

Workshop Report - Poland

EARLY-ASD WP3

Title: Social Stories In Practice - Creating Digital Stories for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Date: 27.08.2025

Duration: 4 hours

Location: Warsaw (+ online participants)

Participants: 56 participants (22 on-site and 34 on-line) + 3 psychologists leading the session)

Participant occupation	Count
Academician	2
Preservice preschool teacher	0
Preservice special education teacher	13
In-service teachers who teach children with ASD	36
Psychologist	4
ICT Expert	0
Other (Speech therapist)	1

1. Introduction

As part of the EARLY-ASD project, a one-day workshop was organized to train preschool and preservice primary teachers in designing digital social stories tailored for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The workshop aimed to:

- Introduce the goals, tools, and outputs of the EARLY-ASD project.
- Equip participants with practical skills for 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.

2. Workshop Objectives

- Introduce the EARLY-ASD framework and highlight the importance of early intervention for children with ASD.
- Guide participants through the process of brainstorming, storyboarding, writing, and reviewing digital social stories.

- Encourage teamwork to design 10 digital stories addressing real-life preschool scenarios relevant to children with ASD.
- Provide participants with hands-on experience using digital tools to create visually engaging, structured, and supportive stories.

3. Workshop Agenda

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
10:00 – 10:15	Introduction to the EARLY-ASD project	Presentation of the main assumptions and goals of the project.
10:15 – 10:30	Getting to know the participants	Participants briefly introduce themselves and share their experience.
10:30 – 11:00	What are Social Stories and Digital Social Stories?	The facilitator explains what Social Stories are and introduces their core principles.
11:00 – 11:15	Brainstorming – choosing topics for the stories	A brainstorming session focused on selecting the most needed and useful social story topics.
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee break	
11:30 – 11:45	Structure of Social Stories	The facilitator explains the basic rules and structure of Social Story creation.
11:45 – 12:15	Group work – creating stories	Participants are divided into groups and create Social Stories (at least 10 stories in total).
12:15 – 12:45	Presentation of the stories + feedback	Groups present their stories; participants and facilitator provide constructive feedback and introduce modifications if needed.
12:45 – 13:00	Summary, next steps and evaluation	Summary of the workshop, information about the upcoming steps, and sharing the evaluation survey link.

4. Workshops outcomes

At the end of the workshop, 10 stories stories were produced. Participants also created the list of social stories topics that are needed to work with young children with ASD.

List of social stories topics
1. Independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily self-care routines (dressing, brushing teeth, toileting) • Preparing simple meals / snacks

- Cleaning up toys
 - Following a morning/evening routine
2. Social skills
 - Inviting someone to play
 - Joining ongoing play
 - Sharing toys and taking turns
 - Respecting personal space
 - Apologizing when something goes wrong
 - Handling frustration or losing games
 3. Emotional regulation
 - Naming emotions / “Emotions are information”
 - Asking for help when overwhelmed
 - Using coping strategies (breathing, sensory corner, taking a break)
 4. Safety
 - Safety rules at home and outside
 - Knowing who to ask for help in public spaces
 - Staying close to caregiver in crowded places
 5. Understanding difficult or stressful events
 - Returning of parent to work
 - Change of preschool / changing routine
 - Divorce / living in two homes
 6. Public behavior
 - Dentist / doctor visit
 - Behavior in shops, restaurants, museums
 7. Sensory needs
 - Asking for sensory support (headphones, deep pressure)
 - Recognizing overstimulation and requesting a break
 8. New situations
 - Meeting a new teacher or therapist
 - First therapy session or extracurricular activity
 9. Self-understanding and identity
 - “Everyone is different”
 - “My actions can affect others”
 - “Someone may not like my behavior, but they can still like me”

Story Title	Aim	Narrative discourse/ Scenario
Story 1. I CAN SAY WHAT I NEED	Learning to identify internal states and communicate needs clearly and safely. The goal is to support autonomy and emotional regulation by helping the child recognize their body signals and express needs instead of acting them out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My body talks to me. Sometimes I feel tired, hungry, or overwhelmed. (Descriptive)</i> • <i>I may feel it in my body: my heart beats faster, my shoulders feel tight, or my tummy feels strange. (Descriptive)</i> • <i>When this happens, I can pause and notice what I need. (Directive)</i> • <i>People cannot read my mind. They don't know what I feel unless I tell them. (Perspective)</i> • <i>I can say: “I need a break,” “It’s too loud,” “I want to stop,” or “I need space.” (Directive)</i>

- *When I use words, adults understand me better and can help me. (Control)*
- *When I say what I need, I feel calmer. (Control)*

Story 2.

ASKING FOR HELP

Building assertiveness without fear of judgment. The goal is to help the child understand that asking for help is allowed and safe, and that seeking support improves learning and coping.

- *Everyone needs help sometimes, even adults and teachers. (Descriptive)*
- *Asking for help does not mean I did something wrong. (Perspective)*
- *I can look at a safe person and say: "Can you help me?" (Directive)*
- *I can ask again if I need to: "I still need help, please." (Directive)*
- *When I ask for help, people know how to support me. (Control)*
- *Asking for help makes learning and playing easier. (Control)*

Story 3.

TAKING CARE OF MY SENSORY NEEDS

Self-regulation through sensory awareness - The goal is to teach the child to notice their own comfort level and communicate limits in socially appropriate ways. The child also learns that other people have boundaries too and that respecting them helps build safe and positive interactions.

