



ACROZZI

EMPOWERING NEURODIVERSE YOUTH

**A WHITE PAPER ON INCLUSIVE YOUTH-
LED PROGRAMS FOR NEURODIVERGENT
CHILDREN**

**By: Sarah Chi
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Executive Summary

This white paper presents the vision, programs, and impact of Acrozzi, a youth-led initiative co-founded by high school student Sarah Chi, who now serves as its CEO.

Our Vision and Approach

- Through Acrozzi's ensembles, workshops, and mentorship pathways, these initiatives create safe, creative, and empowering opportunities for neurodivergent youth.
- Building on the platform of Acrozzi, she also led a team of three peers to launch NeuroBridge, a project dedicated to one-on-one mentorship and inclusive programming for neurodivergent children.



This document outlines the background, program design, demonstrated impact, and future directions, concluding with practical recommendations for youth, community organizations, and policymakers.

Background and Motivation

Sarah's motivation stems from her lived experience growing up in a family where neurodiversity was part of everyday life. Her twin sister and older brother were both diagnosed with ADHD, and her sister struggles with social anxiety. Witnessing both the challenges and the importance of early recognition emphasized the profound impact of timely support.

In Grade 9, she co-founded Acrozzi, initially as a website sharing volunteer opportunities. Over time, it expanded into a broader platform integrating mentorship, education, arts, and community service. In January 2025, she began individual one-on-one coaching for autistic children in partnership with NorthStar, teaching swimming and math. Later that same year, she led a team of three peers to launch NeuroBridge, a mentorship initiative under Acrozzi dedicated to broader inclusion through the humanities, visual and performing arts, STEM, and sports.

Programs and Activities

1 Individual One-on-One Coaching (Partnership with NorthStar)

- Since January 2025, Sarah has personally coached seven autistic children in swimming and math.
- These sessions, conducted in partnership with NorthStar, emphasize safety, trust, and confidence-building.
- This direct experience served as the foundation for developing her group mentorship model, shaping her understanding of what neurodivergent families truly need.



2 NeuroBridge One-on-One Mentorship (Group Project)

- Launched in 2025 as a new project under Acrozzi, led by Sarah and a team of three peers.
- Matches youth mentors with neurodivergent children for weekly sessions.
- Mentorship spans Humanities, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, STEM, and Sports, allowing each child to explore different ways of learning and self-expression.
- Activities may include reading and discussion, drawing and crafts, music and ensemble practice, math and robotics tutoring, or swimming and team games.
- The program emphasizes trust, safety, confidence-building, and individualized growth.

3 Art Workshops

- First launched during March Break 2025 in partnership with NorthStar.
- Since then, seven workshops have been held, serving 25 autistic children.
- These workshops explore a variety of media in visual arts—including painting, sketching, mixed media, and crafts—providing multiple channels for creative expression.
- The program now runs monthly during the school year and biweekly during the summer, ensuring consistent support for children and respite for families.

4 Acrozzi Ensemble & Choir

- The Acrozzi Ensemble includes 14 musicians, and the Choir has 10 singers, with 20% of all participants being neurodivergent.
- These groups rehearse regularly and provide opportunities for teamwork, discipline, and self-expression in a supportive, inclusive setting.

5 Community Performances

- Both the Ensemble and the Choir have performed at charity events and nursing homes.
- These performances not only strengthen community bonds but also showcase inclusion in action—neurodivergent and neurotypical youth performing together as equals.

Program Outline

At a Glance

Program	Start Dates	Participants Served	Key Outcomes
Individual One-on-One Coaching (NorthStar)	January 2025	7 autistic children	Built trust, safety, and confidence through swimming and math coaching
NeuroBridge One-on-One Mentorship	2025	10+ youth mentors & children	Weekly sessions across Humanities, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, STEM, and Sports
Art Workshops	March 2025	25 autistic children (7 workshops)	Explored painting, sketching, mixed media; monthly during school year
Acrozzi Ensemble & Choir	2025	14 musicians & 10 singers (20% neurodivergent)	Performed at charity and nursing homes; regular rehearsals
Community Performances	2023-2025	100+ audience members per event	5 nursing home visits; intergenerational connection through music



Impact Assessment

1 For Children

- Through NeuroBridge mentorship, children had the chance to explore the humanities, visual arts, performing arts, STEM, and sports. This variety allowed each child to discover their own strengths, whether solving math problems, playing an instrument, or expressing themselves through drawing.
- In the art workshops, the use of diverse media enabled autistic children to find safe, creative channels of self-expression.
- Children who previously resisted structured activities began to participate with curiosity and confidence, gradually building social and communication skills.

