Involving Voices of Children in Research: practical learnings from MHIPS
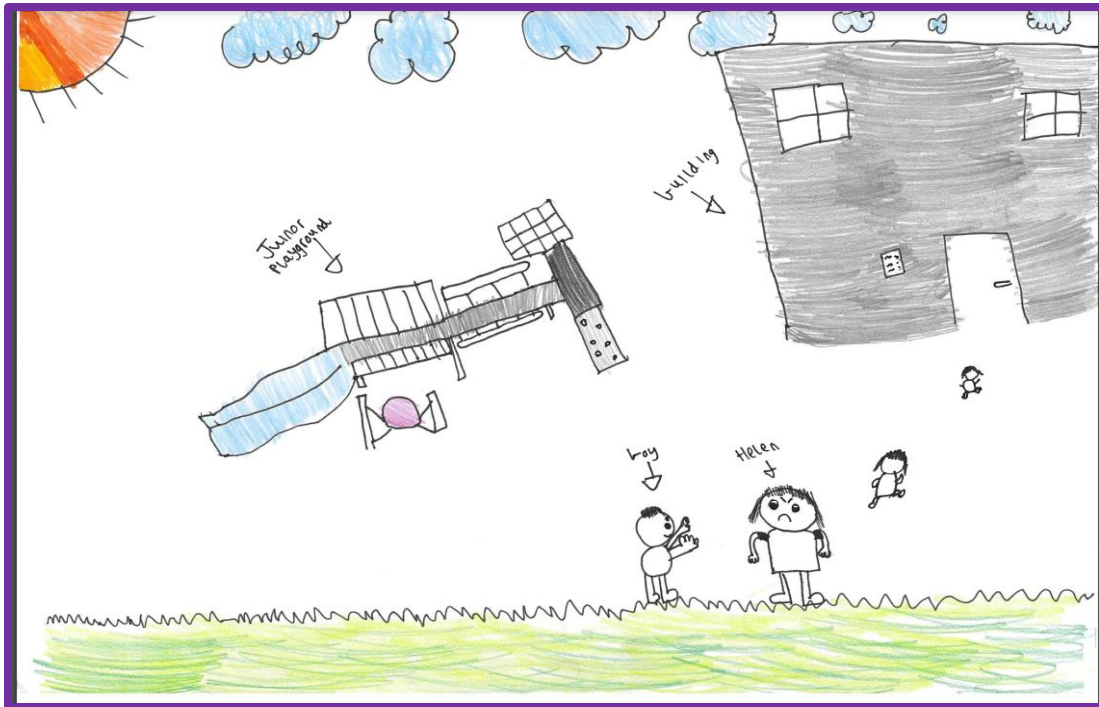
Carla Pozo – MHIPS Evaluation Manager

Centre for Community Child Health

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we learn today and pay our respects to Elders past and present

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Overview

Drawing to explain 'help seeking' (student, 10 years old)

- Relevance
- Example VOC
- Key learnings
- Recommendations

Relevance of VOC

MHIPS Voice of Children

Why involving children in Research/Evaluation?

1. THEIR RIGHT

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Why involving children in Research/Evaluation?

2. ENHANCE EFFECTIVENESS

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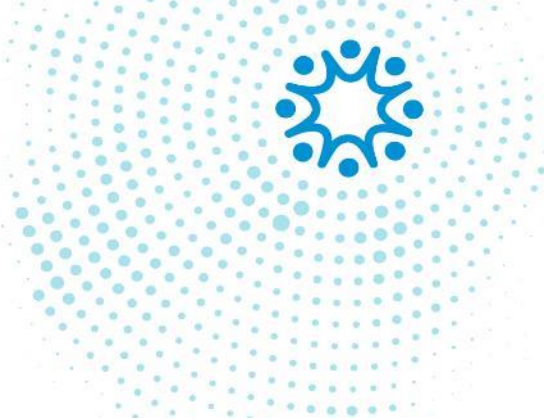
Why involving children in Research/Evaluation?

