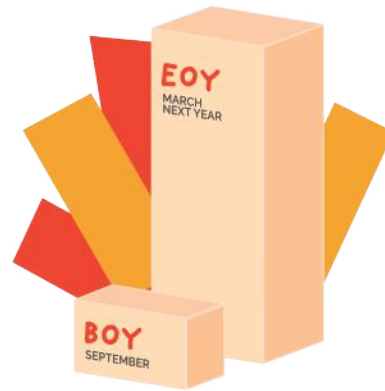
This year, Skills Builder recognised us as an Impact Level 4 Partner, their highest accreditation. This recognition is given to organisations that create deep, measurable learning outcomes. It means our learners are not just participating, but they're building essential skills in a way that can be tracked and seen. Level 4 is only awarded to programs that show clear progress using the Skills Builder Universal Framework. Reaching this level is not easy, and we're proud to be among a small group that has. It's a powerful signal that our approach works, & that our learning experiences lead to real, lasting impact.



Educators

The educators take the Beginning of the Year (BOY) and the End of the Year (EOY) measures based on the rubrics.

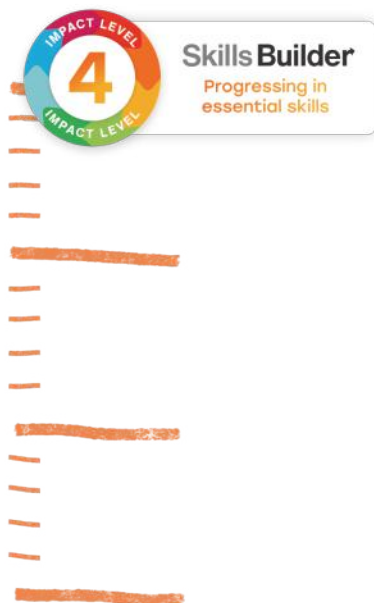
In addition to the BOY and EOY data from the educators, Lead by Design assesses Creative problem-solving assessment for children. This along with the assessment conducted by the educators serves as a medium for the educators to redesign the sessions to develop the 21st century essential skills.



& Us

Lead by Design conducts Qualitative interviews with the educators & the students to understand the progress of the skills beyond the Creative hour and get feedback on the program itself.

In addition to the above methods of impact measurement, during the weekly sessions, children self-evaluate themselves based on the skills they have exhibited during the activity time. This ensures that children take complete ownership of their behaviour & abilities.



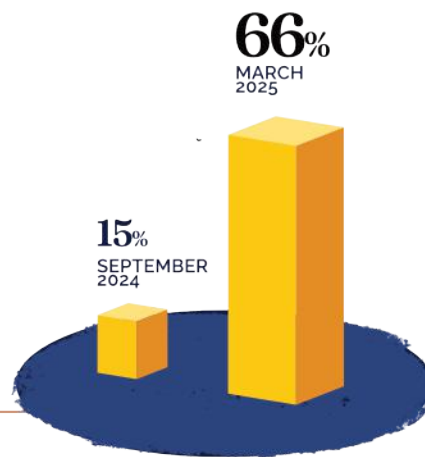
2024-25 Impact Results



Listening

The rubric studies the number of students who paid attention & listened to their classmates and teacher without any reminders and responded with relevant answers.

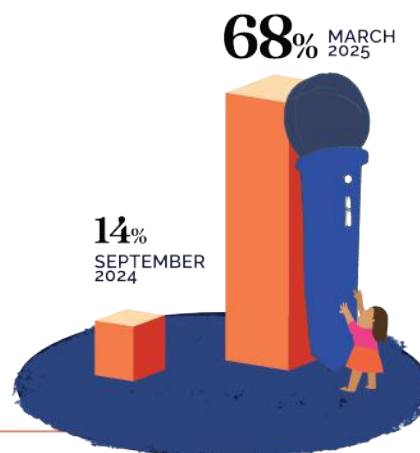
Over the past year, the proficiency in listening increased from 15% to 66%.



Speaking

The rubric studies the number of students who initiated conversation in a group or classroom discussion without any prompts. These student were also able to formulate ideas and opinions & share their thoughts in smaller groups.

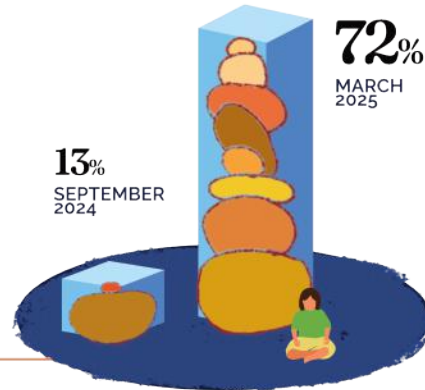
Through the year, the proficiency in speaking increased from 14% to 68%.