- *My body feels different in different places. Some places are loud, bright, or crowded. (Descriptive)*
- *My body may send signals like: "Cover your ears," "Look away," or "Move back." (Descriptive)*
- *These signals help me understand what I need. (Perspective)*
- *I can take deep breaths, use headphones, squeeze a fidget, or ask for a quiet corner. (Directive)*
- *I can say: "This is too much for me," or "I need a break." (Directive)*
- *When I take care of my sensory needs, I can think, play, and feel better. (Control)*

Story 4.

WHEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND — I CAN ASK

Reducing anxiety related to uncertainty and supporting communication. The goal is to teach the child that it is safe and appropriate to ask for clarification and that they do not have to guess what others expect.

- *Sometimes adults say things that are confusing or unclear. (Descriptive)*
- *I may feel lost or unsure about what to do. (Perspective)*
- *It is okay not to understand something the first time. (Perspective)*
- *I can say: "Can you explain?" or "What do we do now?" (Directive)*
- *I can look at the visual schedule to check what comes next. (Directive)*
- *Asking questions helps me learn and feel safe. (Control)*

Story 5.

Building social insight without feeling of guilt - The goal is to support social perspective-taking

- *When I walk, talk, or play, other people notice what I do. (Descriptive)*
- *Loud sounds, sudden movements, or getting very close might surprise someone. (Descriptive)*

<p>MY BEHAVIOR CAN AFFECT OTHER PEOPLE</p>	<p>and help the child understand that their actions can influence the feelings of others. It encourages awareness without shaming — the focus is on choice, empathy, and building connection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People’s faces show how they feel — smiles, frowns, or surprised eyes. (Perspective)</i> • <i>I can pause and look at someone’s face to see how they are feeling. (Directive)</i> • <i>If someone looks uncomfortable, I can step back or lower my voice. (Directive)</i> • <i>Understanding others helps us enjoy time together. (Control)</i>
<p>Story 6.</p> <p>INVITING SOMEONE TO PLAY</p>	<p>Teaching how to initiate social contact in a simple and safe way. The goal is to show that other people may say “yes,” “no,” or “later,” and all answers are okay — this strengthens resilience and reduces fear of rejection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If I want to play with someone, I can walk over and look at them. (Descriptive)</i> • <i>I can say, “Do you want to play with me?” and wait. (Directive)</i> • <i>People can say “yes,” “no,” or “maybe later.” (Perspective)</i> • <i>Their answer tells me what they need — not if they like me. (Perspective)</i> • <i>If someone says “no,” I can play alone or ask someone else. (Directive)</i> • <i>Trying again another time helps me make friends. (Control)</i>
<p>Story 7.</p> <p>WHEN I LOSE — I AM STILL OK</p>	<p>Strengthening frustration tolerance. The goal is to help the child understand that losing is part of play, and they can handle difficult feelings without giving up or feeling ashamed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Games are for fun. Sometimes I win and sometimes I don’t. (Descriptive)</i> • <i>Everyone loses sometimes. Even adults. (Perspective)</i> • <i>When I lose, I may feel frustrated or disappointed. (Perspective)</i> • <i>I can take a deep breath and count to four. (Directive)</i> • <i>I can say: “Good game,” “Maybe next time,” or “Let’s play again.” (Directive)</i> • <i>Staying calm helps me enjoy playing, even when I don’t win. (Control)</i>
<p>Story 8.</p> <p>WHEN I FEEL SCARED — I CAN SAY IT</p>	<p>Teaching emotional awareness and expressing fear - The goal is to normalize fear as a valid emotion that everyone experiences. The child learns that fear doesn’t mean danger, can be talked about openly, and that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New places, loud noises, or changes can feel scary. (Descriptive)</i> • <i>All people feel scared sometimes. Even grown-ups. (Perspective)</i> • <i>I can say: “I feel scared,” “Please stay with me,” or “I need a break.” (Directive)</i> • <i>When I say what I feel, adults can help me feel safe. (Control)</i>

calming strategies can help the body feel safe again.

- *Feelings get smaller when I talk about them. (Control)*

Story 9.

CHANGES
HAPPEN — I
CAN HANDLE
THEM

Flexibility and coping with unpredictability – The goal is to help the child understand that changes are normal and manageable, and that using simple strategies (asking what happens next, checking visuals) can reduce stress and allow them to continue the day successfully.

- *Changes can happen: plans may switch, or someone new may help. (Descriptive)*
- *My body may feel tight or uncomfortable when things change. (Perspective)*
- *I can ask: “What is the new plan?” or “What is next?” (Directive)*
- *I can look at the picture schedule or ask for a visual. (Directive)*
- *One change does not ruin my whole day. (Control)*

Story 10.

EVERYBODY IS
DIFFERENT —
AND THAT’S
OK

Understanding that people are different - The goal is to promote self-acceptance and decrease masking by reinforcing the idea that people have different interests, sensory needs, communication styles, and preferences — and that these differences are welcome and valued.

- *People have different ideas, interests, and ways of learning. (Descriptive)*
- *I may like quiet play. Someone else may like loud games. (Perspective)*
- *I can be myself, and others can be themselves too. (Directive)*
- *Being different makes me unique and special. (Control)*
- *I am enough just the way I am. (Control)*

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Photographs from the workshops

Appendix 2 - Attendance lists

Appendix 3 - Social story scripts

Appendix 4 – Workshops presentation - Polish

Appendix 5 - Workshop evaluation report