

CEHD Grant Application Form

Submit this application form by one of the following due dates along with your proposal. Applications must be received, at tate-center@wmich.edu, by 5:00 p.m. on August 15, November 15, March 15, and June 15.

Application					
Applicant Name:	Angel L. Gullón-Rivera				
Title:	Assistant Professor				
Department:	Family & Consumer Sciences, Family Studies				
Title of Proposal:	Teaching parents about the use of Social Stories to support children with behavioral and emotional challenges.				
Amount Requested:	\$2,000				
Dates of Project:	January 2014- December 2014				
Evaluation Guidelines					
	<i>Strongly Agree</i> 5	<i>Agree</i> 4	<i>Undecided</i> 3	<i>Disagree</i> 2	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> 1
The proposed research/creative activity is well conceived and organized.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1
The proposed work will increase the likelihood that the applicant will secure external funding in the future.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1
The methods and/or procedures are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1
The plans for data analysis or evaluation critique are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1
The costs for the proposed budget are clearly itemized and justified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1
This project has the potential to advance the scholarly/creative reputation of WMU.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1

College of Education and Human Development Grant Program

PROPOSAL

1. **Project title:** Teaching parents about the use of Social Stories to support children with behavioral and emotional challenges.
2. **Project purpose:** The study will explore the effectiveness of using storytelling with children who have emotional and behavioral problems. The purpose of this proposed study is to use Social Stories as a teaching tool with a group of parents who are receiving assistance at the *Parent to Parent*—a non-profit organization serving families who have children with disabilities or special needs. The aim of this study is two-fold: (1) to teach parents how to write Social Stories and use constructive communication strategies through a series of workshops as an intervention approach; and (2) to evaluate the effectiveness of Social Stories by measuring children’s emotional and behavioral problems (as reported by parents and teachers).
3. **Background:** The development of social competency has been linked to children’s academic achievement and positive peer interaction (see Green, Forehand, Beck, & Vosk, 1980; Brennan, Shelleby, Shaw, Gardner, et al., 2013; Know, Kim, & Sheridan, 2012). Children with disabilities often have difficulties acquiring social skills and engage more often in challenging social relationships Walker, & Nabuzoka, 2007. There are several approaches in practice to foster social skills and appropriate social interaction; one of them is the use of storytelling. Storytelling has proven to be a viable method to collect information about past experience and self-representation (see Bettmann & Lundahl 2007, for a review), and also as a teaching tool. For instance, the literature on storytelling and parent-child co-narration has major application and insight on developing intervention programs for children with challenging behaviors. One of the intervention tools is called Social Stories™ (developed by Carol Gray, 1994). This intervention is considered by the National Standards Project¹ as an established treatment and has been widely used as a practical intervention to help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to understand social situations. In addition, several other studies have documented the effectiveness of Social Stories with children with Autism, Aspergers and pervasive developmental disorder (see Kokina & Ken, 2010; Delano & Snell, 2006). However, this approach was originally developed for children with ASD and it has not been often used with children without Autism, namely mainstream children with social and behavioral difficulties, or other special needs (Delano & Shelby, 2008).

Therefore, few studies have used Social Stories with typically developing children with emotional and behavioral challenges and investigated its effectiveness with those who have poor social skills and limited perspective taking skills (see Toplis & Hadwin, 2006; Whitehead, 2007). Carol Gray (2003) and other scholars agree that the use of Social Stories are not exclusively suitable for children with Autism, but can also benefit typically developing children who may have difficulty understanding specific social situations, expected behaviors, and expected responses. Although, teachers, paraprofessionals, and researchers are usually trained to write and implement Social Stories, little is known about

¹ A committee of experts from different fields evaluating and validating national standards for evidence---based education and behavioral interventions for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

the effectiveness of teaching parents how to write and implement Social Stories with their children.

Since scholars agree that the parent-child relationship is the cornerstone for the development of the self and social understanding (see Bowlby, 1988; Harter, 2012), teaching parents about the use of stories and communication strategies with their young children will empower them, and could serve as an intervention tool for parents of children labeled with behavioral problems. Therefore, the main goal of this proposed study is to equip parents with strategies to foster children’s emotional recognition and understanding, as well as perspective taking—these are fundamental factors for children’s social competence and behavioral adjustment. This study will be one-of-a-kind, using storytelling procedures as teaching and evaluation tools with parents and their typically developing children with social and behavioral difficulties.

