



2019 Brock International  
Prize in Education Nominee

**Nirvana Pistoljevic**

*Nominated by Beverley Argus-Calvo*



NOMINATION PORTFOLIO  
FOR THE 2019 BROCK  
INTERNATIONAL PRIZE IN EDUCATION

**Nirvana Pistoljevic, Ph.D.**

Executive Director EDUS-EDUCATION FOR ALL

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Education  
Teachers College, Columbia University

President BAHAAAS (Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American  
Academy of Arts and Sciences)

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Office of the Dean  
College of Education

September 1, 2018

Dear 2019 Brock Jurors,

It is with great admiration that I nominate Dr. Nirvana Pištoljević for this year's Brock International Prize in Education. When approached about being a juror, Dr. Pištoljević immediately came to my mind. A dear friend of mine had mentioned her many years ago and was very impressed on the significant work she was doing with families and children with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with limited funding but plenty of sheer determination and perseverance. As I investigated her work, and through our multiple Skype conversations, emails, publications and educational documents, I understand and appreciate her unwavering efforts to bring justice and education to a most vulnerable population: children and youth with disabilities in the USA and in mid and low-income countries across Europe and Central Asia. She humbly accepted this nomination with great reservation, as she felt that she could not equate herself with the distinguished past nominees. However, as you will learn through the letters of support, parent testimonials, the photographic essay, representative samples of her published works, online resources and examples of press releases, she truly personifies the definition of a servant leader, a person who dedicates her life to enriching the lives of individuals and improving the organizations they serve. Her personal philosophy of "I am a scientist but, first of all, I am a teacher" guides her hands-on evidence-based approach to teaching children and youth with developmental disabilities. Through her selfless leadership, scholarship, and unwavering commitment, she serves as a role model to the teachers, parents and political figures whose lives she touches. Her friend and colleague Dr. Fabiola Casarini comments, "she brings evidence of where research meets politics and education meets health, and she does it with the independence of a warrior and the empathy of a mother."

Dr. Pištoljević currently holds adjunct faculty status at Teachers College, Columbia University, and is the Executive Director for EDUS –Education for all in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a non-profit association she founded in 2010 for the advancement of education and support for children with and without developmental delays. After completing her doctoral studies at Columbia University and working at the Fred S. Keller School in NY, she decided to take a break from academia and returned to her home country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She realized that as the country was rebuilding its social infrastructure, children and youth with disabilities were forgotten. Parents had nowhere to turn when seeking educational opportunities for their children. It was at that time that she understood that her mission was to stay and to "share her knowledge and skills and to improve the quality of life for children who were disenfranchised, abused and neglected in a country which has been war-ravaged," states the distinguished author Aleksandar Hemon.

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In only seven years, EDUS has grown to serve over 200 children daily and currently employs 65 teachers and support staff, who have benefited from her teaching and leadership at no cost to the parents and children they serve. She has worked tirelessly in seeking resources for supporting EDUS and has received over 1.5 million dollars in grant-funded support from USAID, UNICEF and UNDP for projects to advance the social inclusion of children and individuals with disabilities and in developing early detection and intervention systems for the mid- and low-income countries across Europe and Central Asia. To date, her evidence-based intervention programs have impacted over 5000 of children with autism and developmental disorders, and she has provided training for more than 700 preschool and elementary school teachers, thousands of parents and ancillary staff members.

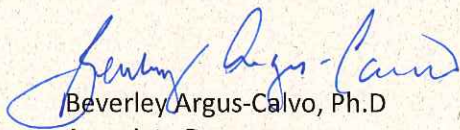
Dr. Pištoljević works closely with the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Care in several countries. In 2017-18 alone, she has provided in-service training and consulted with more than 300 individuals from nine countries. She has also published many guides and handbooks for teachers, pediatricians, parents, and early childhood educators to advance early detection and intervention for children “at risk” and children with developmental delays and disorders. Her mission of realizing the full potential of every child has taken her across the world to work with children, educators and professionals in related fields with the goal of promoting a transdisciplinary approach to evidence-based teaching.

Again, Aleksandar Hemon, eloquently captures Dr. Pištoljević's essence: “I have for years been fascinated with Nirvana Pištoljević's deep deposits of kindness, with her brilliance and energy, even if I do quite not understand how she manages to do it all, what reserves of hope and determination she turns to, in order never to give up or be defeated.” He further describes her as “a superhero, if there ever was one, doing what she does out of a sheer belief in the importance of education and the value of each human life.”

As evidence of the children's lives that Dr. Pištoljević has changed, Sanela Lindsa, a parent of a child with Autism, typifies her as “having raised the bar” by bringing her knowledge and skills back to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms. Lindsa further stated that “...knowing that Nirvana, as a teenager, took refuge in the USA, due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and further struggled to afford a high level of education, I believe that her main motivation is a noble need to help those who are disadvantaged and different to acquire the most valuable asset of all - education.”

As you learn more about Dr. Pištoljević, I trust that you too will agree that she is a truly deserving candidate for the distinguished 2019 Brock International Prize in Education.

Respectfully submitted,



Beverley Argus-Calvo, Ph.D

Associate Dean  
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**Programs in Applied Behavior Analysis: Applied Sciences of Learning and Special Education  
Health and Behavior Studies**

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August 22, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to advocate for Nirvana Pistoljevic to receive the Brock International Teacher Award. I have known Nirvana since she was accepted into our graduate program first as an MA student in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, then as a PhD student, and as a supervisor in our CABAS® Research and Demonstration Schools for our Programs in Applied Behavior Analysis here. She then served as an Adjunct professor in our program and continues to do a distance course for us. She was one of the most outstanding of the 236 PhD students that I have sponsored in 49 years of doing so. As her CV shows, she has published research from our laboratory that has contributed to major advances in educating children with disabilities or children who are from economically disenfranchised communities. I am most proud of the fact that she chose to go back to her home country, when she could have easily had a university or leadership position in the USA. She did that in order to bring to the children of her country expertise that simply advanced their prognosis in life. The approach to teaching as a strategic science results in 4 to 7 times more learning. Moreover, applying what we have learned about the communicative development of children and how to identify and establish developmental stages or cusps is life changing for many children ([www.cabasschools.org](http://www.cabasschools.org)). The fact that Nirvana established a school to do this with children in her war-ravaged country is an amazing accomplishment, especially given the lack of resources, teacher training, and attitudes with which she needed to deal. She has trained over 300 teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and each one of those teachers will have effects on many children.

Even more amazing is the fact that she has also trained over 100 teachers in Serbia and Montenegro as well as over 200 teachers in Palestine. Her development of measures to identify what children were missing and then teaching teachers to use those measures as a step to the application of the strategic science of teaching to address those deficits is very innovative. We do now have a real strategic science of teaching and developmental interventions that if disseminated would begin to address the source of most of the world's woes. Really effective education is a necessary if not sufficient step to saving *Homo Sapiens* along with numerous other species. Nirvana is showing the way!

Sincerely,

*/r. douglas greer/* (Legal Electronic Signature)

R. Douglas Greer, PhD., CABAS® Senior Behavior Analyst, Senior Research Scientist

Professor of Psychology and Education

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To Whom It May Concern:

Nirvana Pištoljević is one of the most amazing people I have ever known, a brilliant, energetic woman whose selflessness is perpetually humbling and inspiring. I have worked with her as a member of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences, whose current president she is. I also interviewed her at length for my book on Bosnian diaspora called *How Did You Get Here?*

While still a teenager, she was forced to flee with her family from Sarajevo, her hometown, which came under siege in 1992. For a while the Pištoljević family wandered in search of a safe place, as refugees are wont to. As a young woman, she had to adjust to new customs and friends, new situations and surroundings, which were often, to say the least, adversarial. She spent some time in Serbia, where once her high-school classmate, who knew she was a Bosnian from Sarajevo, told her: «When war starts here, I'll be the one to slit your throat. » What got her through those times was her intelligence, kindness and deep belief in the value and purpose of education.

So that when she migrated to the USA with her mother and younger brother to settle in the state of New Jersey, she shined in school, ever hungry for knowledge, always eager to learn. From a community college, she transferred to Rutgers University, where she graduated with distinction. All the while she worked in retail full time, quickly advancing to a managerial position, where she frequently had to work overtime, and then study after hours. A refugee for whom hard work and education are less matters of advancement than of sheer survival, Nirvana was--and is--a prime example of immigrant work ethic. Upon graduating from Rutgers, she entered graduate school at Columbia University, where she earned a couple of masters degrees and a PhD in special education, eventually working as the Assistant Director of The Fred S. Keller School, a private research based preschool, and a training site for Columbia University graduate students. She was still in her twenties. She was sought in her field. Thus, The Chicago School of Psychology sniffed around her, interested in implementing special-ed programs she was instrumental in developing at Columbia. She flew to Chicago to talk about the opportunities, but it was February, complete with bone-breaking cold and a blizzard, so she could not make herself commit to anything there. She asked them to give her some time to think about it. Feeling that she needed a little pause from the academia and ceaseless work, she moved back to Sarajevo, intent on staying only for a few months.

Well, she's still there. Soon after her arrival she realized what dire shortage there was of special education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's educational infrastructure had effectively been destroyed in the war, but, on top of that, the default approach to children with special needs was letting them fend for themselves in the classroom as well as in the society, while preventing their disrupting the regular mode of education, largely ideologically contaminated by the ruling nationalist parties. Though the law requires from schools to provide assistance in school setting, children's needs were simply and brutally ignored, while even the good-intentioned teachers were woefully untrained. Many parents simply took their children with developmental delays out of school and kept them at home in order to protect them from the cruelties of a society deeply degraded by war. At first, Nirvana was helping a few kids in Sarajevo, including the ones in an orphanage, then there were a few more children who needed help, then she was training a few teachers, then she was looing for a classroom, then more school space. The six months flew by and she decided not to go to Chicago, nor to return to the United States. Instead she found herself not only in the classroom working with kids unfamiliar with encouragement and kindness from strangers, but also in meetings with local politicians and foreign ambassadors. In the morning she was in the with the kids; in the afternoon she was training teachers and filing data for her research; in the evening she was soliciting support for what would become her life project: *EDUS*.

