

“They’ll know loads more about me”

Facilitating self-expression through Digital Storytelling to support educational transitions

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Introduction



Digital Stories are short videos (1-3 minutes) which focus on a child’s perspective; showing the child doing things they enjoy, and how they interact and communicate. The Autism Community Research Network devised the ‘I am...’ planning framework for use across a range of projects (for more information scan the QR code).



Prior research indicates professionals and parents view Digital Stories positively in supporting transitions for children with an autism diagnosis, however, children’s views could be further explored. To truly understand their experiences, children themselves need to be the primary source of knowledge and respected as the experts within their own lives.

We explored the experience of using ‘I am...’ Digital Stories to support educational transitions of primary-aged children with SEN attending a Pupil Inclusion Centre to alternate settings.

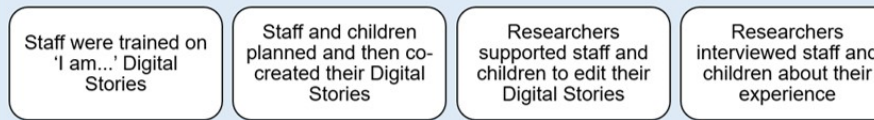
Research Questions

1. How can digital stories be used to represent children’s voices?
2. How do children and adults reflect on the experience of making a digital story?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive digital stories to be useful to transitions?

Sample and Methods

Purposive sampling was used to recruit three primary-aged children and two staff members. Views were collected via semi-structured interviews.

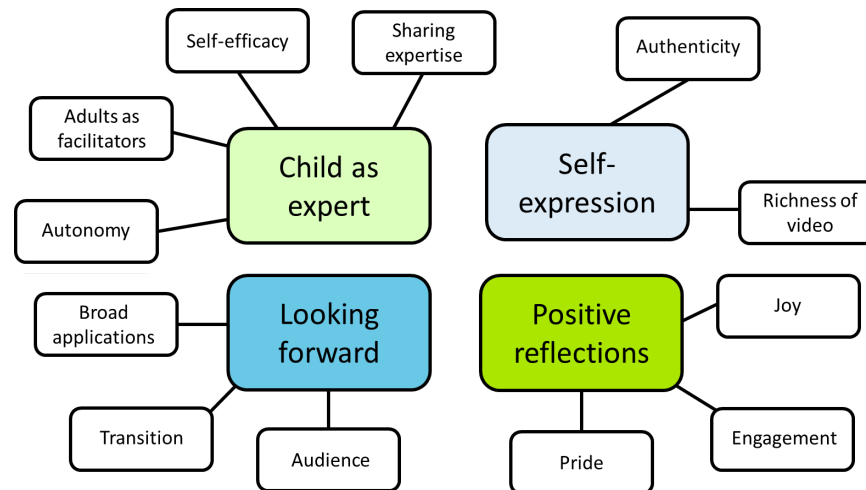
Procedure



Thematic analysis was conducted as a group and involved the creation of four broad themes, each consisting of several sub-themes, as seen below.

“I basically did all the Digital Story bit... yeah I edited it all” (Child)

“It’s them in real life...” (Staff)



Stories were viewed as “a big idea going through the school” and “the way forward” (Staff)

“As soon as I got the first picture in, was zooming through it like bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam” (Child)

Findings

1. Creating Digital Stories enabled children to be authentically represented and respected as experts in their own lives. As one child explained “...it’s your own little video”.
2. One child wanted to show their Digital Story to staff at their new school because, “they’ll know loads more about me”, suggesting children felt their Stories were genuine expressions of who they were.
3. School staff and children spoke about the power of Digital Stories to reduce children’s worries as new staff would “know” them due to the authenticity of the Stories.

Children were excited for the possibility of other uses for their Digital Story and keen to share them more broadly, such as with other adults at the school.

Strengths of the current research were:

- Children were active participants in the planning, filming and editing of their Digital Story.
- Inclusion of children’s reflections on the process.

Future Directions and Implications

- Inclusion of cultural information in the ‘I am...’ framework.
- Use of Digital Stories across different contexts to facilitate children’s voices.
- Digital Stories may be involved in educational decision-making to highlight the importance of facilitating children’s voices.
- Nuanced, creative methods such as Digital Stories enable children to contribute meaningfully to the decisions about their lives and be self-represented. As one child explained “...it’s your own little video”.

