

Presentation from the IOSFS Convention 2021

Speak Up for the Planet!

Virginia Longo

The UN Global Goals at ISBergamo: a way to promote active citizenship in the school community

Our goal, as an International Baccalaureate school, is to provide a multi-cultural educational environment for our students in which they achieve academic success, personal growth and become socially responsible active global citizens with an appreciation of learning as a life-long process. We would like our students to recognise their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet to create a better and more peaceful world. The UN Global Goals (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>), which are displayed in the Middle School building, play an important role in the daily life of our students. Our school strongly believes in the importance of Agenda 2030 (<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>). We try our best to integrate the Goals into our teaching and learning on a daily basis.

In particular, the Arts are integral to the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP). Students are stimulated to think and to articulate their thoughts in new ways, and through a variety of media and technologies. The PYP recognizes that not all learning can be supported solely through language, and that arts as a medium of inquiry also provide opportunities for learning, communication and expression. Learning about and through the arts is fundamental to the development of the whole child, promoting creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills and social interactions.

Here is the question which informed the 6-weeks Arts project:

How can we support our students in their understanding of the UN Global Goals, which are related to important global issues, through activities based on the integration of Visual Arts, Music and Movement?

The starting point for our exciting teaching and learning adventure has been represented by the 'Earth Speakr' app designed by the Olafur Eliasson Studio.

Olafur Eliasson

The artist, Olafur Eliasson (<https://www.olafureliasson.net>) grew up in Iceland and Denmark. Eliasson's art is driven by his interests in perception, movement, embodied experience, and feelings of self. He strives to make the concerns of art relevant to society at large. Eliasson's works span sculpture, painting, photography, film, and installation.

His sculptures and large-scale installation art employ elemental materials such as light, water, and air temperature to enhance the viewer's experience of the ordinary. Not limited to the confines of the museum and gallery, his practice engages the broader public sphere through architectural projects, interventions in civic space, arts education, policy-making, and issues of sustainability and climate change.

In 2019 Eliasson was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for renewable energy and climate action by the United Nations Development Programme because of his project called Little Sun (<https://littlesun.org/>).

Speak Up for the Planet!

Our school joined a worldwide collective artwork for children called Earth Speakr (<https://earthspeakr.art/en>). It invites children to speak up for the planet and adults to listen to what they have to say. Earth Speakr was created by Olafur Eliasson with his studio, children, creative partners, and a group of researchers and experts, and is funded by the Federal Foreign Office on the occasion of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2020. Our students got inspiration from the Earth Speakr app to record their ideas about the wellbeing of our planet. Have fun listening to 7 years old children in action! ([click here to watch the video](#))

For several weeks, students fostered their critical and creative thinking in support of our planet. Each child from classes G2 to G6 designed an avatar that later on was displayed on the pathway between the two school buildings, and all around the school to share meaningful messages about global issues.

During the weekly art workshops, based on the artist Bruno Munari's approach, students also used a white paper bag to create a puppet that was in charge to spread important messages about global issues. ([click here to watch the video](#))

It's all about ICE!

Olafur Eliasson loves inquiring about the natural elements and playing with them. He also believes in the Arts as a powerful tool to let the people reflect on the impact of humankind on the planet. On the occasion of the IOSFS Forum 2021, we shared with participants the activities in which our 9-10 years old students have been involved for almost 6 weeks. That proposal was inspired by Olafur Eliasson's artworks related to the consequences of global warming on the glaciers.

In 2018 Olafur Eliasson extracted 30 blocks of glacial ice from the waters surrounding Greenland and placed them in public spaces across London, where they were left to melt. Called [Ice Watch](#), the temporary installation was meant to serve as a visual reminder of the impact of climate change on the environment. Eliasson hoped that the project would "give feelings to things that are otherwise unemotional" and encourage the "big players, the state, but also the private sector and large companies" to act. The artist intended to allow visitors to have physical contact with the ice: "The ice is amazingly beautiful – you can smell it, you can kiss it, and essentially put your hands on it and touch Greenland....It is a lot more physical; it suddenly gives a stronger sense of what it is they're talking about when they say the Greenland ice caps are melting," he explained.

Since Olafur Eliasson grew up in Iceland and Denmark, he was very young when he fell in love with the Nordic landscapes. Through the years, he was also able to touch by hand the consequences of global warming on Icelandic glaciers. In [The glacier melt series 1999/2019](#) he photographed several dozen glaciers in Iceland as part of his ongoing project to document the natural phenomena of the country. The thirty pairs of images from 1999 and 2019 reveal the dramatic impact that global warming is having on our world.

G5 and G6 students have been reflecting on the consequences of human actions on the glaciers. As the first step, both classes tried to imagine the kind of a sound landscape you can experience while exploring a glacier. Kids enjoyed inquiring about this specific environment through movement and vocal exploration and improvisation. From the very beginning, all the activities were enriched by a Dorian melody, titled *Pastoral n°1*, from

Music for children volume n°4. In particular, the middle-voice melody was sung or played on a melodic instrument by the music teacher to inspire the movement and vocal improvisation of the students.

Later on, G6 students worked hard to reproduce that specific landscape using barred instruments through improvisation and the making up of a melody titled “Listen to the planet’s voice”. In fact, after the first sessions dedicated to improvisation and exploration, we composed some lyrics to enrich the musical experience and share an important message with the audience.

In every lesson, we put in place a rotation so that each child could experience different instruments and different roles. While the xylophones were usually responsible for performing the original melody, metallophones and the keyboard were dedicated to reproducing the soft and smooth atmosphere of the glacier. Glockenspiels were used as colour. After several sessions, the group decided to create an introduction to the melody. All the students could experience different roles and have fun exploring the possibilities of each instrument. For many of them, especially the very active ones, it has been a challenging experience since great self-control and listening skills were required.

The Dorian melody from *Music for children* also offered a great opportunity for improvisation on barred instruments. In particular children loved call and response activities. Each child could find room to express themselves at their best.

G5 students went through a similar experience but, instead of barred instruments, they have been using Boomwhackers®. Also, in this case, the musical experience originated from exploration and improvisation. Boomwhackers® allowed our children to include movement in their performance. In particular, they have been reflecting on smooth underwater movements. Students were also highly inspired by the words of Olafur Eliasson who describes the sound of the bubbles of air that are trapped in the ice blocks.

This class, which is composed of a good number of very active boys, is characterised by a constant high level of energy. We thought that a musical and movement activity based on a specific dynamic (*piano*) and a certain movement vocabulary could be beneficial for such students who often show a low level of body awareness and self-control.

By the end of the activities, we asked the students to point at the UNO Global Goals that they consider relevant for the Olafur Eliasson Project.

And the answer was: many of them!

N° 13, Climate Action, was very popular.

N° 14 Life below Water and n°15 Life Land were considered also very relevant.

N° 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, n°12 Responsible Consumption and Production were also mentioned.

Have fun watching our students in action following this [link](#).

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