*EDUS—Education for All* is an NGO Nirvana founded and has carried on her shoulders from the beginning. It provides the framework for a special education primary school, helping kids with developmental delays from the entire region (Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, and the rest of Western Balkans), and even from as far as Western Europe. The amount of love, thought, energy and time Nirvana has invested in establishing, developing and keeping *EDUS* alive is enormous. One only has to visit the school (as I have on number of occasions) to witness how invaluable and important education is for those kids, and how much their parents and family appreciate it. She has quite literally saved some of those kids' lives.

What Nirvana has done is nothing short of heroic—she singlehandedly established special education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, extracted money and support from most unlikely places in the poorest country in Europe, trained a generation of special-ed teachers, and transformed lives of hundreds of children and families in need, all the while collecting and analyzing data for research in the field. Again and again she has dealt with obstacles and obstruction, with patriarchy and sexism, with corruption and nationalism, with her own motherhood and PTSD, but always courageously, unflinchingly providing opportunities to the most neglected children, advancing her humanist project.

I have for years been fascinated with Nirvana Pištoljević's deep deposits of kindness, with her brilliance and energy, even if I do quite not understand how she manages to do it all, what reserves of hope and determination she turns to in order never to give up or be defeated. She is a superhero, if there ever was one, doing what she does out of a sheer belief in the importance of education and the value of each human life.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly and unconditionally recommend Nirvana Pištoljević for the 2019 Brock Prize.



20<sup>th</sup> of August, 2018.  
North Wales, UK

Dear Committee,

I am writing in support of the nomination that my colleague and long-term collaborator, Dr Nirvana Pištoljević, received for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Dr Pistoljevic has dedicated her life to applying her considerable energies and knowledge to development and application of inclusive, evidence-based methods of education for those most in need, from children with developmental disabilities to specialists trying to help them, in a variety of settings, most notably across several low- and medium- income countries.

First, as a director of EDUS (Education for All), Dr Pistoljevic worked tirelessly to bring the latest behavioural technologies developed at the Columbia University (and worldwide) to her native Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there was no provision for effective education of children with Autism and other developmental delays. Under her tireless leadership, EDUS classrooms have enabled hundreds of children in primary and preschool classes to reach their potential, and their families to enjoy better prospects and wellbeing.

Understanding the importance of providing the local specialists with the knowledge they need to effectively teach and support the children in their care, Dr Pistoljevic and her team have been providing continuous education that established a system of centres for early detection and intervention in BiH, operating within the existing network of institutions. As part of this work, they have developed and validated the first set of developmental scales that is locally relevant and provides the tool to specialists for assessing developmental level of the children in their care. An accessible set of guidance materials had also been developed to empower early-years carers and parents to contribute to their children's development in the best possible way.

Indeed, Dr Pistoljevic and her team have been systematically developing and advocating a comprehensive system of early detection, diagnosis, and intervention suitable for low- and medium- income countries, first of its kind. From BiH to the region (Montenegro) and beyond (Palestine), she had been tirelessly engaged in developing an ever-expanding cadre of professionals that are working directly with children and able to put the evidence based effective interventions into their day-to-day practice.

To complement this work, as an active member and recently President of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian American Academy of Arts and Sciences (BHAAAS), Dr Pistoljevic has fostered much needed international collaborations and knowledge exchanges that brought specialists from the whole world to work on projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is much needed in a country where the established Universities and other educational institutions seldom enable their students and scholars to learn about the contemporary methods or findings in education, behavioural sciences, and sciences in general.

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Having taken part in several such collaborations, ranging from international conferences to educational events to research projects, I can personally attest to Dr Pistoljevic's scope of work and the influence it is having on the provision, especially in special education, in the region and beyond. This contribution had been recognised by a large number of organisations, including BiH Ministry of Health, UNICEF, US Aid, and many others, whose funding continues to support her work.

It would be difficult to overemphasize how important this ambitious programme of changes and developments is for engendering much needed changes in the perceptions and practices of the cultures that see the children with developmental difficulties as a burden on their families and society, as hopeless cases that must be managed, as fundamentally unteachable. Dr Pistoljevic has set out to change these ossified practices and – supported by a dedicated team of specialists who she herself helped to educate – persisted in her endeavours in face of continuous opposition to challenges of the status quo. I have much admiration for this work. It takes a special kind of person to keep going and change the system for the better.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly and without reservation support Dr Pistoljevic's nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Signed,

Dr Mihela Erjavec

Senior Lecturer and Teaching Fellow at Bangor University, UK  
Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, UK  
World Bank International Consultant on the Reducing Health Risk Factors in Bosnia and Herzegovina Project  
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Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

To Whom It May Concern,

It is our great pleasure and honor that our professor, associate and friend Dr. Nirvana Pistoljevic is nominated for the Brock Prize in Education for 2019. And it is even more important for us to write a letter of recommendation for this exceptional and enthusiastic scientist who, in the domain of her scientific and professional work, unselfishly helps the most vulnerable population in our country and around the world - children with disabilities.

We have known Nirvana for 10 years, and it is not easy for us to write briefly all of her achievements and all that she did and do with her devotion and committed work in the promotion of education. As a young person, a refugee from a country in the whirlwind of war, she earned a reputation in the United States and, with valuable work, effort and dedication, became a Doctor of Science at the prestigious Teachers Collage at Columbia University, where, after studying, she was engaged as a professor and director of the prestigious scientific research center for the promotion of evidence-based education. When we first contacted her in 2008, she readily accepted to help us on a voluntary basis, and then we started a successful cooperation that is still ongoing. Nirvana, with her directness and professionalism, enthusiasm and readiness to help and share her knowledge and experience, has simply won a large number of parents and professionals in our country. As teachers working with children with developmental disabilities, we found irreplaceable associates and support in solving numerous problems with which the education system is a small, war-ravaged country as Bosnia and Herzegovina encounters every day. The associate who is rarely found, the collaborator who is a great source of knowledge and experience, but an even greater source of motivation and powerful driver for better education and better life of children and all actors of childhood. Nirvana is a human being you can go for professional help and be sure you will get it. It does not matter whether you are a professor, a teacher, a student, or a parent. She does not distinguish between small and big problems, between important and irrelevant people who need her advice or support. She is simply the great expert and humanist to whom you can rely on. Despite numerous business opportunities, in 2010, Nirvana opted for a major challenge and this is to establish a evidence-based education system in B&H. With a small group of professionals and parents, the Association EDUS - Education for All was founded and launched a great battle. Although planned as an experimental project with 7 children in the autistic spectrum, at the very beginning, on the initiative of Nirvana and because of the situation and needs of children and their families, this number increased to 20. Over the years, the program has grown and more and more children have appeared in need for quality education. So far, over 500 children with the most severe developmental disorders have passed through EDUS evidence-based education programs that is available in just a few countries in the European Union. It is also very important that, regardless of the high standards of work, this kind of education is free for children and their families, which is not a case in even a much more developed country than B&H, all thanks to Nirvana and her dedicated work.

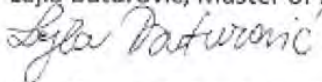
With her every day efforts, which are systematic, comprehensible and accessible to everyone, Nirvana contributes greatly in informing the community about better recognizing early signs of developmental delays and disorders and understanding the

importance of early childhood intervention, both in B&H and around the world. The scientist, expert, and person thanks to who children with disabilities get quality education, their families become more competent and successful, and teachers are more efficient in their work, during which problems become challenges and opportunities for learning.

Nirvana is the author of numerous publications in our country and abroad, she is still engaged as a lecturer at Columbia University and Parma University, and an associate of numerous international organizations, including UNICEF B&H and UNICEF State of Palestine. As an organizer, coordinator and implementer of numerous trainings, conferences and symposiums, she continuously works on improving the quality of education. In this way, she gives the opportunity to various professionals to become expert in the application of the latest scientific methods in working with children, exchange experiences and learn about the latest scientific achievements. She is the one who introduced applied science to classrooms throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus directly enhanced the competencies of teachers and their students.

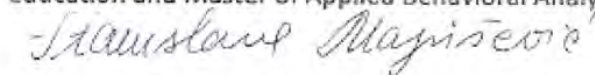
By changing the world step by step, creating better quality education for children with disabilities and contributing to the improvement of every little life she touches, Nirvana is already the winner of the biggest prize for us! With the nomination of such an extraordinary person, Brock's prize for education cannot come in better hands, because quality education should be available to everyone, and we are happy and proud that this is possible now, thanks to Nirvana.

