



Upskilling Preservice Teachers to Support Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder through Digital Social Stories

Project number 2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000246304

Creating Digital Social Stories to Improve Social and Emotional Development of Children with ASD

EARLY-ASD WORKSHOP GUIDELINES

By Mellis Educational Technologies in cooperation with University of Warsaw



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1. Workshop Organisation

1.1 Tasks

1. Participant selection

The workshop will be announced to the following groups:

- academics with expertise in preschool or SEN education,
- preservice teachers specializing in Special Educational Needs (SEN) or preschool education,
- in-service preschool teachers who work with children with ASD or inclusive practices,
- psychologists with experience in early childhood or ASD,
- ICT experts supporting the development of digital tools for education.

Participants will be selected according to the following criteria:

- motivation to contribute to the co-creation of digital social stories,
- interest and/or professional involvement in supporting children with ASD and inclusive preschool practices,
- balanced representation of different professional backgrounds (academics, preservice teachers, in-service teachers, psychologists, ICT experts) to ensure interdisciplinary collaboration.

2. Participants will be formally invited to the workshop, which will take place at a designated venue on the announced date.
3. Annex 1 will be translated into the national languages of the partner countries and distributed to potential participants as preliminary information.
4. Four workshops will be delivered:
 - UW & APS (joint),
 - COMU & MELLIS (joint),
 - UCM, and
 - UNIBUC.
5. Each partner country will host at least 10 participants. If the number exceeds expectations, additional working groups will be formed to ensure active participation.
6. Before the group work, a workshop presentation (Annex 2) will introduce the four stages of digital story creation and prepare participants to share their opinions and ideas.
7. The annexed question list (Annex 3) will guide the introduction of the four stages of digital story creation.
8. During the hands-on activities, participants will use the storyboard creation form (Annex 4) and the story content checklist (Annex 5).
9. Workshops will be documented through note-taking, audio recording, or video recording, depending on participants' consent.
10. Photos will be taken and stored in the project e-archive.
11. A participant signature list will be available during the workshop (Annex 6).
12. The quality evaluation form will be distributed to all participants (Annex 7).
13. Workshop moderators from the partner universities will be responsible for reporting. All partners will use the common report template prepared by UNIBUC (Annex 8).
14. The collected surveys will be analysed by the partner universities. Results will be summarised in a short evaluation report and used to improve future workshops.
15. If necessary, workshops may be repeated to collect additional information.

1.2 Participants' Contributions

1. Participants will receive information about the workshop content in advance (Annex 1) to familiarize themselves with the topics and prepare for discussions.
2. During the workshop, participants' opinions, experiences, creative ideas, and story creation processes will be the focus. The four stages of digital story creation will be introduced and discussed (Annex 3) in relation to social and emotional challenges faced by children with ASD and difficulties in teaching them.
3. Each workshop group will address specific challenges to avoid preparing duplicate social stories (Annex 9). Each group will aim to create at least 10 social stories. While developing the stories, participants will follow these principles:
 - a. Use simple and clear sentences
 - b. Focus on positive aspects
 - c. Include visual aids
 - d. Align content with developmental skills
4. Participants will work on story elements, including character definitions, storyboards, narration, detailed story components, and story length (Annex 4-5).
5. Participants will present their stories and discuss which aspects are appropriate or inappropriate in meeting the needs of children with ASD.
6. Participants will sign the attendance list (Annex 6), which also serves to obtain consent for recording and photography for project dissemination.
7. After the workshop, participants will complete a quality evaluation form (Annex 7; Google Form QR codes provided in these guidelines).

8. If necessary, workshops may be repeated to collect additional information or include more participants.

1.3 Reporting

1. After the workshop, all documents will be collected, and project team members will use them to prepare the workshop report. A standard report template has been shared with all partners by UNIBUC.
2. The workshop report will be based on:
 - a. participants' answers to the workshop questions,
 - b. the social stories created during the sessions,
 - c. the results of the quality evaluation surveys (Annex 7).
3. UNIBUC will compile all social stories produced by the participants.
4. MELLIS will consolidate all partner reports and ensure that at least 40 social stories are available in a single document. Items 3 and 4 will be completed jointly by UNIBUC and MELLIS.
5. All partners will review the draft report and provide feedback. After incorporating this feedback, UNIBUC will finalise the report.