Self regulation

The rubric studies the number of students were able to remain calm & find solutions during conflict with others. **Over the course of the year, the proficiency in self regulation increased from 13% to 72%**



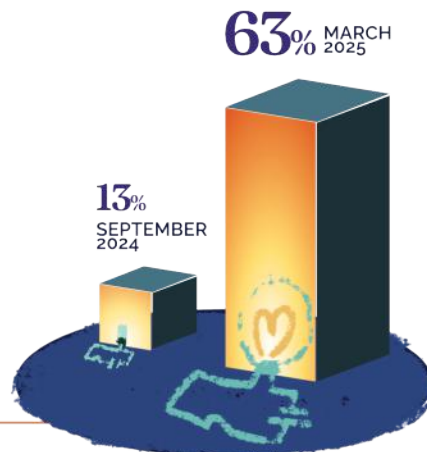
Focus and attention

Tracks the number of students immersed in a given activity completely and resisted distraction. **This year, students displaying proficient focus went up from 36% to 72%.**



Creative thinking

The rubric studies the number of students who created something of their own using elements that they have seen around them. **In our classrooms, the proficiency in creative thinking among students increased from 13% to 63%**



Collaboration

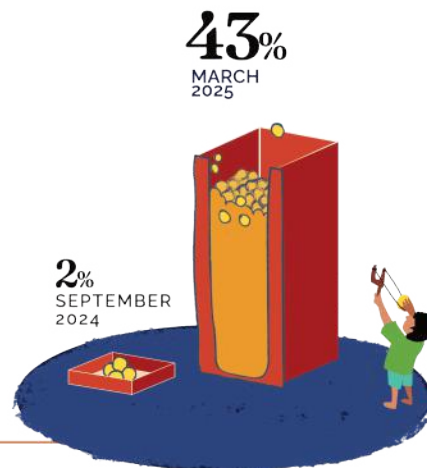
The rubric studies the number of students actively engaged in group activities and took initiative and invited other team members to engage as well. In the past year, the proficiency in Collaboration in classrooms increased from 21% to 83%.



Problem solving

The number of students who were able to list real world factors that would influence the challenge and find multiple different solutions for the same challenge. They were also able to evaluate different solutions independently and provide logical reasoning for the desired solution.

This year, the proficiency in problem solving increased from 2% to 43%.



Over the years, **150+** educators across **10** different organisations have guided **8000+** children towards creating more than **200** innovations to tackle the challenges of today.

Anti bullying action campaign

Water Saving Washing Machines

Accessibility to sanitation and hygienic facilities

Food preference charts for managing food waste

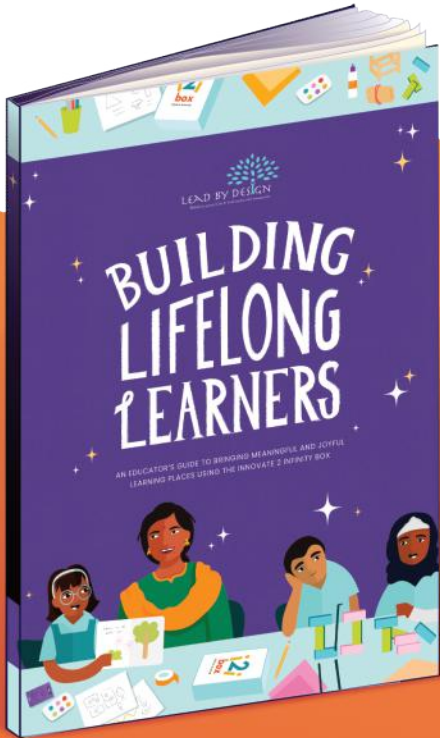
Waste disposal system through a unique report card system

Conversation Circles for Shared Voice

Storybooks on Gender Equity

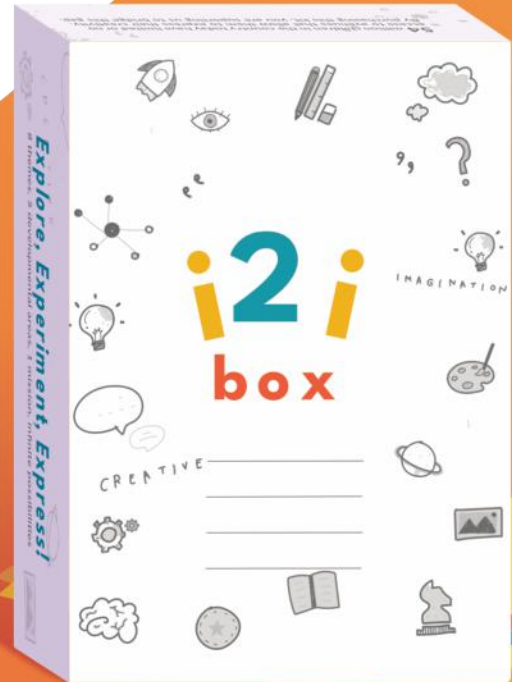
Switch-Off Campaign for saving electricity