Lejla Buturovic, Master of Educational Sciences - Inclusion and Individualization in Education

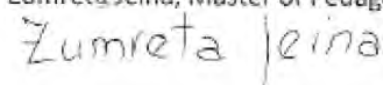


Stanislava Majusevic, Masters of Educational Sciences - Inclusion and Individualization in

Education and Master of Applied Behavioral Analysis



Zumreta Jeina, Master of Pedagogical Science - Inclusion and Individualization in Education



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Sarajevo, August 2018

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"I am a scientist, but first of all, I am a teacher". These are the words with which Nirvana Pištoljević has introduced herself to me and other parents at her first lecture in Sarajevo, eight years ago and they still frame my picture of her, as a professional and a person. In more than twelve years of my life as a parent of a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and an activist for children with disabilities, searching far and wide for assistance for them, I have never met anyone even close to such an impressive combination of knowledge of education science and ability to apply it swiftly and effectively in real life, due not just to intellectual ability, but intuitive understanding, empathy and respect that she has for each and every child and adult that she comes across to teach. Passionate about scientific research, Nirvana manages to keep the focus on her students and their needs, whether they are children, parents or professionals. Revolving her ethos around real people and their abilities, especially when it comes to children with developmental delays, she used the science to their great benefit and perhaps, by directing her own research that way, is making it closer to real life.

In 2006 my son Harry, at the age of four, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Having just moved from Australia, where Harry was born, to Bosnia, my home, with our family of six, my husband and I decided to stay in Bosnia and try to get help for him here or in the countries of the region. Unfortunately, in the area in transition from the post-war period, where even professionals seemed to know very little about autism at all, it has proven to be an impossible mission, so Harry missed his early intervention and reached the school age completely nonverbal. Around that time, in 2008, I met Nirvana here in Sarajevo, through the Autism Parents' Association, on one of her private visits to her hometown. After an initial lecture to the parents, comprehending the greatness of need of the families and children in a country where the institutionalization of these children was the only official answer, Nirvana has offered to train for a year, free of charge, at the school in New York in which she worked at the time, several professionals that we choose as best candidates. This plan didn't work because we parents couldn't raise funding for their travel and accommodation. Still, in director of one of the special schools we found a willing partner in undertaking a year-long project of training their staff and we came to agreement with Nirvana to take a year leave from her work to be the project expert here. At her arrival to Sarajevo in 2010, in order to be able to conduct trainings, Nirvana, myself and my husband and several other parents and professionals have founded a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization "Education for All- EDUS", with Nirvana as the Executive Director. Ever since, driven by the sheer gravity of need, as well as Nirvana's great professional competence that inspired enthusiasm of all members to strive for advancements in education, this organization has become a leader in evidence-based and a pioneer in science-based education of children, parents and professionals and hope for many families of children with developmental delays, not just in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also surrounding countries (Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania) and reaching as far as Sweden and Palestine. Nirvana's initial idea was to take just one classroom with six children with ASD in order to train the professional staff and parents in-situ in application of behavior analysis. That number immediately had to be changed to 20 children, which by the end of the school year increased to 65. Very soon that number reached a hundred and last few years is well over, around 150. It was exciting and energizing to watch how these children progress and see the joy of their parents and families. My own son Harry, eight years old when the program started and completely non-verbal, at the age of ten started to use words and short sentences and greatly improved his communication skills. That, for our family was short of miracle, since we had given up the idea that he would ever speak. Under Nirvana's supervision, some 50 children with different developmental delays, ASD in particular, has been prepared for mainstream education system so well that they did not need further assistance and a few of them have become the best students in their class.

Knowing the path of these children and how they had difficulties to be accepted even in special education schools, I believe that the EDUS program was a life-changing period for them, offering possibilities that they would otherwise never have- to have a career and a full social life. As an integral part of the program, Nirvana was organizing parent education, first all by herself, and later with the emerging team of professionals that she trained and supervised.

These were annual cycles of lectures and workshops with the aim to give parents basic understanding on the science behind their children's school activities and skills they need to reinforce the results of such work when the child is with them. Changing individual life courses of several hundred families was actually the result of the activities related to the main goal of EDUS- systemic advancement of education for children with or without developmental delays, through additional education and training of professional staff. In this direction, supported by UNICEF, Nirvana's most important achievement is being a focus in laying foundations for an effective system of early detection, diagnosis and intervention for children with development delays in Bosnia and Herzegovina and improvement of the systems in the neighboring countries. This was done through a series of trainings of the local health, education and social welfare professionals, with the emphasis on immediate application of new knowledge under guidance and supervision of Nirvana and her EDUS team. Several hundred professionals from the region have participated in these sessions and in previous years; EDUS was contracted by UNICEF to replicate the system in Palestine. One of the most impressive products of this action was a set of instruments for the assessment of children and early intervention, including a guide for the creation of a parent education curriculum, the first such in the region, with Nirvana as the co-author. Together with us parents of EDUS, Nirvana was also advocating and taking an active role in changes

and adjustments of government policies, laws and regulations that would enable early intervention and the advancements in education of children with disabilities. We have also created many public awareness and acceptance raising campaigns that have perceptibly changed the general view and attitude towards persons with disabilities, especially those with autism, of which the local public new very little before.

In terms of advancement of higher education and science, I witnessed great learning opportunities that Nirvana has offered to the students of University of Sarajevo and team of professionals in EDUS. Many of them have participated in research designed by Nirvana around the EDUS program and presented their work highly respected and acclaimed conferences around the world and two of them have received, again under Nirvana's mentorship, Master of Science Degree at the University in Parma. I must say that, knowing the local system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is very unlikely that these people would ever have chances like this in their professional career, which, once they reach a degree, often doesn't require life- long learning or any research. Despite all these achievements, it is frustrating to realize how slowly the systemic changes happen and how strong the inertia is of the existing system, not helped by the fact that the country is ridden by corruption, as well as political and economic problems. As a result, the changes in the support system on a large scale in no way reflect the amount of energy Nirvana and EDUS have invested. Nevertheless, systems are abstract, people with which Nirvana has worked are real and so are the changes she effected. Parents, including myself, who have witnessed the fantastic results of intensive, science-based work with their children will never again be satisfied with explanations that point to their child's disability and require them to accept lower standards in work. She has selflessly disseminated her knowledge to all willing professionals empowering them to understand the child's individual learning process and be successful instead of complacent and powerless. She has been uncompromising with public officials on issues of quality and accessibility of education for children, regardless of their social status or ability. She has told the public via media that they should see the potential in each child and that each child can learn.

So, if I had to select Nirvana's main achievement in Bosnia, apart from life-changing experiences and new chances in life for many concrete children and families, it would be that she has managed "to raise the bar", even higher than the first-world level. Knowing that Nirvana, as a teenager, took refuge in the USA, due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and further struggled to afford a high level of education, I believe that her main motivation is a noble need to help those who are disadvantaged and different to acquire the most valuable asset of all- education.

Sincerely,

*Sanela Lindsay*

Parent of Child with Autism, and Co-founder of Education for All- EDUS



Dear Jurors,

I'm pleased to support Dr. Nirvana Pistoljevic's nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education.

As her former trainee and a Master Student in the Applied Behavior Analysis courses she was teaching in, I had the opportunity to experience her approach to the applied science of education both as a leader and a teacher. She is a prolific researcher, that offered to our research team, at Columbia University, her innate feel for perfecting research design and a new, sophisticated grasp of data collection, database architecture and data analysis not to mention the work she did to improve our shared assessment tool: she did it in just a couple of years, tested the effectiveness of new tools in the schools (Keller CABAS® campuses) she was supervising and the improvements she brought to the whole school and reasearch system are still in place and spread all over the world.

In our professional environment she was often described as a genius: her system-based approach to education, showing that children with autism and developmental delays could learn new skills and acquire new developmental capability with the implementation of developmentl protocols she designed, was never conceptualized and tried before. Her capacity to be a scientific supervisor, a school dean and a Master teacher trainer and mentor, while still working directly with children and families, raised the bar for every Columbia University Teachers College's student, now and then.

Nirvana's output of completed educational projects has exceeded the combined results of all other efforts in

- school building
- research
- teaching
- mentoring
- writing papers
- training professionals
- advocacy for the rights of children-with and without disabilities- and their parents all over the world
- raising the awarness of the autism condition locally and worldwide
- helping other professionals in every field of Pedagogy, Medicine, Neuroscience, Technology, Complex Systems Analysis and Innovative Schooling

I've witnessed during my 15 years of work as an Educational Psychologist, a Behavior Analyst and a Univerity Professor.

After her surprising decision to leave her well deserved high position at Columbia University and Keller Schools to move back to Sarajevo, Bosna & Herzegovina, many American colleagues found out that she was a war refugee (something that she never told) who had always dreamt for a better future for her sadly destroyed country. She quickly found out about the Country's school system's problems and realized there weren't quality services for disadvantaged children, children with developmental disability. She also felt that Bosnian population was still affcted by the consequences of a war that ended twenty years before but never really ended, leaving people, especially young people, with a shared feeling of hopelessness. Schools and teaching were a result of that.

In less than two years she started EDUS, where children of all ages, with multiple disabilities, with and without family, were welcomed and received the higher level of early intensive behavioral intervention. The centre quickly grew into being a systematic replication of CABAS® model of schooling and became a research centre that is still attracting professionals in the fields and enthusiast students from all over the world.

This is when colleagues started to call her a saint and a miracle maker.

I'm immensely proud to call myself her friend and to be affected by her energy and I hope, one day, to reach her level of transdisciplinary understanding of evidence-based pedagogy.

The ABA Masters I direct at Modena and Reggio Emilia University had the honor to invite her as a lecturer and her powerful speech, together with the amount of data she showed, raised the motivation and the conscience of those who thought teaching is an art: Dr. Pistoljevic culturally affected the culture of education in my Country, by showing to over 3000 teachers that teaching can be and should be a science, especially when education can mean a better future for all.

Dr. Pistoljevic is trying to raise knowledge and bring evidences on where research meets politics and education meets health, and she does it with the independence of a warrior and the empathy of a mother.

I kindly ask you to consider her name for the Brock International Prize in Education because of all her accomplishments through difficulties but also because, despite her PhD, experience, awards and achievements, she still calls herself a Teacher. Giving everything she owns, knows and builds to others isn't what she does, it is who she is.