ANNEX 1

PROJECT NAME: Upskilling Preservice Teachers to Support Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder through Digital Social Stories

PROJECT NO: 2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000246304

WORKHOP NAME: Creating Digital Stories for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

OBJECTIVES: In general, the workshop contributes to the project's main aims:

- Introduce the goals, tools, and outputs of the EARLY-ASD project.
- Motivate and empower teachers to actively engage in the co-creation of digital social stories for children with ASD.
- Develop participants' skill in creating digital social stories that support the social, emotional, and communication needs of children with ASD.
- Foster collaboration between preservice teachers, trainers, and stakeholders to co-create meaningful resources for inclusive preschool education.

PARTICIPANTS: Academicians, preservice preschool teachers, preservice SEN teachers, in-service teachers who teach children with ASD or have experience in this respect in preschools, psychologists, and ICT experts

WORK PLAN:

Pre-workshop preparation

Participants receive information about the workshop content in advance and are encouraged to revise their knowledge before attending.

Introduction & Project Overview

The workshop begins with a presentation of the EARLY-ASD project, including its objectives, framework, and the specific goals of the workshop.

Icebreaker activity

Participants introduce themselves, share expectations, and reflect on their prior experiences with inclusive education and children with ASD.

Stages of Digital Story Creation

Trainers introduce the four main stages: brainstorming meaningful ideas, storyboarding, writing, and reviewing.

Hands-on group work: Story Creation

Participants work in groups (e.g., 2 groups of 5 teachers) to co-create 10 digital social story drafts (e.g. 5 per group) based on real preschool scenarios.

Review & Peer Feedback

Participants will review the stories using a structured checklist to ensure their appropriateness and quality. Groups will present their stories, followed by peer and trainer feedback and open discussion.

Wrap-up & Evaluation

Trainers summarize key outcomes, discuss next steps, and participants complete an online quality evaluation survey.

Coffee break & Informal Discussion

Opportunity for networking, exchange of impressions, and additional questions.

Post-workshop follow-up

Workshop results are published on the project website, and participants can access further resources and information about EARLY-ASD activities.

ANNEX 2

Presentation prepared by UNIBUC

Link: <https://ap.adminproject.eu/files/index/index/3550?qj#folder=144827>



ANNEX 3

Four Stages of Story Creation

SESSION 1 - BRAINSTORMING

Initiating and follow-up questions

1. What are the most common social, emotional and communication challenges you have experienced while working with children with ASD in early childhood education? (Shall we try to orient the discussions around “what can’t young children with ASD do or understand easily?”)
 - a. This question can be an inspiration for participants to find a story topic.
2. How can we ensure that social stories are developmentally appropriate for young children with ASD? Can you give an example?
 - a. This question can help them see how they can create a social story without making it complicated for children with ASD
3. What strategies can we use to maintain a positive focus in social stories, and which types of expressions should we avoid?
 - a. This question can make participants remember the importance of being sensitive to children’s emotional situations and avoiding stress creating expressions in the stories.

SESSION 2 – STORYBOARDING

Initiating question

1. How can we create effective storyboards? (Clues for discussion: Sentence lengths, number of messages in one sentence, background (crowded with distractive elements or simple), number of characters, colour design, movements of characters and objects, emotions, background sounds, etc.)

SESSION 3 – WRITING

Initiating and follow-up questions

1. How can we create a title for our story?
 - a. This question can help participants see the story title shouldn’t be directly about the target problem behaviour that can cause stress in child. Should be simple, easily understood.
2. Writing simple and clear sentences can sometimes be challenging; how can teachers make this process easier? And how many sentences in one story are satisfactory/required to convey the target message.
 - a. This question can attract participants’ attention to explaining things by using 4 sentence types suggested (descriptive, directive, perspective, and control), avoiding metaphors, phrases, proverbs that can be difficult for them to understand.