Our Resources



Educator's Manual

A comprehensive guide for the educators on why, what and how to set up and measure progress in a Creative Learning Lab



i2i box

A comprehensive creative kit for children aged 6-10 years. It allows them to explore, experiment & express their creative potential.



Once upon an idea cards

Developed for 5+ year old children to nurture their imagination, language skills and creative thinking

SOLVE IT!

OUT OF THE BOX

AGES 9+ | PLAYERS 1+ | TIME 1hr

SOLVE IT! is a first of its kind, kid centered card game brought as step by step method based on the process of design thinking. Played by 9+ year olds, SOLVE IT! offers a unique approach to learning about sustainable development goals by using Design Thinking to solve real-world challenges.

SOLVE IT! allows children to empathize, innovate, collaborate, and find unique solutions ultimately building prototypes that aim to address important global issues.



the Sustainable Fellowship

At Lead by Design, we are proud to introduce the Sustainable Fellowship, a one-year immersive initiative that reimagines education and sustainability in tandem.



The Fellowship is our bold step towards **aligning creative education with real-world impact, especially through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**


Sustainable Fellows are 18+ year old young adults, who are passionate problem solvers & have unwavering dedication to addressing global challenges reflected in the SDGs. They embody a mix of creativity, leadership and a strong commitment to development.

Over the course of the year, Fellows receive training in creative problem solving, design thinking, and SDG-based action planning. They work directly with government schools, setting up Creative Learning Labs and facilitate play-based learning experiences that develop 21st-century skills like creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. In addition to the classroom experience, Fellows identify a Sustainable Development

challenge of their choice and lead a local project to address it.

Fellows serve as both educators and action leaders empowering children to become problem solvers while driving sustainability innovation themselves.

By the end of the Fellowship, each child impacted gains essential life skills through joyful, purpose-driven learning and each Fellow leads a tangible sustainability project aligned with a global SDG. This dual impact on both children and community makes the Sustainable Fellowship a powerful platform for long-term change.



My student Vishaka started the year as a shy child who barely spoke to her classmates. By the end, she had written a story tackling gender inequality and water scarcity—and shared it confidently with the class. That moment showed me the true power of creative education.

Porkothai
Sustainable Fellow
2024 Cohort

The Year Gone By: Grounded Impact in 2024-25

In our very first year, Sustainable Fellows led Creative Learning Labs in low-income government schools across Chennai. Through storybooks, student-led innovations, and real-world projects, over 100 children took their first steps as changemakers.

Our fellows guided children to explore challenges like food waste, plastic pollution, & gender inequality transforming complex problems into creative actions and solutions. From designing water-saving devices to starting awareness campaigns, our students led the change in their communities.

This journey also sparked a new movement. Fellows initiated the Creative Climate Collective, a space for collaboration, learning, and leadership. What began as peer support quickly

*Over **100** children took their first steps as changemakers.*



evolved into a platform that brings together young people and sustainability experts through dialogues, workshops, & idea exchanges.

Our experience this year has shown us that when young leaders and children are given the tools, trust, and space to grow, transformation follows. The Sustainable Fellowship is just getting started—and the impact is already real.

Recognitions & Platforms



Our Fellows were invited to present their work at the International Triologue on Climate Education, alongside



K ⚡ D S E ▷ U C
A T I ♥ N R ⚙ V
⚙ L U T I O N ⚙

We were featured at Teach For India's Kids Education Revolution Retreat, showcasing student-



Fellows became part of the Climate Educators Network & were invited to present in business networks, connecting with professionals across





Creative Climate Collective

5 monthly meet ups, 35+ sustainable businesses covering 10 different sustainable developmental goals, 120+ participants

The Creative Climate Collective (CCC) is a peer-led network created by our Sustainable Fellows to carry forward their commitment to sustainability beyond the school setting. **It brings together young changemakers, entrepreneurs, artists, designers, and sustainability professionals who believe that building a sustainable future requires creativity, collaboration, and continuous learning.**

Sustainability demands more than technical fixes. It calls for cultural shifts, systems thinking, & bold experimentation. Yet young people interested in sustainability often lack spaces to meet others, build ideas, and stay engaged beyond isolated programs. CCC fills this

gap. It offers a dynamic environment where ideas are shaped, skills are sharpened, and action is made visible. By investing in spaces like CCC, we enable the emergence of a new kind of leadership—young, cross-disciplinary, and deeply rooted in community and context.