For all of these reasons, I think Nirvana Pistoljevic embodies excellence in education and deserves this award. Should you have any question, I invite you to contact me at the number or address, above.

Sincerely,

Fabiola Casarini, PhD

Research Fellow, Dept of Education and Human Sciences,  
University of Modena and Reggio Emilia  
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To whom it may concern,

With great pleasure, I am writing to you in order to recommend Dr. Pistoljevic for a Brock International Prize in Education.

I have had the honor of meeting Dr. Nirvana Pistoljevic through the work she has done for UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Regional UNICEF office in Geneva years ago. For the past two years, we have collaborated on the project to advance early childhood policy and services in State of Palestine. Throughout perennial program activities, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Pistoljevic became an integral and important part of the overall UNICEF project objectives in strengthening early childhood development and creating intervention services in the State of Palestine. With her guidance we have been able to develop trainings and materials tailored for Palestinian teachers, pediatricians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, etc. Together, we have been working with Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development on strengthening and creating better opportunities for children in West Bank and Gaza.

She has introduced first parent education curriculum in Palestine and we are currently working on validation and standardizations of Dr. Pistoljevic's Behavioral Developmental Scales for children in Palestine in order to better monitor development in our country. Dr. Pistoljevic has worked with professors from several universities in West Bank and Gaza on introducing new knowledge into curricula and majors that deal with children. Some Palestinian Universities are considering to design a Master degree programme, where Dr. Pistoljevic will provide technical guidance and distance supervision to the programme design.

Together with her staff she has conducted inter-sectorial trainings for over 300 health professionals, teachers, psychologists and social workers from early childhood and pre-elementary schools, nurseries and clinics. Throughout my observation of her abilities, competence and dedication, I truly believe that Ms. Pistoljevic excels at everything she puts her mind to and her main goal of helping children in the world through education, has been achieved long time ago. Therefore, I strongly recommend Ms Pistoljevic for the Prize in Education for her fundamental innovative, inspiring and impactful work throughout the world.

Sincerely,

Dr. Selena Bajraktarevic and Kanar Wael Qadi  
Early Childhood Development  
UNICEF – State of Palestine  
Jerusalem  
Office: +972 (2) 5840400

Sarajevo, 31 August 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I was introduced to Nirvana Pištoljević in Sarajevo in 2010, via a skype conference, at my friends' who have a child with autism. She was then trying to set up with them, from her position of a professor in the Columbia University and an official of Fred Keller School in New York, the program for children with developmental delays in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Immediately, I have been taken by her enthusiasm and willingness to share her knowledge with professionals in our country and to help the children here.

Later I have closely followed her work in the country, after she has founded organization "Education for All- EDUS", which has become a leader in the area of education of children with developmental delays, not just in Bosnia, but in the whole region. They have excelled in many areas, especially in early intervention, education of educators and parents, raising public awareness and acceptance of children with disabilities and their human rights. I have been a proud supporter of EDUS since the foundation and, as of last year, one of the Honorary directors.

On several occasions I have visited the schools run by EDUS and Dr. Pištoljević, and spent some time with the children and teachers. I was impressed by the quality of program and the level of attention for each child, the scrutiny of professionals' work and the amount of research they have conducted, but I also appreciated strong ties and joint work with the families of children in raising public awareness and support of the education establishment.

I believe that the arrival of Dr. Pištoljević to Bosnia has been a great opportunity for children, families and professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and wider, and I sincerely hope that the education officials will fully recognize it, as much as the parents and public have.

Sincerely,

*Dunja Mijatović*

Honorary Director

Education for All- EDUS

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

dunja16@hotmail.com

# Parent Testimonials

My son, a beautiful brown-haired boy, is 4 years old, named Adan. My son does not speak. Just imagine one day without the greatest human gift, the gift of speech. Not being able to express your needs and wishes, the world around you which is full of colors, lights, sounds, and thus everyday situations represent a difficult task. We live with it. And it is not easy either. Pediatricians believe that it is not a problem if you do not speak until your third year, some specialists tell you, "It's a bit strange, but they will graduate college." The tedious circle begins this way, going from one specialist to another, giving you a diagnosis, comforting you, diminishing the fact that they will not be of much help in the end, and that you are left to fend for yourself. You go looking for answers on the internet, the cards stack up very quickly, and all clues point to AUTISM. You educate yourself a lot during a course of a year on this topic, because you do not have any other way out. Paying expensive private speech therapy sessions for a two-year-old, when he needs a speech therapist least, leastways not at that age. You change a couple of private kindergartens, after the trouble of introducing him from the beginning, realizing daily angered stares from educators at you and your child. Kindly letting you know that your child seems to be too aggressive, they are fearful for other children with him around. You pass through a lot of kindergartens, associations, similar SOS

institutions, everyone will understand you, but no one can help you, because if you only mention the word autism, many doors will become closed because of fear, ignorance and prejudice. You will get a million excuses, some are justified, most are not. You are quick to give up in the end. I referred myself to the State's "special institution" but they do not enroll before the child's age of three years, despite the fact that the earliest age is the most valuable for treatment, but I was an exception due to my desperation and was given two hour sessions twice a week. My first observation I noticed: one teacher works consecutively with four children, two children in a wheelchair with cerebral paralysis, one with visible motor difficulties (here I am not referring to discrimination but the outdated system of work). How will my hyperactive child be able to learn something with these distractions, it is simply impossible for him to stay seated for a minute, not to mention someone working with him. This is physically impracticable, you quickly realize there will be no effect, two hours of such work is insufficient. I was at the beginning again. But where now? Where to find in one place everything for my sons needs to be rehabilitated, namely: a dialectologist, a one on one educator approach, oligophrenologist, psychomotor reducer, physician and speech therapist? This is a very expensive disorder for which you need a whole team of experts, that's a lot of money that most parents do not have. Work has to be tailored to each child in accordance with the severity of the disorder, without

a complete approach, which need not be supplemented, at least when autism is concerned. So, through my search, we came to the doors of the association "EDUS" for our first observation with Dr. Nirvan Pištolejić. I was delighted with her charisma and intellect, above all with her desire to help me as a desperate mother. She knew all the answers to my questions, the first person that did not fear my three-year-old boy. For the first time I was surprised with someone who said very loudly to me, "I know how to help your son," here you will receive all the professional help you need, we work will every day with your child. Through the conversation, she uses the term "our children" very often, with so many pride and love stories about them. I felt somehow that my son belonged right there as well. Yes, she is a person with a vision and mission to make the world a better place - at least their world. Give me hope to my better tomorrow as well. I sighed. My son, everything will be ok, shall we go to the park. I looked at my son at that moment, so beautiful, carefree, nothing around him, staring mesmerized at the tree tops, as the leaves dance in the wind. And I start looking in that direction as well. Actually, I've never noticed how beautiful this scene is. I guess I should look a lot more in his direction and see how beautiful things I have not seen for a long time are.

Mother A.P.

My daughter Mia was born on one January night. My munchkin that conquered my heart the day I found out I was pregnant. I instinctively knew that this girl would be special. I never thought that she would be "special" in the sense that she will be atypical, but it never changed my feelings for her, even when she was diagnosed with HFA /High Functioning Autism at the age of 5. This grew my feelings and determination to be her biggest support. I am a single mother, raising Mia with my mother who was herself a single mother to me and my late brother. Mia is a child who impress even at first glance, but still she has difficulties in making friends, understanding the meaning of words and sentences addressed to her as well as integrating into society. But with the help of NGO EDUS and their experts, she literally blossomed into a girl, who when she was 5, could not answer the question "What is your name?", into the girl by the age of 10, who already completed third grade of primary school with honors as one of the best pupils in the school! I do not know where would be today if EDUS didn't exist. There were numerous situations when I could not and did not know how to help her, to explain most hopeless sentence, how to calm her down in her fear attacks relating to obvious unreasonable things. Many times, other parents grimly watched me when she was pushing other kids on the playground, when she fell on the floor of the bus station, screaming, because there is no free space on the left side (because she had to sit on that side), although there were empty seats on the right side. People would watch like I am having a spoiled child, and often they would attack me



We visited everyone - my wife and I, with our son. All doors of all facilities for working with children with special needs were closed to us. The only door that opened was the EDUS door.

We will not allow it to shut down, because nobody wants to work with children with the disadvantaged in development pre-school aged kids, especially if there is a complex problem like our almost blind child - in addition to all the other difficulties. None of the institutions in Republika Srpska nor the Federation of BiH wants to take over any kind of burden of this kind on their own.

Remember how the parliamentarians coldly rejected the proposal for a GPS bracelet, that is the way we are dealt with always. That is why I hereby appeal to all, that we take the opportunity that is given for our children's better tomorrow.

Father, L.J.

verbally, not knowing that I have something that is the most valuable in my life and that is a child with developmental difficulties. It is very hard to describe the feeling of powerless and pain in a mother's heart who would do everything for her child, but not being able to. I cannot imagine how the world looks in her eyes, what has she been through, because she cannot express herself, she cannot say what is on her mind, and why is she afraid of things. And when you, with trembling voice, in a few sentences explain to those people what it is about, they start to apologize.

Some of them still continue behaving like they do not care. And they should not care. At the end, my child is still my child, regardless of the fact whether she has or hasn't developmental difficulties. I encourage myself that I am on the margin, but then I look at the environment that surrounds me. My Mia does not have a single friend, she has her small mates from the kindergarten "Sunce" in Mjedjenica, but no one comes to our house to play with her. She is not invited to birthdays, very few children come to her birthday parties. I am suffering because of that, because I would like her to be accepted in society. Although her progress is impressive due to behavioral therapy by EDUS, majority of people still have judgments of her upon her diagnosis. As if they were afraid she might hurt their children. And they do not know that children with autism are most similar to angels, children who do not know about the evil, children who do not lie. The most beautiful children. The most loving CHILDREN. I have found my new family in parents who have children in the EDUS program. First of all, brave parents who know how I feel, having the same problems. People who were with me in times when I did not know what to do.