SESSION 4 - REVIEWING

Initiating question

1. From which aspects should a story be reviewed?
 - a. The moderator can revolve around the sentence types, the balanced use of sentence types in line with the story content, length of the sentences/story, message appropriateness, language use, drawings or images suggested and their quality to meet the needs, etc.

ANNEX 4

STORY CREATION

VIDEO STRUCTURE

Each animated video tutorial will have the following structure:

1- INTRO

(The name of the story will be dubbed. Intro will have a soft background music. Shall we also put the name in written on the screen?)

2- STORY

- For each storyboard/scene, propose one (and if it is so necessary two) short-length sentence/s.
- For each storyboard/scene, propose images or background visuals (Draw and explain the movements if any or describe it thoroughly with words – this is important because our audience is special.)
- In total, 25-40 scenes will be enough to create approximately 2/3-minute video depending on the length of the sentences. (We will add one-two seconds waiting duration after each storyboard because of the dubbing process in the partner languages. So, you can arrange your sentences accordingly.)

2- OUTRO

(Project all logos, disclaimer, social media accounts, website link and the number and name of the module) (15 seconds at most, this part is necessary for the project visibility, but since this part is a kind of distraction, teachers can turn off the video after they watch the story with children. We can put a warning on the website/YouTube channel for this.

SENTENCE LENGTH

Inappropriate

In the morning, when I wake up and get out of bed, I brush my teeth carefully, eat a large breakfast with many different food, pack my heavy backpack with books, lunch, and my favourite toys, and then walk slowly to the bus stop while thinking about all the fun things I will do at school today with my friends and teachers."

Challenge

- Very long, there are more than one happening or opinion.
- The child can be distracted.
- Each sentence should give only one message in social stories for young children with ASD.

Appropriate

- (Descriptive) *Sometimes I go to the playground at school.*
- (Directive) *I can walk slowly to the play area.*
- (Perspective) *My teacher knows I may feel shy at first.*
- (Control) *If I feel nervous, I can take one deep breath.*

NARRATION AND VOICE

Principles:

1. **Clear and Slow Speech:**

- Speak slowly and clearly, giving the child enough time to process each sentence.
- Avoid rushing through the story.

2. **Simple Language:**

- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Avoid complex grammar or long phrases.

3. **Positive and Supportive Tone:**

- Use a warm, friendly, and encouraging tone.
- Highlight positive behaviours and outcomes.
- Keep the voice and intonation consistent throughout the story.

DURATION OF VIDEOS AND RESOLUTION

Duration: Each video should ideally be between 1 to 3 minutes long at most. Please ensure your scenes are not less than 6 and more than 20 scenes (storyboards).

Format: MP4 will be used.

Resolution: Between 720 - 1080p will be chosen for clear visuals.

CHARACTER DEFINITIONS

1. Simple and Clear Definitions

- Characters should be drawn with basic shapes and clear lines, (no complex definition)
- Children should easily understand what the character is doing. So, explain the characters' body position – standing, sitting, walking, looking, jumping, playing an instrument, playing with ball, waving hand, etc., and avoid drawing/describing more than 4-5 characters in one storyboard not to distract the target child with ASD.

2. Clear Emotions

- Facial expressions and body language should be clearly described in each storyboard/scene: happy, sad, surprised, excited, etc. If no emotion is required, write “idle”.

3. Simple and Bright Colours

- Suggest bright but not overwhelming colours for characters and backgrounds.
- Different colours help children distinguish characters and objects easily. So, if you want the target children to distinguish a specific object, indicate its colour in the storyboard descriptions.

4. One Action per Scene

- Each scene should show the character performing one action or emotion.
- If a character does more than two things in one storyboard, it can distract the child.

5. Consistency

- Try to keep the character's clothing consistent across scenes,
- Consistency helps children recognize and connect with the character.

6. Animation Speed and Simple Movement

- Movements in the story should be slow and easy to follow. In your story, try to avoid sudden or complex motions.

