



SKILLS TRAINING FOR CHILDREN AGED 4-6 WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

(Thematic Workshop)
Educational Brochure
for School Presentation

eTwinning partnership project developed by partner schools from Turkey and Romania

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1. Project Overview

This brochure presents the eTwinning project “Skills Training for Children Aged 4-6 with Special Needs (Thematic Workshop).” The project is implemented through cooperation between partner schools from Turkey and Romania and is designed for educational presentation in preschool and school settings. Its central orientation is therapeutic and educational at the same time: it proposes structured workshop experiences based on art, sensory exploration, and inclusive participation.

From a theoretical perspective, the project is consistent with developmentally appropriate early childhood practice, which values active exploration, play, meaningful interaction with materials, and learning experiences adapted to children’s developmental variability (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020). It is also compatible with inclusive early childhood principles that emphasize participation, individualized support, and environments in which children with disabilities or developmental differences can engage meaningfully alongside peers (Division for Early Childhood [DEC], 2014).

The purpose of the thematic workshops is to create therapeutic activities using art and painting materials. In this framework, children are invited to work with clay, mud, paint, water, brushes, pencils, paper, stone dust, and related resources in an atmosphere that reduces performance pressure and encourages personal expression. Accordingly, the educational value of the workshop does not lie primarily in the aesthetic quality of the final product, but in the developmental processes activated through exploration, sensory engagement, symbolization, and communication (Malchiodi, 2012).

2. Project Goal

The project goal is to enable children to express themselves freely through direct contact with materials such as clay, mud, stone dust, water, and other artistic resources. Through this process, the workshops are intended to contribute to children's distinct developmental levels while particularly supporting emotional expression, self-confidence, and participation in shared educational experiences. In practical terms, the project places emphasis on process-oriented learning, on the child's initiative, and on the creation of emotionally safe opportunities for expression.



3. Why the Project Matters

The project is educationally relevant because it addresses several domains of preschool development simultaneously. In the early years, art-based activity is not limited to creativity in a narrow sense; rather, it may support language, social participation, cognitive engagement, sensory processing, and fine-motor coordination when it is intentionally organized and developmentally adapted (NAEYC, 2020).

Research in early years education has shown that child-led art experiences can contribute to children's personal and social development, while varied art forms may also foster confidence, participation, and collaborative learning behaviours (Theodotou, 2019, 2020). For children with special needs, such workshop environments may be especially valuable because they combine structure with flexibility, give multiple channels for expression, and allow educational aims to be pursued through concrete and motivating materials.

For these reasons, the present project aims to highlight the contribution of art activities to the multidimensional development of preschool children. More specifically, it investigates how art-based experiences may influence preschool participation and cognitive skills, develop artistic expression, strengthen motor skills, support social communication and cooperation, enhance sensory expression abilities, and sustain children's interest in learning.



4. General Objectives of the Workshop Project

The general objectives of the project may be formulated in educational terms as follows:

- To support children's emotional expression through safe, enjoyable, and non-threatening art experiences that allow them to communicate preferences, feelings, and simple meanings.
- To strengthen self-confidence by valuing individual initiative, personal choice, and exploratory action rather than aesthetic performance.
- To stimulate cognitive development through observation, comparison, experimentation, sequencing, and simple problem solving in relation to concrete materials.
- To develop fine-motor and perceptual-motor skills through the manipulation of clay, brushes, pencils, water tools, and textured resources.
- To foster social communication and cooperation during shared tasks, paired work, and small-group artistic activity.
- To enhance sensory exploration by engaging children with different textures, colours, temperatures, consistencies, and forms.
- To increase interest in learning through hands-on, multimodal, and developmentally appropriate educational experiences.



5. Developmental Areas Supported by the Project

In educational terms, the project targets several interrelated developmental areas. The table below summarizes these domains and the type of contribution expected from workshop participation, based on early childhood and inclusive education principles (DEC, 2014; NAEYC, 2020).

Developmental area

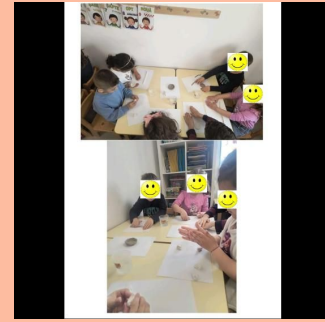
Educational contribution of art-based workshops

- Emotional development
- Children are encouraged to externalize feelings, preferences, and experiences in a non-judgmental context, which may support self-awareness, emotional expression, and emerging regulation.
- Cognitive development
- Art activities can engage attention, exploration, comparison, categorization, sequencing, and simple cause-effect reasoning through concrete action with materials.
- Motor development
- Handling clay, brushes, pencils, moulds, and water tools can strengthen coordination, dexterity, grip control, and bilateral action.
- Social development
- Collaborative tasks may promote interaction, turn-taking, joint attention, imitation, cooperation, and participation in shared routines.
- Sensory development
- Different materials provide tactile, visual, and proprioceptive experiences that can enrich sensory exploration and expressive possibilities.
- Motivation for learning
- The playful and concrete character of the workshops may increase engagement, enjoyment, persistence, and willingness to participate in educational activity.