People who have generously offered their love and embrace when it was very, very difficult. The mandatory topic in primary and secondary schools. I can only hope that this day will come. In not so many of us, but we are there for each other. To some of them I even do not know the name but, Mia is starting the Mainstream School. know we have a lot challenges ahead of us. But she they hugged me and offered their love in difficult times. Family, the kind that doesn't bind is not of kind. One gem that shines through my life and my love is endless, as she is. And because of blood but they are my family for a lifetime. They were there for me when my true family failed, because of the love and strength she gives me daily, I think I am not at the margin. Her smile is because my child was not typical. And all their children are my children, and my child is theirs, while any sufferings and temptations. Because she is my daughter. My Mia. that I am not at the margin. Yes, because the society is in many milestones failed. People flinched when I tell them about Mia's condition because they do not know what it is. Raising awareness should

Mother I.C.

## My child went to JU Center

"Vladimir Nazor" for 8 months, which we combined with a regular kindergarten. That was 8 months lost for nothing. For eight months his behavior did not improve, he did not even learn how to hold a pencil in his hand. I signed him ou, while everyone wondered why. My son was 4 years old, did not advance, they did not work with him – that is the reason simply said. If I had to hand it over to Vladimir Nazor, he would experience shock, throwing tantrums, screaming. Now he attends a half-day stay in one regular kindergarten, and is on the Holding List for the EDUS program. I hope that everything will be resolved quickly with the start of the EDUS program, because my son is already 5 years old, the time has come, and our children need expert work with qualified staff.

Mother M.



## My child was

enrolled in the JU Center "Vladimir Nazor". I want to thank EDUS – for thinking of their educators - and of course, the EDUS Parent Council. Given the complex diagnosis of my child, EDUS proved to be a full hit and a best option. For a child who has daily attacks, when I look back and compare him to an earlier period - before EDUS - and now - I can simply say he is a different child.

Mother MG

„I would like to take this opportunity to thank EDUS – for thinking of their educators - and of course, the EDUS Parent Council. Given the complex diagnosis of my child, EDUS proved to be a full hit and a best option. For a child who has daily attacks, when I look back and compare him to an earlier period - before EDUS - and now - I can simply say he is a different child“

Mother M

Before 4 years, Anur got on his ear by bee on the seaside. Since then, he has been terribly afraid of bees, wasps, flies- literally has a phobia. In my attempts to teach him to accept the flies, when we head outside, I place a scarf, and a headphones on his head to cover his ears. He felt safer. Dino and Nerma (educators at EDUS) played sounds od bees on the radio, explained to him where the bees lived, why they existed, talked about honey – this made his phobia diminsh. He startd playing outside without having to cover his ears. The doctor did not believe me and said it was not possible that this was due to his fear cause by a sting, that he can not remember that. That's what I said in EDUS, and Nerma said, "What do they know - what he remembers, we will try to get rid of those phobias in this way. "

Two nights ago, Anur leaned and suddenly said, "Bee, auch, my ear, hurtsss! ". That happend almost 4 years ago! What to say? What would I do if it was not for the work of EDUS – with their knowledge of treating our children? See, here is a new start, how things stand. I met a 19-year-old boy who matures in Vladimir Nazor, and he does not know a single letter - for me it's shocking. I wonder how much children are left in this way? For how many of them - some of the fears have never been overcome, because no one offered them a chance or did not want to learn them?

There, today is this day.

Mother A.H.

"If it wasn't for EDUS and their work, who knows who would treat our children?"

Not so long ago, three years ago, I struggled with myself to accept my child. I did not want to admit that my baby was different besides the warnings, I've been listening to every type of advice, "he is just lazy, he'll talk eventually." By doing thus I was lying to myself. But all the institutions and doctors we visited, just kept on telling us these same things and I blindly accepted them.



When one incident occurred in a regular kindergarten and I realized I should look for help. We decided to try with EDUS. It turned out that something was different with my baby. He was not lazy and it was not "just because he was a man" that he didn't speak at the time. He was already in the spectrum of autism.

When it went to EDUS, I can not isolate only one aspect, but everything has changed. His attention, behavior, and speech. At the age of five, he started speaking, we have been making progress with the help of the wonderful, kind people, who see these children as they are - wonderful, small human beings, but unfortunately most of them that are misunderstood..

Mother A. Č

Our story is a bit different, but yet the same or similar to other stories.

My son was a typical child until he was two, whose speech and motor skills were developing normally. He had great eye contact and was responsive to his name, he knew names of family members, even mimicked the sounds. Then, within a month, he lost fine motor skills and only MAMA remained in his speech, which was also lost very quickly. After visiting a well-known speech therapist and defectologist- who based on one sentence and without any work, concluded that my son has autism, just because he returned a hairdryer to its place-added that he was spoiled and that I should treat him like in the military.

To the question of whether to include him in EDUS, she was categorical that there is no need and that he would only "pick up the nonsense of other children" there. Still, we did not listen to her. We took him to the observation where he had minimal scores. By recommendations of Sabina and Džana (EDUS-es educators), he started one on one tutoring classes,, went for two months and immediately moved to the so-called early intervention.

The results were immediately visible, that the late prof. Zubcevic said he cannot diagnose him, that the child is advancing and that we stick to EDUS.

Now my boy is 5 years old, and thanks to EDUS and my persistence in working with him – from a child who has completely lost eye contact and responding to his name, where his pen was falling out of his hand, who couldn't watch TV without jumping for hours in front of it like on trampoline, who didn't understand instructions, who didn't approach anyone except me, who wasn't interested in anything except commercials and sorting everything in unusual forms – I now have a child who has perfect eye contact, who looks at me and according to my facial expression knows could he make something wrong or not, a child who when scolded – starts to cuddle, who watches TV while sitting or lying and if he gets up and starts jumping-on my command he immediately stops.

My son eats on his own, goes to the toilet without my help. Brushes his teeth on his own, and gets dressed as well. When I say we are going to study, he goes and sits by himself, he holds his pen better than other children of his age. We are learning letters now, how to write.

From stereotypical behaviors, we came to the stage where he makes entire constructions from wooden blocks of various shapes and sizes, inventing his self-interests and games, and child that likes to play with us, pulling us when he wants more. He approaches everyone, notices other children and sounds in nature, his concentration is better as well as his understanding. If there wasn't this "prolonged school break" he might have spoken, but I don't lose faith nor hope, and I hope that this will improve when he starts going to EDUS kindergarten. EDUS is just as important as working at home. I knew, every day, to ask educators for advice. Work with your children and have no doubt that EDUS will help you.



# CURRICULUM VITAE

## Nirvana Pistoljevic

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### EDUCATION

- **Doctor of Philosophy: Applied Behavior Analysis**, May 2008  
*Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York*
- **Master of Philosophy: Applied Behavior Analysis/Behaviorism**, May 2008  
*Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York*
- **Master of Education: Instructional Practice in Special Education**, October 2007  
*Teachers College, Columbia University, New York*
- **Master of Arts: Special Education/General Education/Applied Behavior Analysis**, May 2005  
*Teachers College, Columbia University, New York*
- **Bachelor of Arts: Psychology- Highest Honors**, January 2002  
*Rutgers University, New Jersey*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Adjunct Assistant Professor of Education**, January 2009- Present

*Teachers College, Columbia University, New York*

Department of Health and Behavioral Studies

- Classes taught:  
“Applied Behavior Analysis I” - *Spring 2009, Fall 2009, Spring 2010*  
“Teaching Students with Disabilities in the General Education Classroom-INCLUSION”- *Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters 2010- present.*  
“Introduction to Special Education” - *Fall 2010, Summer 2011, Fall 2011, Summer 2012, Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Summer 2014, Fall 2014, Summer 2015, Fall 2015, Spring 2016*
- Taught Masters/Phd level courses in special education, focusing on applied behavior analysis, positive behavior supports, measurement of student behavior, applications of various scientific tactics on behavior management, curricular modifications, criterion-referenced behavioral assessment, functional communication training, creating individualized educational and behavioral plans for students. The students in the class were learning about teaching Verbal Behavior, Self-Management, Social Skills, Adaptive Skills, Academic Knowledge, Behavior Management, Individualization of curriculum, while continually collecting data on students learning and advancement in the therapeutic and classroom settings.
- Inclusion and introduction to special education graduate classes focused on different ways to identify and include students with special needs in regular education, learning about education law and provision needed for students in different educational categories, educational and behavioral tactics and supports used in regular education classrooms to help educators individualize instruction, make adjustments, manage the students, measure outcomes, evaluate students learning and teachers teaching, and therefore making inclusion a success.

**Visiting Professor of Psychology, March 2012- 2016**

Master and Phd Program in Applied Behavior Analysis,

*University of Parma, Italy*

Department of Psychology

- Teaching at a BCBA approved graduate program, covering Behavior Analyst Certification Board 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Task List topics.
- Teaching intense masters and doctoral level classes focusing on the principles of the science of behavior and practices such as data collection, experimental design, interobserver agreement, social validity, treatment integrity, functional assessment, schedules of reinforcement, and stimulus preference assessment. Lectures expand students' knowledge of basic Verbal Behavior Operants and provide in depth analysis of Verbal Behavior and its implication in building the curriculum and teaching children how to develop language.
- A deeper knowledge of behavior consequences, manipulation processes and procedures for development, evaluation, and dissemination of effective and sustainable behavior analytic programs starting from the selection of an intervention and experimental design. The lectures focus on the teaching as applied behavior analysis, best evidence-based tactics and interventions for children with autism and other developmental delays as well as for children without disabilities, and prepare students for the international certification exam.
- Teaching doctoral level courses in verbal behavior and verbal behavior analysis.