3. GAP
(Under 12 Yo)

Sun, Y. et al. (2023) – Methods and ethics in Qualitative Research exploring Young Children's Voice.

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Why involving children in Research/Evaluation?

Time – budget

Recruitment - ethics
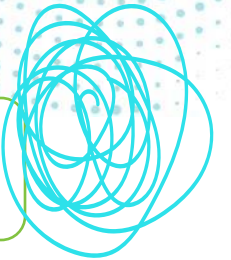
Why not?

'children vulnerable' 'incapable'

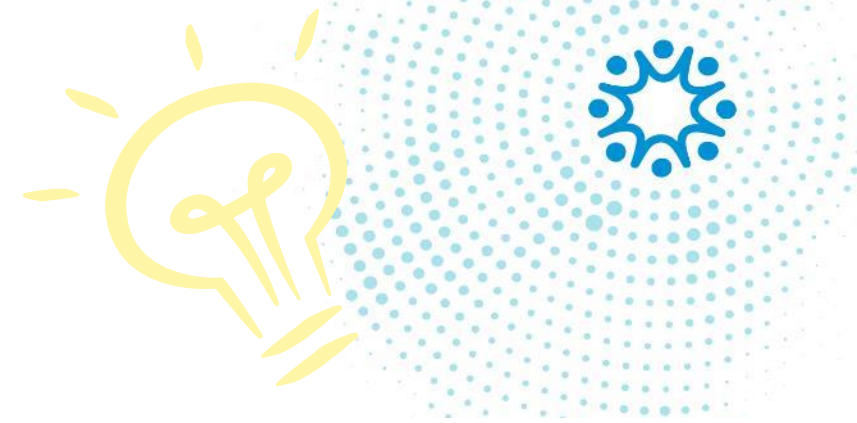Limited practical Knowledge
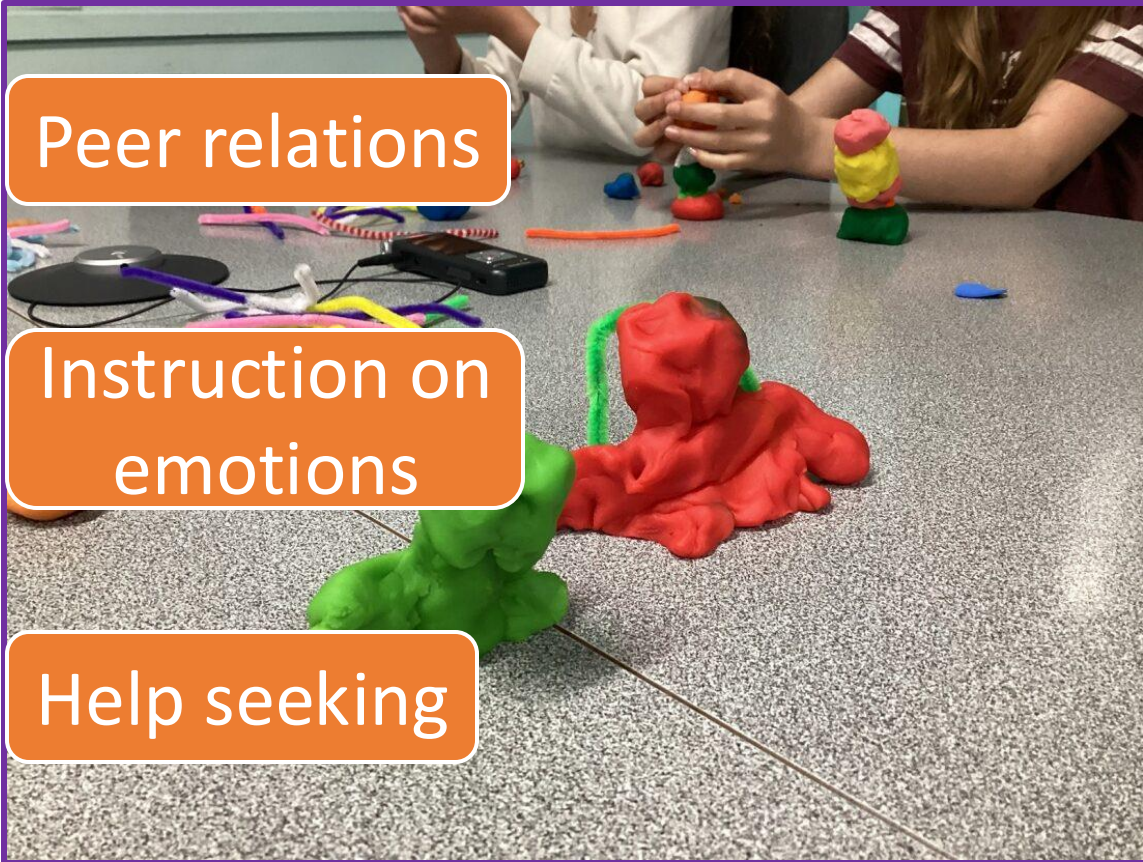
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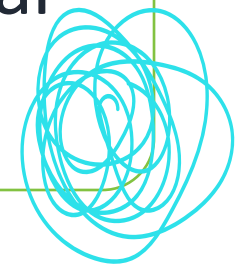
How to? MHIPS VOC experience