6. Expected Results / Beklenen Sonuçlar

At the level of expected educational outcomes, it is anticipated that children will become more willing to take part in group work and will increasingly enjoy being involved in a shared production process. By helping, observing, and responding to one another, children are expected to strengthen basic cooperation and social participation skills. At the same time, repeated opportunities for material exploration and non-evaluative expression are expected to support confidence, initiative, and emotional communication.

A broader expected result concerns educational transferability. The project is based on the premise that art applications can be adapted for use at multiple educational levels and can be especially meaningful for children with special needs when activities are carefully scaffolded and linked to inclusive objectives. In this sense, the project may function not only as a classroom initiative, but also as an example of good educational practice that can be disseminated to other institutions.



7. Preparation Stage / Hazırlık Aşaması

Preparation for the project was conceived as an introductory and organizational stage designed to familiarise teachers, children, and families with the materials, procedures, and aims of the thematic workshops. This stage also ensured that implementation would remain safe, structured, and developmentally appropriate.

Preparation activities included a Zoom information session and task assignment for teachers and project partners; introductory videos on clay and scented stone materials; guided familiarisation with clay modelling and scented stone-making techniques; obtaining parental consent forms; preparing the materials required for the project; and carrying out initial exploratory tasks based on simple shapes and objects created from clay and stone dust.

The weekly workshop flow was organised as follows: clay making (week 1); transformation of clay after drying (week 2); use of stone dust (week 3); and painting products made from stone dust (week 4). This progression reflects an educational logic of gradual familiarisation, material transformation, and expressive completion



8. Methodological Principles

The methodological design of the project is grounded in several educational principles. First, it adopts a child-centred perspective in which each child is encouraged to explore materials in a personal and meaningful way. Second, it prioritises process over aesthetic judgment, which is particularly important in work with young children and with children whose developmental profiles require flexible forms of participation (Malchiodi, 2012; NAEYC, 2020).

Third, the project reflects inclusive and accessible practice by adapting activities to developmental level, response rhythm, and educational need. This orientation is consistent with DEC recommended practices, which stress the importance of intentional environments, responsive interaction, participation, and collaboration with families in early childhood intervention and education (DEC, 2014). Fourth, the project relies on sensory-rich learning and on cooperative participation, thereby creating conditions in which exploration, communication, and shared attention can emerge naturally within the activity.

Finally, teacher support is conceived as observation-based and scaffolded rather than directive in a rigid sense. Adults guide, model, encourage, and document progress, but they do not impose narrow performance expectations. Such a stance is educationally important because it protects motivation and



9. Examples of Workshop Directions

Depending on classroom context, children's developmental needs, and available materials, the project may include recurring or rotating workshop experiences such as clay emotions, finger painting, mud and nature art, water-brush discovery, textured collage, scented stone casting, and shared mural work. These directions are not intended as rigid prescriptions; rather, they are examples of how the general framework may be translated into accessible educational situations.

From an academic perspective, the value of these workshop directions lies in their adaptability. A single activity can be simplified, extended, individualised, or transformed into pair or group work according to the children's sensory profile, attention span, motor possibilities, and communication needs. This flexibility is one of the strengths of art-based pedagogical work in inclusive early childhood settings.





10. International Cooperation in eTwinning

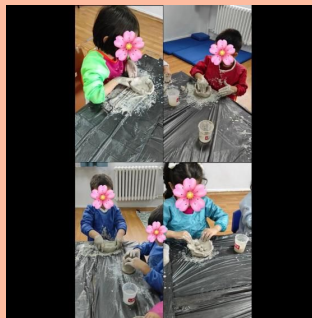
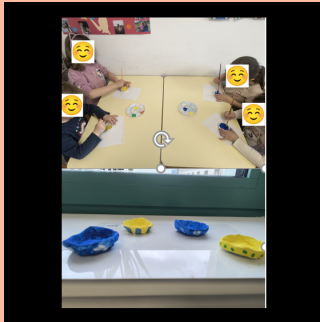
The project is carried out in cooperation with partner schools from Turkey and Romania. Within the eTwinning framework, this partnership gives the workshops an intercultural, collaborative, and professionally reflective dimension. According to the European School Education Platform, eTwinning offers a safe and free online space in which schools can collaborate, exchange practice, and support teachers' professional development (European School Education Platform, n.d.).