**Executive Director - "EDUS-Education for All", August 2010 - Present**

*An association for advancement of education and support for children with and without developmental delays.* A Non-for-Profit organization promoting and supporting evidence based educational practices and research in education, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Conceptualized, written and implemented a 7-year (and running), over 4 mil.\$ research project to introduce evidence based educational practices to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Created an appropriate early detection and intervention system for children with ASD and other developmental delays and disorders. Designed a preschool, elementary school and afterschool programs for children with disabilities in special education and in inclusion settings.
- Responsible for the development, implementation, and management of the Project which in first year focused on creation of 2 pilot classrooms based on teaching as applied behavior analysis for 20 students, ages 4 through 8-years old. By 2017, the program grew with the support of international grants (UNICEF, UNDP, USAID, US Embassy, Australian Embassy, Swiss Embassy, etc.), to 4 different programs for over 180 children across 18 classrooms, from Early Intervention through Kindergarten, Elementary school and Tutoring program, providing treatment for children ages 18 months through 15- years old.
- Training, supervision and mentoring of 55 EDUS employees (special education and general education teachers, teaching assistants, speech pathologists, physical therapists, social workers, and psychologists). Provided constant training for the project staff, through lectures, modeling, peer tutoring, in-situ observations, evaluations and constant feedback.
- Developed and oversaw implementation of evidence based curricula, behavior management programs, individual educational plans for all children and continually conducted research according to the student's individual needs and capabilities.
- Summarized and analyzed student, teacher, class-wide and project-wide data. Implemented scientific tactics to improve teachers teaching, classroom outcomes, classroom management, students learning, and staff continual education. Generated several analysis and presented EDUS outcomes on scientific international conferences.

**Grants**

- In 2014-19 received a 850,000.00 \$ UNICEF grant to develop a System of Early Detection, Diagnosis and Intervention for B&H through Early Childhood Developmental Centers with all needed materials and trainings to implement and monitor this novel approach. Developed first standardized developmental screening, monitoring and evaluation tools for the country. Developed parent education curricula and tools for assessment and Individual Education Plan creation, curriculums for ages 1 month- 6 years old. Also, produced several parent education materials, booklets and guides.

- Developed training for kindergarten and elementary school teachers on how to differentiate instructional and include all children in a learning process. Written a guide for teachers with top 10 educational tactics on how to teach better in any learning environment.
- Worked with the relevant ministries (Education, Health and Social Work) and UNICEF on developing and advancing legislation regarding Early Childhood Development in B&H.
- In 2012-2014 received a 215,000.00 \$ UNDP grant for “Improving the Outcomes for children with severe Developmental Disorders in BiH” through applied work with the children and their families.
- In 2016- 2018 received a UNICEF-Palestine 250,000 \$ grant for Development and Advancement of Early Childhood Policy and Programs in State of Palestine. Worked on developing training, materials, books and trained teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers working with children in nurseries, kindergartens, health clinics and in NGO’s, throughout West Bank and Gaza.
- In 2017 received a 310,00 \$ USAID research grant for development of an App for early detection of developmental delays and disorders, for development of a diagnostic protocol for ASD for low- and mid-income countries and a validation study of an appropriate model of early intervention for B&H, development of a possible model for low and mid-income countries.
- In 2018-2020 received a UNICEF-Palestine 400,000 \$ grant for Advancement of Early Childhood Development in State of Palestine through creating developmental standardized tools and booklets with trainings for professional staff in Health, Education and Social Care Sectors.

**Consultant for the UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNDP), April 2012- Present**

- Consulted and worked with the UNDP Social Inclusion Program for B&H. Focused on advancing governmental systems of support for the people with disabilities and aligning services with the UN Convention for Human Rights.
- Worked with UNDP on creating first educational video game in 3 languages, and with UNICEF, developed a first e-book and video game in BHS and English.
- Working with the UNICEF- B&H Health Sector on developing a sustainable system of Early Detection and Intervention for the country.
- For the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Care together with the UNICEF- B&H, developed syllabi for the advancement of the transdisciplinary collaboration and professional education in B&H. Developed 3 training modules for the year long courses to establish new professions: Early Detections (for children ages birth-18 years old) and Early Interventionist (birth-18 years old).
- Working with the UNICEF- B&H Education Sector on the Preschool education reform in B&H.
- Developed and standardized developmental behavioral tools for screening, assessment, individual developmental programming, and monitoring of early childhood development for the UNICEF B&H.
- Conducted several research studies on the early childhood development, effectiveness of early intervention at the different levels of services, and research based analysis of the Roma children development in B&H,
- Consulted for UNICEF-Serbia on the advancement of Early Childhood Services in Serbia. Working on the development of several sectors and advancement of existing early childhood intervention and preschool programs in the country. Conducted trainings for the government employees in the sectors of education, health and social care.
- Worked for the UNICEF-Geneva office as an Expert Trainer for 23 Southeast European and Central Asia countries on “*Advancing ECD in CEE/CIS - Strengthening UNICEF Regional capacity for translating scientific evidence into effective services for children.*”
- Worked with UNICEF-Croatia and International Step by Step Association- Netherlands on integrating UNICEF – ISSA resource Modules into the Lifelong Learning Programme for home visitors on young child wellbeing, child protection and partnership with families: Capacity Building



Activity (Training of Trainers) for Teaching Staff at the Faculty of Health Studies, University of Rijeka and University Department for Health Studies, University of Split, June 2016.

- o Worked with UNICEF-Palestine on the National Strategy on Early Childhood Development and Intervention, and creation of training syllabi and trainings for multisectoral approach to early detection and intervention in SOP. Technical advisor for the UNICEF and UNRWA at SOP (Gaza and West Bank).
- o Worked with government of Montenegro on creating and advancing systems of support for children with ASD in the country.

**Visiting Lecturer via BGP+ Brain Gain Program, January 2011- June 2011**

*Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, B&H, Department of Pedagogy*

*“Special Pedagogy II”*

- o Undergraduate class focusing on different ways to include students with special needs in regular education, principles of inclusion, learning about education law and provision needed for students in different educational categories, educational and behavioral tactics and supports used in regular education classrooms to help educators individualize instruction, make adjustments, manage the students, measure outcomes, evaluate students learning and teachers teaching, and therefore making inclusion a success.
- o Comparison of two educational systems (BiH and USA), arrangement of observations of special and general education classrooms and comparison of the educational approaches and outcomes in both. Also, developed collaboration with the faculty of the Sarajevo University and introduced new educational research and practices from the world.

**Assistant Director/Senior Behavior Analyst, May 2008-August 2010**

*Fred S. Keller School, Palisades, NY*

- o Responsible for the management, supervision and mentoring of all school employees (supervisors, teachers, teaching assistants, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, and office staff). Developed and oversaw implementation of evidence based curricula, behavior management programs, and continually conducted research according to the students individual needs and capabilities.
- o Mentored and supervised teachers and student teachers in a graduate cohort at Columbia University (Master and PhD students in Applied Behavior Analysis Program at Teachers College). Also, developed teaching assistants’ modules and provided constant training, evaluation and supervision for all employees.
- o Summarized and analyzed student, teacher, class-wide and school-wide data. Implemented scientific tactics to improve teachers teaching, classroom outcomes, classroom management, students learning, and staff continual education.
- o Conducted school staff weekly meetings, individual weekly classroom meetings, and observed and evaluated development and implementation of instruction across all 7 classrooms (Early Intervention through Integrated Preschool Classrooms).
- o Continually communicated with parents, outside therapy providers, and school districts. Attended all annual (CSE and CPSE) meetings and supervised creation of all individualized educational plans for each student. Also, conducted all initial students assessment, evaluations, and made decisions regarding placement of students and teaching assistants.
- o Designed, conducted and published research with the focus on verbal behavior analysis.

**Supervisor/Associate Behavior Analyst, September 2006-May 2008**

*Fred S. Keller School, Yonkers, NY*

- o Conducted and published research in the advancement of the science of education and Applied Behavior Analysis with the focus of interested on language development/ verbal behavior
- o Supervised, evaluated and provided an in situ training for classroom teachers, student teachers and teaching assistants. Continually evaluated student performance, design and implementation of the evidence based student curricula and behavior management programs.
- o Collected classrooms data and evaluated staff and student performance based on data analysis. Conducted staff meeting and helped development and implementation of all instruction.

- Collaborated with Parent Education program and communicated with parents, senior behavior analysts and districts on a regular basis.

**Head Proctor/Teaching Assistant for Applied Behavior Analysis I, II, and III, Fall 2005- Spring 2008**

*Department of Health and Behavioral Studies; Professor R. Douglas Greer (Graduate Courses)*

*Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY*

- Coordinated and managed all the teaching assistants/proctors in the Master Program -Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis.
- Assisted in mastery of the behavioral principles and the application of behavior analysis through implementation of self-management strategies to achieve course criteria.
- Collaboratively wrote instructional objectives and research procedures with course professor and then evaluated, graded, and provided feedback for graduate students quizzes and exams across three different levels of applied behavior analysis courses (principles, pedagogy, and curriculum)

**Special Education Teacher/Master Teacher, September 2004-August 2006**

*Fred S. Keller School, Yonkers, NY*

- Developed and implemented comprehensive individualized programs based on the principles of applied behavior analysis for students ranging in ages 3 to 5 years old. Designed individual and group instruction across communication, academic, social, expanded community of reinforcers, physical development, and self-management domains for students with moderate to mild developmental disabilities and behavior disorders.
- Continually analyzed student data to determine locus of learning deficits and utilized research-based tactics to improve student performance while conducting research in areas associated with the acquisition of verbal behavior. Also, collected, summarized, and analyzed teaching assistants data and class-wide data, and implemented tactics to improve classroom overall performance.
- Supervised and mentored teaching assistants and student teachers from the Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis program at Columbia University. Designed and conducted research with the Master Cohorts as part of their in situ training.
- Communicated closely with parents, parent educators and students home districts in order to assist with generalization of skills acquired as school to other environments.