MHIPS Evaluation – Voice of Children

Peer relations

Instruction on emotions

Help seeking

Longitudinal Case studies

14 schools across Victoria

65 students in year 4 and 5

45 min session – 25 min activities

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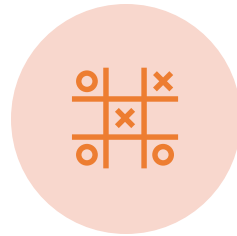
MHIPS VOC – Session

VOC - Year 1: LISTEN

WHY WE ARE HERE?

WARM-UP

VOICE 1 (GROUP)

VOICE 2 (1 ON 1)

COOL –DOWN ACKNOWLEDGE-MENT
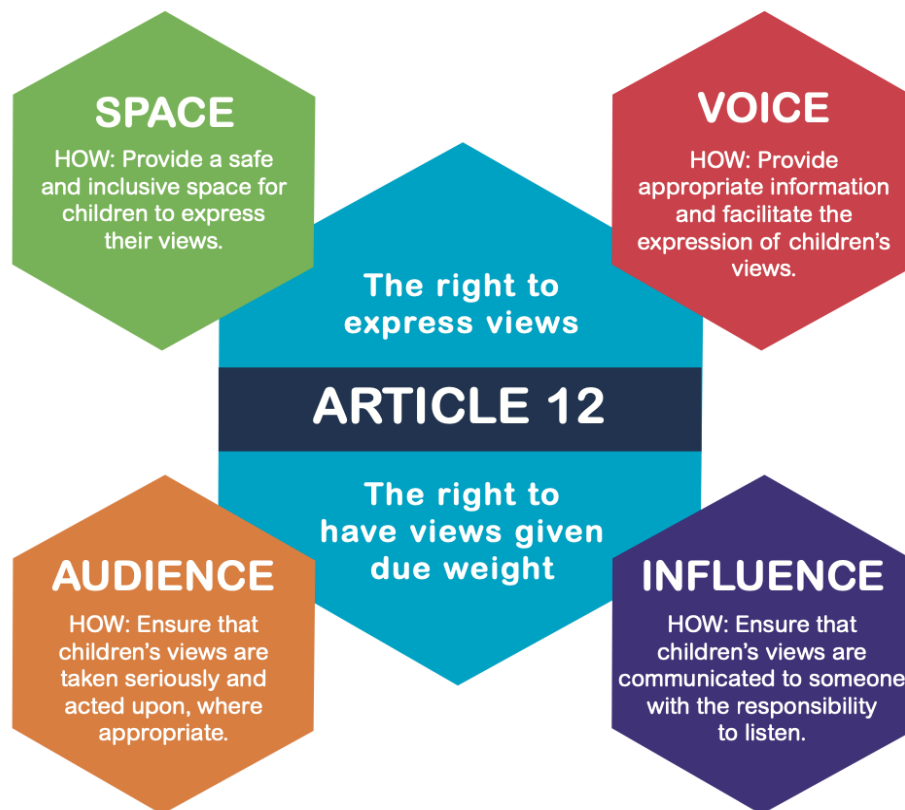
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Key learnings

Key learning 1: Methodology

Lundy's model of participation

SPACE
HOW: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views.