2 For Families

- Parents reported reduced stress and valued the reliable respite provided during workshops and mentorship sessions.
- Several parents expressed that these programs gave them “the first time to rest without worry,” knowing their children were safe, engaged, and understood.

3 For Peers and Community

- High school volunteers developed leadership, empathy, and collaboration skills by guiding neurodivergent youth across multiple disciplines.
- The Acrozzi Ensemble and Choir, with 20% neurodivergent members, showcased true inclusion: youth of different abilities rehearsing and performing together.
- Community performances strengthened intergenerational bonds and presented neurodivergent children not as passive recipients of care, but as active contributors to culture and community life.



Future Directions and Recommendations

Research

- Sarah is currently writing a paper on neurodivergent education, with a focus on creative, trust-based, and individualized approaches to learning.
- Future research will document outcomes of NeuroBridge mentorship and art workshops, highlighting how multi-disciplinary activities (arts, STEM, sports, humanities) impact confidence, social skills, and inclusion.

Expansion

- NeuroBridge: Scale the mentorship program by recruiting and training more youth volunteers, and partner with schools, libraries, and community centers to increase accessibility
- Art Workshops: Broaden the program to include more media and extend its reach to additional libraries and community venues.
- Ensemble & Choir: Continue monthly rehearsals and expand community performances, ensuring that neurodivergent members remain active and visible participants and contributors.

Sustainability

- Acrozzi's long-term vision is to become a registered non-profit organization supported by grants, partnerships, and a structured volunteer pipeline.
- Build a youth mentorship pathway to sustain leadership: training high school volunteers, then passing the model on to younger cohorts for continuity.

Advocacy through art

- In 2026, Sarah is planning a solo art exhibition exploring themes of inclusion, identity, and neurodiversity, further integrating visual arts with advocacy.
- The exhibition will also highlight collaborative works from neurodivergent youth, bringing their voices into public dialogue.

Recommendations

For Youth Volunteers

1. Start with Interests – Engage children through their passions (art, sports, puzzles, music) to build trust.
2. Patience and Flexibility – Respect each child's pace, encourage expression in their own way, and celebrate small victories.
3. Practice Teamwork – Choirs, ensembles, and group sports can serve as safe spaces for practicing collaboration



Reccomendations

For Community Organizations

1. Blend One-on-One and Group Programs – Ensure both individualized support and inclusive group activities.
2. Support Families – Provide parents with meaningful respite and opportunities for peer connection.
3. Volunteer Training – Offer short workshops on neurodiversity to empower youth mentors.

For Policy Makers

1. Dedicated Funding – Allocate grants for inclusive programs at a community level.
2. Support Youth-Led Models – Formally recognize youth-driven initiatives as vital partners in inclusion services.
3. Leverage Public Spaces – Encourage libraries and community centers to host regular programs accessible to neurodivergent children.

Conclusion

The work of Acrozzi, including its newest initiative NeuroBridge, demonstrates how youth-led programs can deliver meaningful impact for neurodivergent children and their families. By uniting one-on-one mentorship with inclusive opportunities across STEM, humanities, visual arts, performing arts, and sports, Acrozzi provides a replicable model of resilience, empathy, and innovation. With continued support from community organizations and policymakers, Acrozzi has the potential to grow into a sustainable platform that advances both community inclusion and youth leadership across Canada.

About the Author

Sarah Chi is a Grade 12 student at St. Clement's School in Toronto, where she excels academically as a straight-A student and pursues leadership in arts, sports, and community initiatives. She is the Co-Founder and CEO of Acrozzi, a youth-led platform dedicated to inclusive opportunities for neurodivergent children, and the lead of NeuroBridge, a peer mentorship program. Sarah is also a certified lifeguard and swim instructor (since Grade 10), a CASI Level 1 snowboarding instructor, and a recipient of the Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award. In the arts, she has won Gold and Silver Keys from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and plans to hold a solo exhibition in 2026. Her experiences as a mentor, educator, and advocate continue to inspire her vision of building an inclusive Canada where every child can thrive.

Prepared by Acrozzi, September 2025. Your efforts can change lives.