**Research Assistant in the Behavioral Dynamics Lab, Fall 2001-Spring 2002**

*Department of Social Psychology; Professor Kent Harber*

*Rutgers University, New Jersey*

- Conducted research with undergraduate student population at Rutgers University and New York University
- Designed surveys and questioners as part of the research projects; coded, entered and analyzed collected data.
- Completed and wrote an honors research project.

**Teaching Assistant of Introduction to Psychology** (Undergraduate Courses), Fall 2000-Spring 2001

*Department of Psychology; Professor Gilchrist*

*Rutgers University, New Jersey*

- Lectured and conducted Lab exercises weekly to a group of students assigned
- Mentored undergraduate students in introductory psychology course material
- Collaboratively wrote instructional objectives and research procedures with course professor
- Administered and graded undergraduate student's exams on the principles of psychology

**SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS**

- Pistoljevic, N. & Hulusic, V. (in press). Educational e-book for children with and without Developmental Disorders. *Journal of Computers in Education*, XX, XX-XX.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Dzanko, E. (2017). Effects of a modified speaker immersion procedure on the increase of spontaneous speech in children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *European Journal of Behavior Analysis*, 18(2), 307-321.
- Pistoljevic, N., Hulusic, V. (2017). An interactive E-book with an educational game for children with Developmental Disorders: *A pilot user study in games and virtual worlds for serious applications (VS-GAMES)*, 2017 9th International Conference on. IEEE.
- Hulusic, V. & Pistoljevic, N. (2017). A curriculum for developing serious games for children with Autism: A success story. *In Games and Virtual Worlds for Serious Applications (VS-GAMES)*, 2017 9th International Conference on. IEEE.
- Hulusic, V. & Pistoljevic, N. (2015). Read, play and learn: An interactive e-book for children with Autism. *In International Conference on Games and Learning Alliance* (pp. 255-265). Springer International Publishing.
- Hulusic, V. & Pistoljevic, N. (2013). Teaching children with and without disabilities school readiness skills, *In Proceedings of ECC '13 - 7th WSEAS European Computing Conference*, pp. 316-323, ISBN: 978-960-474-304-9
- Hulusic, V. & Pistoljevic, N. (2012). "LeFCA": Learning framework for children with Autism. *Procedia Computer Science*, 15, 4-16.
- Greer, R. D., Pistoljevic, N., Cahill, C., & Du, L. (2011). Conditioning voices as reinforcers for listener responses in preschoolers with autism. *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, 27, 139-247.
- Pistoljevic, N., Cahill, C., & Casarini, F. (2010). Effects of the speaker immersion procedure on the production of verbal operants. *Journal of Speech Language Pathology and Applied Behavior Analysis*, 5(2), 192-207.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2008). *The effects of multiple exemplar and intensive tact instruction on the acquisition of Naming in preschoolers diagnosed with autism and other language delays*. Columbia University, New York. (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University). Abstract from: UMI Proquest Digital Dissertations [on-line]. Dissertations Abstract Item: AAT 3317598.
- Greer, R. D., Stolfi, L., & Pistoljevic, N. (2007). Emergence of Naming in preschoolers: A comparison of multiple and single exemplar instruction. *European Journal of Behavior Analysis*, 8, 119-131.
- Pistoljevic, N., & Greer, R. D. (2006). The effects of daily intensive tact instruction on preschool students' emission of pure tacts and mands in non-instructional settings. *Journal of Early and Intensive Behavioral Intervention*, 3(1), 103-119.

**OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

- Pistoljevic, N., Majusevic, S., Jeina, Z. (2018). *Handbook: Introduction to differentiated instruction for elementary school teachers*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF
- Pistoljevic, N. & Majusevic, S. (2018). *A handbook for applying evidence based tactics in preschools*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF.
- Singer-Dudek, J., Pistoljevic, N. (2017). Exceptional Students. In: John Stein, J.S. (Ed.), *Reference Module in Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Psychology*. Elsevier, pp. 1-7.
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- Pistoljevic, N. & Zubcevic, S. & Dzanko, E. (2016). *Developmental behavioral screening and monitoring tool; Early childhood developmental assessment from first month through 6 years-old*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2015). The effects of the environment during prenatal and postnatal period on the early childhood development. *Procedia of Academy of Arts and Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo; B&H.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2015). *Early Childhood Development and Atypical Development Key Indicators*. Sarajevo, B&H, UNICEF. (translated and published in 3 countries)
- Pistoljevic, N. & Majusevic, S. (2015). *Guide for assessment and creation of individualized developmental plan and program for children ages birth to 3 years-old*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Majusevic, S. (2015). *Guide for assessment and creation of individualized education plan and program for children ages 3 to 6 years-old*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF.
- Pistoljevic, N., Buturovic, L., Jeina, Z. (2014). *Parent education curriculum; For parents of children ages birth through 6 years-old*. Sarajevo, B&H: UNICEF.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2013). *Gap analysis of legislation on protection of rights of people with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, BiH: United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- Pistoljevic, N. (2012). How behavioral science can help us become greener. *Proceedings of CIBW115 Green Design Conference*, 181-184. ISBN: 9978-90-365-3451-2. Retrieved from CIB- International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction Digital Library.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2012). Early child development: Indicators, atypical development, recommendations. Sarajevo, B&H: United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- Pistoljevic, N. & Lindsay, S. (2012). "EDUS-Education for All" and Discrimination of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Z. Popovic-Momcinovic, S. Gavric, & P. Govedarica (Eds.), *Discrimination: One Term, Many Faces*. Sarajevo, B&H.
- Pistoljevic, N. (2012). How "EDUS" brought ABA to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Invited article. *European Association of Behavior Analysis Newsletter*.

#### **MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS**

- Pistoljevic N., & Majusevic, S, Singer, J. *The Effects of the Teacher Training and Implementation of the Decision Protocol on Children's Learning*.
- Pistoljevic N., Dzanko, E., & Majusevic, S. *The Effects of Early Intervention Services Provided through the Early Childhood Development Centers and Resource Rooms across B&H: A Pilot Study*.
- Pistoljevic, N., Dzanko, E., & Buturovic, L. *The Effects of Voice Conditioning Protocol on the Listener Behaviors in Children with Autism*.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Greer, R. D. *The Effects of Intensive Tact Instruction on the Emergence of Naming and Frequency of Emission of Independent Vocal Verbal Operants*.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Greer, R. D. *Acquisition of Naming for 2 and 3-Dimensional Contrived Stimuli in Preschoolers with Autism and other Developmental Delays: A Comparison of Multiple and Single Exemplar Instruction*.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Oblak, M. *The Effects of a Peer-Yoked Contingency Game on the Acquisition of Observational Learning, Naming, and Emission of Vocal Verbal Operants by Preschool Students in Integrated Setting*.
- Pistoljevic, N. & Oblak, M. *The Effects of a Peer-Yoked Group Contingency Game on the Acquisition of Observational Learning of Sight Words by Preschool Students*.

## INVITED LECTURES

- *“Functional Intersectorial Approach to Developing a System for Early Intervention for Children with Developmental Delays and Language Development in Children with ASD”*. Invited lecture at University of Dubrovnik, Croatia. January, 2018.
- *“The Role of the EDUS® Guides for Assessment, Development and Monitoring of Development in Preschool-age Children”*. Invited lecture at University of Dubrovnik, Croatia. January, 2018.
- *“Detection, Monitoring and Intervention in Early Childhood Developmental Period: Central European and Palestinian Model Preliminary Results”* Invited lecture, Investing in Early Years- UNICEF and The World Bank Joint International Conference, Ramallah, December 2017.
- *“Early Interventions for Children with Developmental Disorders”*, Plenary lecture presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Congress of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Association of Serbia, Zlatibor, May 2016.
- *“Screening and Monitoring of Early Childhood Development- Importance of Use of Standardized Validated Tools”*- Round table chair, 4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Congress of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Association of Serbia, Zlatibor, May 2016.
- *“Working with Children with Special Needs in B&H”*, Invited lecture, Bangor University, School of Psychology, Bangor, Wales, February 2016.
- *“How to Establish a System of Early Intervention”*, Invited lecture, Days of Special Education International Conference, Belgrade, Serbia, February 2016
- *“Early Childhood Development; Long-term Effects of the Early Neurodevelopmental Period”*, Invited lecture, University of Mostar, Mostar, January, 2016.
- *“Validating Materials and Instruments for Early Detection and Intervention for Children with Developmental Disorders”*, Lecture presented at Annual Meeting of Pediatric Association of Federation of BiH. Sarajevo, BiH, December 2015.
- *“Early Childhood Development: System of Detection, Intervention and Family Support”*; Invited lecture series for UNICEF- Serbia. Belgrade, Serbia, November 2015.
- *“Children Diagnosed with Developmental Disorders; Research Opportunities in Computing”*; Lecture presented at a Complex System Institute Seminar Series at University of Charlotte, October 2015.
- *“Early Childhood Language Development; Some Current Research”* Invited lecture at Department of Child Psychiatry, University of Arizona Medical School, Phoenix, AZ, October 2015.
- *“Environmental Effects on the Early Childhood Development”*, Invited lecture at Department of Child Psychiatry, University of Arizona Medical School, Phoenix, AZ, October 2015.
- *“Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism Spectrum Disorder”*, Invited CME accredited lecture at Department of Psychiatry, University of Arizona Medical School, Phoenix, AZ, October 2015.
- *“Therapy Application of ABA for Children”*, Invited CME accredited lecture at Department of Psychiatry, University of Arizona Medical School, Phoenix, AZ, October 2015.
- *“Concept of Early Detection and Intervention Services through an Existing Primary Health Care System in B&H”*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Technical Advisory Group Meeting of UNICEF. Sarajevo, B&H, June 2015.
- *“The Effects of the Environment during Prenatal and Postnatal Period on the Early Childhood Development”*; Fetal Medicine Seminar at the Academy of Arts and Sciences of B&H. Sarajevo, B&H, March 2015.
- *“How to Effectively Engage Learners in Any Classroom; What Every Educator Needs to Know prior to Entering any Teaching Environment”*; 10<sup>th</sup> Association for the Advancement of Radical Behavior Analysis (AARBA) International Conference, Trieste, Italy, June 2014.
- *“Changing an Organizational Culture with Behavioral Strategies in Order to Deliver the Expected Results”*, 8<sup>th</sup> European Behavior Based Safety and Organizational Behavioral Management, Conference, Trieste, Italy, June 2014.
- *“The Science of Teaching; How to Motivate and Train Educators to be Better at What they Do”*, 8<sup>th</sup> European Behavior Based Safety and Organizational Behavioral Management Conference, Trieste, Italy, June 2014.