VOICE
HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views.

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE
HOW: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate.

INFLUENCE
HOW: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.

'Voice' is not enough…

- Children must be given the opportunity to express themselves (**Space**)
- Children must be facilitated to express their views (**Voice**)
- Children's views must be listened to (**Audience**)
- The view must be acted upon, as appropriate (**Influence**)

Key learning 1: Methodology – Mosaic approach

Mosaic Approach,
Clark (2005)

- **Mosaic approach**, aims for diverse ways to express their views
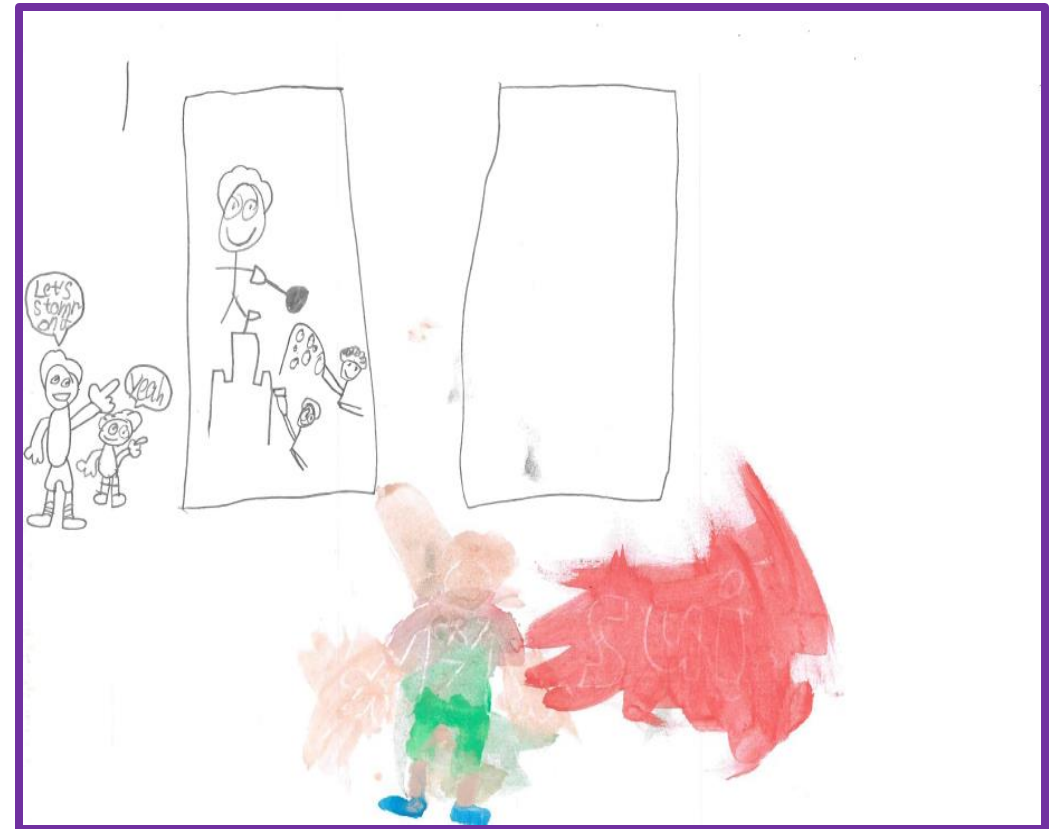- **Criteria:** create activities that can work in a classroom where we don't know anyone.

