

Children's imaginaries in the representation of Antarctica

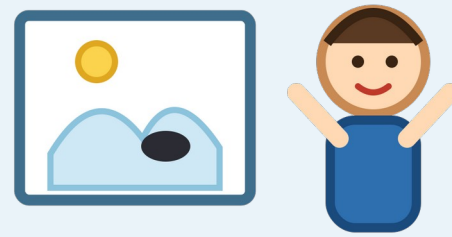
...and why they matter for future citizens and decision-makers

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THE QUESTION

How society pictures Antarctica shapes how its importance reaches new generations. Children's drawings are a privileged window into that perception. This study asks how children aged **5–12** represent the white continent, drawing on art competitions and school programmes in **Chile, Argentina and Mexico**.



Key finding. Children's Antarctic imaginaries are strongly mediated by institutional frames — competition mottoes and thematic rules largely shape what children paint. The imaginary is not spontaneous; it is taught.

THREE COUNTRIES, THREE IMAGINARIES



ARGENTINA The sovereign imaginary

Flag & bicontinental map, bases, icebreaker ARA Irizar, penguins, sovereignty and heroism. Framed by curricular laws (14.222; bicontinental-map law 26.651), Ushuaia's 2024 contest (from kindergarten), Premio Antártida (OEI, 2021) and UNDEF's Aulas Bicontinentales.



CHILE The scientific imaginary

The polar scientist, Piloto Pardo & the Endurance rescue, the “Antarctic dream”, the voyage itself. Science-led “antartización” from Punta Arenas, led by INACH's Feria Antártica Escolar (FAE) — plus Teraike–Navy painting (2012), Embajadores Antárticos link-ups and ~4,000 children in workshops.



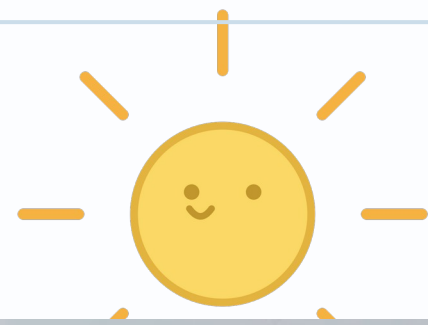
MEXICO The structural absence

No Antarctic children's painting contest documented. Mexico is not yet a Treaty party (2023 Senate accession agreement; SCAR member 2021). Emerging channels: AMEA outreach (“Pasaporte Blanco”) and Antarctica Day flags. Expected motifs are global-scientific rather than national.

WHAT THEY DEPICT MOST

- Penguins & fauna
- Ice & icebergs
- Bases & flags
- Scientists & peace
- Heroes & the voyage
- Auroras & the dream

PROGRAMMES THAT TEACH THE GAZE



Base Naval Antártica “Arturo Prat” — Embajadores Antárticos, 2025.



Live link-up: 50+ schools (Chile, Guatemala, Spain) — via Mirador Antártico.



Students connected live with Base Prat — partner school classroom.



Aulas Bicontinentales (UNDEF, Argentina) — federal classroom workshops.

Embajadores Antárticos (CL): Valle Hermoso & Huellas Magallánicas, CEHP, UPLA — live contacts with Antarctic bases for schools.

Aulas Bicontinentales (AR): UNDEF (2021–2023) — federal workshops on the bicontinental map and Antarctic sovereignty.

These frames precede and shape what children draw.

A PROPOSAL

- 1 Balance the frames — combine identity, science and environmental care in briefs

SPOTLIGHT Feria Antártica Escolar (INACH)

761 students (2026) **283** teachers (2026) **16** regions of Chile

Chile's flagship school programme. Since 2004, secondary students propose Antarctic research; the best teams join the **Expedición Antártica Escolar** to Base Prof. Julio Escudero. FAE 2026 drew a record 413 proposals from all 16 regions — the strongest participation data of the three countries.

A SHARED VISUAL VOCABULARY

Children's own works — collected through Embajadores Antárticos & partner schools



Children connecting live with Base Prat draw penguins, the red base and the Chilean flag — fauna, ice, ships and bases recur across all three countries.