STORYBOARDS

Storyboard creation requires drawings or detailed explanations about what should be seen on the screen. It may be a classroom, a schoolyard, in front of a house, etc. (In fact, young children can associate the photos of their own surroundings easier. So, in your own digital stories you can use the photos of your students' school, classroom, bedroom, kitchen, etc.) The character movements, emotions, speeches, and sounds should be clarified and indicated if they need to be displayed on purpose. Story characters can be the main character, friends, family members, teachers, children in the park/playground/street, staff in the markets/shops, etc.

STORY CREATION

Story no:	
Story name:	
Story topic and message:	
Suggested length of your story:	
Story characters:	
Which places the story takes place namely:	
Additional Notes, if any:	

SCENE 1

WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? (DRAWING – SAMPLE IMAGES - DESCRIPTION)	FRAME/EVENT DESCRIPTION
Draw or explain in detail what we should see in the storyboard.	Describe the where the character is (schoolyard, class, street, etc.), and if there are any, movements (looking, walking, standing, sitting, etc.), sounds (wind, cat meowing, bird tweets, etc.), emotions (happy, sad, etc.), dubbing notes
	Background:
	Movements:
	Sounds:
	Emotions:
	Notes for dubbing
	Additional notes:
<div><div><div></div><div>Description</div></div><div><div></div><div>Perspective</div></div><div><div></div><div>Directive</div></div><div><div></div><div>Control</div></div></div> <div>NARRATION OF THIS PART OF THE STORY: Write the sentence (one sentence with one message) below and determine <u>which type of sentence</u> it is.</div>	

SCENE 2

WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? (DRAWING – SAMPLE IMAGES - DESCRIPTION)	FRAME/EVENT DESCRIPTION
Draw or explain in detail what we should see in the storyboard.	Describe the where the character is (schoolyard, class, street, etc.), and if there are any, movements (looking, walking, standing, sitting, etc.), sounds (wind, cat meowing, bird tweets, etc.), emotions (happy, sad, etc.), dubbing notes
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	Movements:
	Sounds:
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	Notes for dubbing
	Additional notes:
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SCENE 5

WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? (DRAWING – SAMPLE IMAGES - DESCRIPTION)	FRAME/EVENT DESCRIPTION								
Draw or explain in detail what we should see in the storyboard.	Describe the where the character is (schoolyard, class, street, etc.), and if there are any, movements (looking, walking, standing, sitting, etc.), sounds (wind, cat meowing, bird tweets, etc.), emotions (happy, sad, etc.), dubbing notes								
	Background:								
	Movements:								
	Sounds:								
	Emotions:								
	Notes for dubbing								
	Additional notes:								
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	Description								
	Perspective								
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	Control								

SCENE 6

WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? (DRAWING – SAMPLE IMAGES - DESCRIPTION)	FRAME/EVENT DESCRIPTION
Draw or explain in detail what we should see in the storyboard.	Describe the where the character is (schoolyard, class, street, etc.), and if there are any, movements (looking, walking, standing, sitting, etc.), sounds (wind, cat meowing, bird tweets, etc.), emotions (happy, sad, etc.), dubbing notes
	Background:
	Movements:
	Sounds:
	Emotions:
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SCENE 8

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	Description								
	Perspective								
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	Background:
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SCENE 15

WHAT IS ON THE SCREEN? (DRAWING – SAMPLE IMAGES - DESCRIPTION)	FRAME/EVENT DESCRIPTION
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Write the whole story below.

ANNEX 5

Story Checklist

Reviewer Group No/Name:			
	Yes	Partially	No
The sentences in the story are simple and clear and developmentally appropriate.			
The story addresses a specific problem, routine, or social skill relevant to the child's needs.			
The title of the story is appropriate (Not directly addressing the anxiety-creating problem)			
The story mostly uses the first-person perspective to support identification and empathy.			
The story tone is consistently positive and supportive, reducing anxiety and making the child feel safe.			
Words expressing certainty (e.g., “always,” “never”) are avoided.			
The story includes a balanced distribution of the four sentence types: Descriptive, Perspective, Directive, Control			
Real or relatable images are used where possible to enhance understanding.			
Visuals used are simple, with minimal or no distracting backgrounds.			
The story includes appropriate audio narration to support non-readers.			
Multimedia elements (audio, video, images) enhance clarity and engagement without overwhelming the child.			
The digital tool/platform used is appropriate for the child’s sensory and motor abilities.			
Flow of the story is simple and intuitive.			
The story can be paused, replayed, or reviewed as needed.			
If I/We created this story I/We would change/rearrange			