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Key learning 1: Methodology – Mosaic approach

Magic Map

Key learning 1: Methodology – Mosaic approach
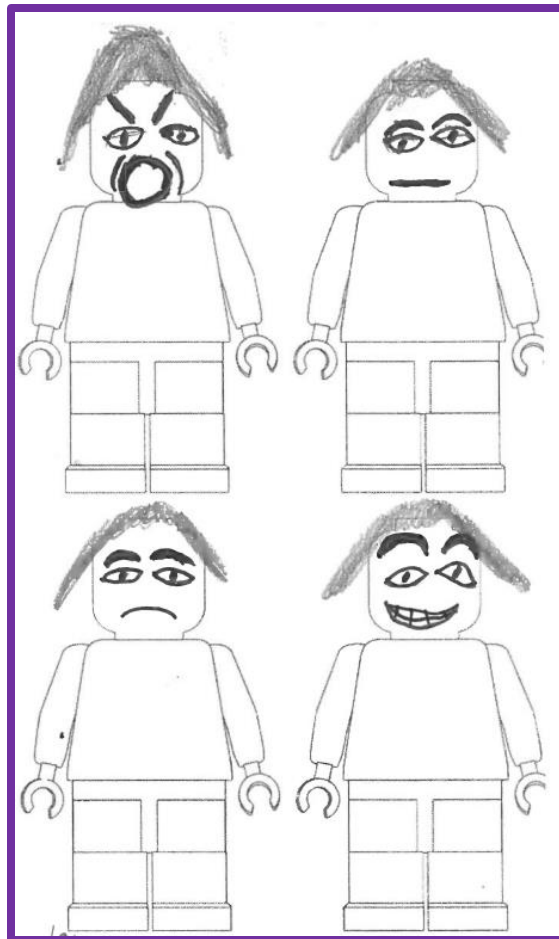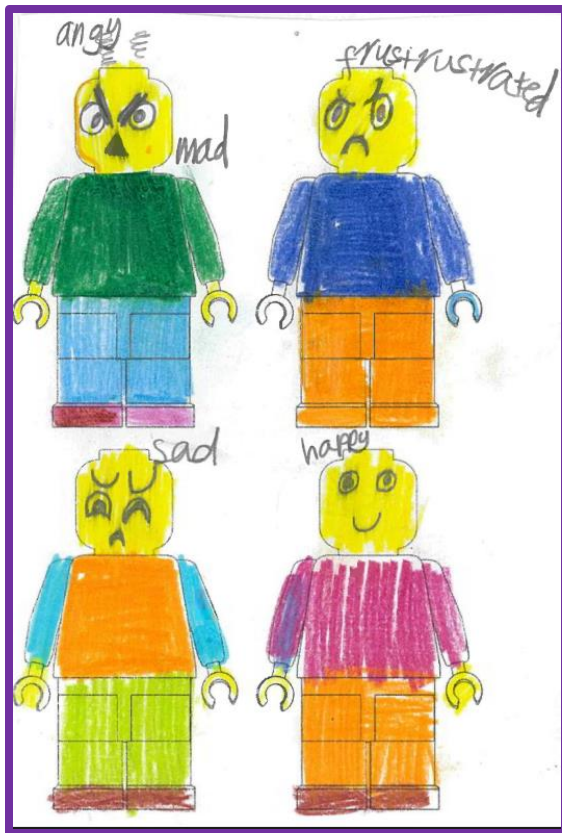

Rockstars

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Key learning 1: Methodology – Mosaic approach