In the context of this project, international cooperation may include the exchange of classroom examples, workshop plans, reflective notes, visual documentation, and short digital presentations concerning children's participation and progress. Such cooperation contributes both to pedagogical reflection and to the dissemination of inclusive educational practices grounded in everyday classroom activity.

11. Concluding Perspective

“Skills Training for Children Aged 4-6 with Special Needs” is a meaningful educational project that places the child’s experience at the centre of pedagogical action. By integrating art, sensory exploration, emotional expression, and inclusive participation, the project creates developmentally valuable opportunities for preschool children with special needs.

In academic terms, the project is relevant because it translates well-established principles from early childhood education, inclusion, and arts-based practice into a coherent workshop model. In practical terms, it offers schools a realistic, humane, and adaptable way of supporting children’s development through materials that are concrete, motivating, and accessible. For these reasons, the project can be presented not only as an eTwinning initiative, but also as an educational example of process-oriented and inclusive preschool practice.



12. Integrated Curriculum in Romania and Turkey

This chapter offers a concise comparative synthesis of how the present project can be related to integrated curriculum approaches in Romania and Turkey. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive policy analysis, but rather to show that the thematic workshop model is compatible with early childhood curricular principles in both educational contexts. In both systems, preschool education values holistic development, learning through play, active exploration, and educational experiences that connect cognitive, emotional, social, motor, and creative dimensions of development.



12.1. Integrated Curriculum in Romania

In the Romanian preschool curriculum, integration is understood as an educational approach in which learning is organised holistically rather than through rigidly separated subjects. At this level, the child's development is approached in an interconnected manner, and educational experiences are designed around play, exploration, interaction, and thematic learning. This perspective is highly consistent with the project's emphasis on workshop-based learning through clay, water, paint, and other sensory-artistic materials.

According to the project document on integrated curriculum in Romania, preschool activities are structured through experiential domains such as language and communication, sciences, human and society, aesthetic and creative development, and psychomotor development. The value of integration lies precisely in the fact that one activity may engage several domains at the same time. For example, a clay-modelling task may support vocabulary and oral interaction, stimulate observation and comparison, strengthen fine-motor coordination, and encourage aesthetic expression in a single coherent learning sequence.

The Romanian perspective also emphasises annual themes, thematic projects, learning centres, and daily routines as practical means of curriculum integration. In this regard, the present eTwinning project can be interpreted as a thematic and interdisciplinary educational framework in which children learn through concrete action, collaborative participation, and guided discovery. The teacher's role, as reflected in the Romanian model, is to create stimulating learning environments, observe children's progress, adapt activities to developmental level, and encourage free expression. These functions correspond directly to the methodological principles already outlined in this brochure.

Assessment in the Romanian preschool approach is continuous and formative, relying primarily on observation, children's products, and developmental progress rather than on standardised performance. This makes the Romanian integrated curriculum particularly suitable for educational projects involving children with diverse developmental profiles, including children with special educational needs, because emphasis is placed on participation, progress, and meaningful engagement.



12.2. Integrated Curriculum in Turkey

The Turkish perspective presented in the partner document places the project within the broader framework of the Türkiye Century Education Model and in relation to the general aims of preschool education established by the National Education Basic Law No. 1739. Within this framework, preschool education is intended to support children's physical, mental, and emotional development, help them acquire positive habits, and prepare them for primary school. These aims are compatible with the project's focus on emotional expression, self-confidence, social participation, and early skill development.

The Turkish document also highlights a principle that is essential for this project: the preschool years are a period of particularly rapid development and high learning potential, yet each child remains unique and may require different forms of support. From this perspective, integrated and inclusive workshop activities are educationally valuable because they allow children with different developmental profiles to participate in shared experiences while receiving the scaffolding they need.

Another important idea in the Turkish synthesis is that learning should not be confined only to the classroom and should be supported by diverse environments, including the home and other educational settings. This is especially relevant for the present project, since activities such as clay work and stone-dust modelling may be continued beyond the school context, with parental involvement reinforcing children's learning, sensory exploration, and transfer of skills.

The project is also consistent with the Turkish emphasis on progressing from simple to complex tasks, beginning with children's direct experiences and immediate environment, and promoting learning by doing. The weekly workshop sequence described earlier in this brochure reflects precisely such a progression: children first explore clay directly, then work with dried clay transformations, then use stone dust as a new material, and finally paint the resulting products. In pedagogical terms, this sequence supports concrete thinking, active experimentation, and the gradual extension of children's expressive and cognitive abilities.

Finally, the Turkish document underlines that learning in preschool should be conducted through play. From this standpoint, the project's artistic procedures—kneading clay, using moulds, mixing stone dust with water, pouring, shaping, and painting—may all be understood as forms of playful learning. The educational significance of the project therefore lies not only in the products created, but also in the process itself, through which children develop curiosity, cooperation, responsibility, sensory awareness, and a more confident relation to learning.

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Thank you!