ANNEX 6

EARLY-ASD - Upskilling Preservice Teachers to Support Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder through Digital Social Stories - 2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000246304

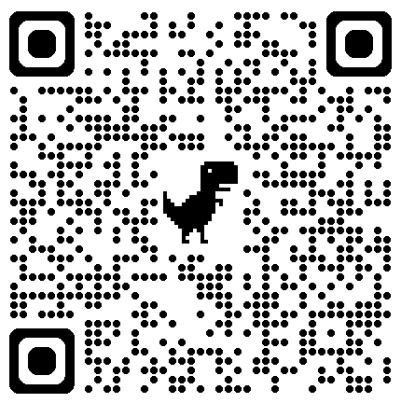
SIGNATURE LIST

I consent my photos taken during the workshop can be used to disseminate the project activities and my ideas recorded and story/ies that I worked on can be used in the teaching activities carried out with young children with ASD.

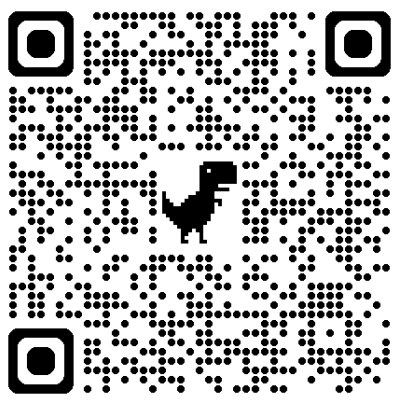
	Name and Surname	Institution	Email	Signature
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				

ANNEX 7

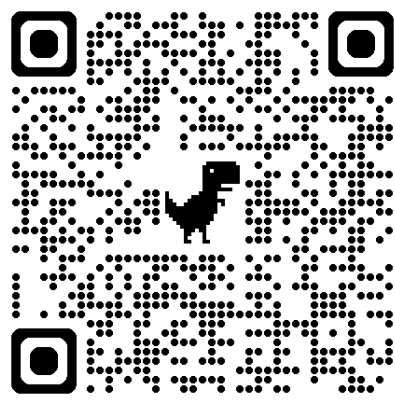
Edit Link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1COMvZSlr08BSvpvgjY_YcJnNZLHTyg9zAorTdFPItYw/edit



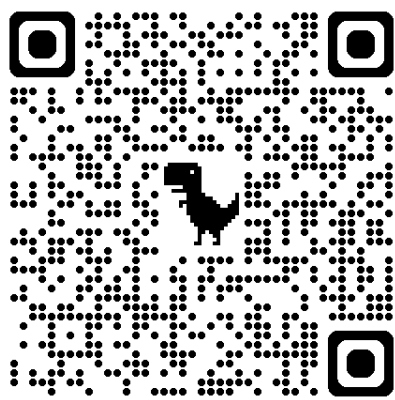
ENGLISH VERSION



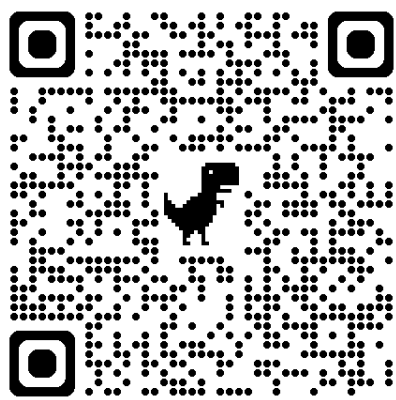
POLISH VERSION



ROMANIAN VERSION



SPANISH VERSION



TURKISH VERSION

ANNEX 8

The report template created by UNIBUC

Link: <https://ap.adminproject.eu/files/index/index/3550?qj#folder=144827>

ANNEX 9

Story Topics

Groups share their topics not to overlap with the other group.

Group 1
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Group 2
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.