■ **Creative Climate Collective is how we extend the spirit of the Sustainable Fellowship into the wider world—by building a culture of youth-led, design-driven, and community-rooted sustainability.**

How we take collective action for sustainability:

1. **We host expert-led sessions** with sustainability practitioners—including entrepreneurs, artists, designers, and industry professionals—who offer fresh perspectives and mentorship.
2. **We run peer learning circles** on systems thinking, circular economies, eco-design, and creative leadership, giving participants the tools to deepen their practice and build confidence.
3. **We support member-led projects** through feedback forums, visibility platforms, and access to resources—whether it's a sustainability campaign, an awareness exhibit, or a community-based prototype.
4. **We create opportunities for collaboration** through storytelling initiatives, showcases, and working groups that connect fellows and community members across disciplines and geographies.



Until now

Over 6 years of working with children and educators to develop 21st century skills and mindsets, our strengths have grown with our impact resonating even wider.

In 2019, we set out with an audacious vision to build the next generation of problem solvers ready to tackle real-world challenges, from climate action to inequality.



Student Ambassadors of Change projects were recognised nationally by UNICEF- DFC and YOUVA and won awards for their design implementation

2019

Student leaders featured on Radio FM 90.4 & other innovation platforms to measure classroom progress concerning the skills developed.



Student Ambassadors of Change projects were recognised nationally (UNICEF- DFC and YOUVA) and won awards for their design implementation

2020

InnovatED

Selected as 1 of 9 incubatees in innovatED - an education focused national incubation program.



Finalist in Global Social design challenge organised by UMO Design



Student ambassadors selected to represent team INDIA in global BE THE CHANGE conference organised by Design for Change - Brazil

2021



Selected as TOP 25 global Social Impact startup by UNLEASH Plus, an international

pioneer incubator program working towards sustainable development goals.



PATH-BUILDER

Won first place in Path builders social impact competition



Won a seed grant from "The Circle India" Social Impact competition.

2022



Selected for impact fellowship organised by Skillsbuilder partners.

Our impact measurement method has been accredited by the global partners.



Selected as TOP 25 social startups in the social impact competition conducted by IMPUSLE

2023

Launch of the Sustainable

Fellowship – A year-long program empowering young adults to lead SDG-focused, play-based learning in government schools.



swissnex

KIDS EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Fellow Work Recognised –

Fellows presented their projects at national and international forums including the International Trialogue on Climate Education and the Kids Education Revolution Retreat.

Launch of the Creative Climate

Collective – A peer-led network for young changemakers to collaborate beyond classrooms and lead sustainability action across disciplines.

A Year of Firsts & Foundations

2024

2025-26

Our goal for 2025-26 is to bring 21st century essential skills to 10,000 children. To achieve this, we

- **Train and deploy 5 Sustainable educators** impacting 1000 children.
- **Train 100 government school teachers**, reaching 4000 children.
- **Train educators from 10 partner organizations**, impacting 5000 children.

In the long term, we aim to partner with state governments to introduce building 21st century essential skills amongst young children there by bringing in play based education.

Partners helping us redefine learning!

our partners

TEACHFORINDIA



our supporters

InnovatED



our corporate partners



nference®

Over 150+ individual supporters who have been our champions month on month!



our team

WE ARE YOUNG, DYNAMIC TEAM WITH A RICH EXPERIENCE AS EDUCATORS, DESIGNERS, ARCHITECTS & RESEARCHERS.

Co-founders, Dr. Sowmya Lakshminarayanan and Anna Maria Geogy brings in years of rich research experience to nurture experimentation, critical thinking and problem solving abilities in students ■



Dr. Sowmya
Lakshminarayanan



Anna Maria Geogy

Our work is supported by
a team of consultants, interns, volunteers, mentors &
advisors, all working towards the mission to build
India's next generation problem solvers.

Partner with us to redefine learning

1



Invest in the cause & support us to develop 10,000 young problem solvers

2



Visit our classrooms in Chennai & across India

3



Volunteer in a way that resonates with you

4



Connect us with individuals & keep the conversation going



Thank
you



SCAN
THE LINK
to support us

Contact us

LEAD BY DESIGN foundation,
2/665, IAS colony, 1st Main road,
Manapakkam, Chennai - 600 125

- 7338837801
- reachus@leadbydesign.in
- @lead_by_design