4. **Methods and Plan of Work:** Approximately 15 families and their children will be participating in the study. Parents will be recruited from a local non-profit organization (Parent to Parent of Southwest Michigan). Parents will be invited to participate in a series of training workshops for approximately 8 weeks. At the beginning of the study, parents who consent to participate will be surveyed regarding children’s behavioral problems and parent-child communication strategies. Children will also participate in several assessments examining their sense of self-worth (using the Attachment Story Completion Task-ASCT), perspective taking, and vocabulary comprehension. Also, school teachers will be informed of the child’s participation in the study and will be asked to complete a questionnaire measuring children’s behavioral adjustments. To evaluate the effectiveness of the Social Stories, the ABAB design will be used to measure a baseline (A), a treatment measurement (the first B, implementation of Social Stories), the withdrawal (the second A) and the re-introduction of Social Stories (the second B).

Data analysis: To measure the frequency and percentage of target behaviors, descriptive statistics will be used (it will also measure the means and standard deviations). Also, target behaviors will be graphed as percentage and will be visually inspected for changes in variability and trend. To measure the association among variables (e.g., children’s perspective taking, behavioral problems, sense of self-worth, improved target behavior and vocabulary) inferential statistics will be performed (e.g., correlation and regression analyses).

Table 1 Proposed timeline.

<p>Spring 2014 (January-February)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and refine workshops presentations. • Prepare materials and guidelines for parents • Consult with program director to identify recruitment strategies and location for the workshops • Obtain HSIRB approval 	<p>Spring 2014 (March- May)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit participants • Collect pre-assessment data (perspective taking, behavioral problems) • Conduct workshops (8 weeks) • Administer the Attachment Story Completion Task • Transcribe and analyze data 	<p>Summer 2014 (June-August)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing transcribing and analyzing children’s ASCT data • Collect post data assessment: behavioral adjustment as reported by parents and teachers. Children’s perspective taking. <p>Fall 2014(September-Dec.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and submit manuscript(s)
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5. Budget and Justification

(omitted):

6. **Anticipated outcomes.** As mentioned above, the use of Social Stories with children with behavioral challenges has proven to be a promising approach. I anticipate that with successful parent training and implementation of the Social Stories, parents will report a decrease in the targeted behavior. Also, children with lower scores on perspective taking will benefit the most from the use of Social Stories, as suggested by Toplis et al. 2006. Furthermore, I hypothesize that children's sense of self-worth will be associated with their behavioral problems as reported by both parents and teachers. In addition, I expect a moderate correlation between teacher and parent ratings of children's behavioral problems. Ideally, I would like to find that the children's behavioral outcomes at the end of the study would be significantly lower compared to the pre-assessment data.

7. **Plans for continuing research and creative activity:** The preliminary results of the study will be disseminated at the Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations in November 2014. Also, a presentation proposal will be sent to the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) Biennial Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, that will be held on March 19 - 21, 2015. Furthermore, I will prepare and submit a manuscript for publication to *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *Developmental Psychology Journal* or *Child Psychology Journal*, or the *Attachment and Human Development Journal*.

In my previous work, I examined the theoretical assumption that children's sense of self-worth influences their social interaction (Gullon-Rivera, 2013). The use of Social Stories as an intervention approach **will expand my scholarly work** with the use of children's storytelling as vehicle to assess their sense of self-worth in the context of family relationships and parent-child attachment. My work will contribute and expand the literature on using stories as an intervention tool for developing a sense of self-understanding and the understanding of the self in relation to others. Children not only learn about self-regulation via storytelling, but also learn to recognize and understand others' emotional states- thus promoting social competence and positive peer interaction. This pilot study will serve as a groundbreaking project that has the potential to expand to other agencies and community resources for families in Kalamazoo and surrounding cities (e.g., KRESA Great Start Plus; Prevention Works-CFP). This pilot study **will support external funding proposals** for future projects, collaboration opportunities with other programs (e.g., Special Education); and will provide opportunities for research experiences for graduate students.

Also, I have been in direct contact with Carol Gray, who developed the Social Stories strategies and is the director of the Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding. Several Social Stories Satellite Schools already exist in the United Kingdom and in the United States, accredited by Carol Gray. If this pilot study and future intervention approaches are successful, WMU could be a Social Story Satellite School in Carol Gray's Social Stories Satellite Schools and Services program. This will allow WMU to hold Social Story workshops and charge for admission, among other things. According to Carol Gray, most Satellite programs earn a reasonable profit. WMU could be the first Satellite School in Michigan.

References

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