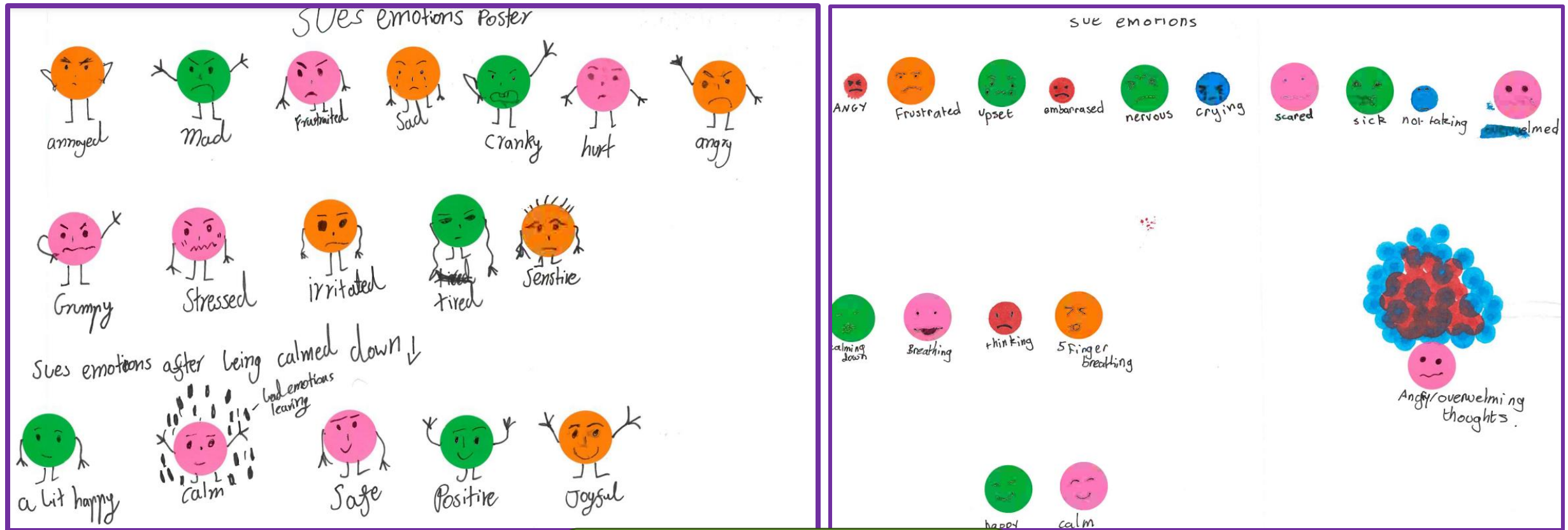

Lego People - Playdough

Key learning 1: Methodology – Mosaic approach

Emotions poster

Key learning 2 : aim for higher levels of involvement

		participants.		participants.	
Collecting data		Research involves adults interviewing children or survey-ing their opinions.	Children and adults collaborate on data-gathering activity.	Children organise and carry out data collection activities.	Who gets in-volved in data collection?
Analysing the data and drawing conclusions		Adults show preliminary findings to children and ask for feedback.	Children and adults work together to analyse data and determine conclusions.	Children analyse data and draw their own conclusions.	Who has a say in what the conclusions are?
Producing a report		Adults consult children on aspects of the final report.	Children and adults work together to produce a report.	Children produce their own report in their own words.	Who gets credit for the report?
Dissemination of the report and its findings		Adults consult children on how to disseminate findings.	Children and adults collaborate on dissemination and awareness-raising activities.	Children undertake activities to disseminate their findings.	Who is actively involved in dissemination?
Advocacy and mobilisation to achieve policy impact		Adults consult children about possible advocacy actions.	Children and adults work together on plans for advocacy and mobilisation.	Children develop and implement an action plan for advocacy and mobilisation.	Who is active in follow-up campaigning and advocacy?

Harry Shier (2019) – Analytical tool for develop partnerships
with children and adolescents

Key learning 3 – Consent & Assent

- Power dynamics

- Relevance of children 'assenting' to participate.

- Assenting as a key **process** for respect their voices

- Facilitator checking constantly – opportunity to withdraw at any time.

PICF video - Powtoon

Key learning 4: Pedagogy

- Involving an expert teacher in our team as a facilitator was key in engagement, activities, flexible approaches.

- Great managing group, and power dynamics.

- Teachers are hidden researchers!

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Recommendations

Final recommendations

1. Value children voices in all stages of research

2. Involve an engaging creative teacher

3. Amplify their voices in child-friendly and relevant ways

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If you think that amplifying children voices is meaningful, then make it happen!

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QUESTIONS?
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Mental Health in Primary Schools, or MHiPS, is a partnership between the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI), the University of Melbourne Faculty of Education, and the Victorian Department of Education.

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