- *“UNDP & UNICEF B&H Case Study: Bringing the Change and Hope for People with Disabilities through Science”*. Lecture given at the “Rethink Europe: Solidarity, Civil Society and Political Governance” 25<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly and Conference of European Foundation Center (EFC). Sarajevo, BiH, May 2014.
- *“Introduction of an Early Intervention Concept in Eastern European Country: Bringing the Change and Hope for Children with Developmental Delays”*; Lecture presented at 6<sup>th</sup> CABAS® Conference, Richmond, VA, October 2013.
- *“The Impact of the Science of Behavior in Post-War, Post-Communist Country: Bringing the Change and Hope for Children with and without Special Needs”* Invited lecture at North Carolina University at Charlotte. Charlotte, NC, October 2013.
- *“Early Intervention Based on Applied Behavior Analysis Concept, Burdens to Deal with in the Middle Income Countries”* Invited lecture given at the Annual Meeting of South East European Autism network (SEAN). Sarajevo, B&H, May 2013.
- *“The paradigm shift from traditional views of children with developmental delays and disabilities in low and mid income countries”* Invited lecture given at the Annual Meeting of South East European Autism network (SEAN). Sarajevo, B&H, May 2013.
- *“Preparing Children to be Successful in Inclusive Setting”* Invited lecture at “Education Tailored to the Needs of Children”. Belgrade, Serbia, November, 2012.
- *“The Impact of Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis in Post-war, Post-communist Country: Bringing the Change and Hope for Children with and without Special Needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*. Invited Tutorial held at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Seattle, WA, May 2012.
- *“Saving Children with Schooling: CABAS® Experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina”* Invited presenter, 8<sup>th</sup> International AARBA Conference, Rome, Italy, June 2012.
- *“Current Research on the Development and Advancement of Verbal Capabilities in Children With and Without Developmental Delays”* [Investigaciones actuales sobre el desarrollo y avance de las capacidades verbales en niños con y sin retrasos en el desarrollo]. Invited Symposium “Autism, Verbal Behavior, and Behavior Analysis”, 6<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Granada, Spain, November, 2011.
- *“Behavior Analysis and Environment”*. Invited lecture as part of the Inclusive Design Course, Sarajevo Green Design Festival, Sarajevo B&H, September, 2011.
- *“Research to Disseminate Best Practices for Children with Autism”*. Invited keynote speaker at the AAARBA Conference “ABA: The New interventions and methods in clinical, educational and rehabilitation settings”. University of Milan, Italy, June 2011.
- *“Teaching Students with Special Needs in an Inclusive Classroom”*. Invited lecture at the seminar “School Reform: Inclusive education- Where we are and Where we are Going.” University of Tuzla, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation. Tuzla, B&H, June 2011.
- *“From Columbia University and New York to Mjedenica and Sarajevo in the Steps of the Science”*, Key-note speaker at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Psychologists of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Banja Luka, B&H, February 2011.
- *“Current Research on the Development of Verbal Capabilities in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder”* Invited Guest Speaker at 3rd Annual “Mind and Body in Autism” Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, April 2010.
- *“Verbal Behavior Developmental Theory”*- Invited Guest Speaker at City College of New York, New York, March 2010.
- *“Single Case Experimental Design in Education”* Invited Guest Lecturer at Teachers College, Columbia University, March 2010.
- *“The Need for Development of Qualified Experts to Work with Children with Autism”* Invited guest speaker at the Academy of Arts and Sciences, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 2009.
- *“Applied Behavior Analysis- The Science of Learning and Teaching”*. Invited lecture at the Second Congress of Scientist from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the World, Sarajevo, B&H, August, 2008.

## SOME RELEVANT PRESENTATIONS

- Chair of the symposium: *“Earlier is Better: Efficacy Criteria for Early Intervention Evidence-Based Programs for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disorders”* at 9<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Paris, France, November 2017.
- *“Effectiveness of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Early Intervention and Preschool Programs: The Analysis of EDUS Guides for Developmental Assessment and Creation of Curricula for Children Ages 0-3 and 3-6”*; Nirvana Pistoljevic & Stanislava Majusevic. Paper presented at a symposium at 9<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Paris, France, November 2017
- *“Creation of Behavioral Developmental Screening Tool to Aid in Early Detection and Promotion of Early Childhood Development Through Transdisciplinary Approach”*; Nirvana Pistoljevic & Eldin Dzanko. Paper presented at a symposium at 9<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Paris, France, November 2017.
- *“The analysis of EDUS Guides for Developmental Assessment and Curricula for Children ages 0-3 and 3-6”*; Nirvana Pistoljevic & Stanislava Majusevic, Paper presented at 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Association for Behaviour Analysis, Italy, September 2016.
- *“Effects of a Modified Speaker Immersion Protocol on the Production of Verbal Operants”*, Nirvana Pistoljevic & Eldin Dzanko, Paper presented at 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Association for Behaviour Analysis, Enna, Italy, September 2016.
- *“Functional Multi-sector Approach to Development of the System to Advance Early Childhood Development in B&H”* Lecture given at 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Neum, B&H, May, 2016.
- *“Early Childhood Development; The Effects of the Environment”* Lecture given at 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Neum, B&H, May, 2016.
- *“Read, Play and Learn: An Interactive E-book for Children with Autism”* Nirvana Pistoljevic and Vedad Hulusic, Presented at Games and Learning Alliance Conference- Serious Games Society 2015, Rome, Italy, December 2015.
- *“Developing and Implementing an Early Detection and Intervention System in a Mid-income Country; Promoting Early Childhood Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*, Nirvana Pistoljevic and Selena Bajraktarevic, 1<sup>st</sup> International Developmental Pediatrics Conference, Istanbul, December 2015.
- *“Creation of Behavioral Developmental Screening Tool to Aid in Early Detection and Promotion of Early Childhood Development through Transdisciplinary Approach”*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Gulf Coast Applied Behavior Analysis Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 2015.
- *“EDUS Guide for Developmental Assessment and Creation of Curricula for Children Ages 0-3 and 3-6 as Part of the Early Intervention System; Promoting Early Childhood Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Gulf Coast Applied Behavior Analysis Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 2015.
- *Developing Early Detection and Intervention System; “ABA for All” through EDUS and UNICEF Lecture presented at 7<sup>th</sup> CABAS® Conference, New Jersey, March 2015.*
- *Chair of the symposium “Advances in Social Learning Theory and Verbal Behaviour Developmental Theory” at 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Association of Behavior Analysis, Stockholm, Sweden, September, 2014.*
- *“Hear my Voice: Effects of Conditioning Voices as Reinforcers for Listener Responses in Children with Autism, 2 Experiments”*; Nirvana Pistoljevic, Eldin Dzanko, Lejla Buturovic, & Adnad Vrbanjac. Paper presented at 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Association of Behavior Analysis, Stockholm, Sweden, September, 2014.
- *Chair of the symposium: “More on the Emergence of Language Learning Capabilities and How to Induce Them in the Educational Settings” at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, IL, May 2014.*
- *“Effects of Conditioning Voices as Reinforcers for Listener Responses on Rate of Learning, Awareness, and Preferences for Listening to Stories in Children With Autism”*. Nirvana Pistoljevic, Eldin Dzanko, Lejla Buturovic. Paper presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, IL, May 2014.

- *"The Importance of Observational Learning and Naming for Success in Mainstream Education". Nirvana Pistoljevic, Stanislava Majusevic, & Admira Kaljanac. Paper presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, IL, May 2014.*
- *"Induction of Observational Learning and Naming as Key to Prepare Students for Learning in Inclusive and General Education Settings", Pistoljevic, et al. 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Gulf Coast Applied Behavior Analysis Conference, Baton Rouge, LA, October 2013.*
- *"Autism and Verbal Behavior; Language Development in Children with ASD" Nirvana Pistoljevic, Eldin Dzanko, & Lejla Buturovic, Lecture presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Medical Symposium of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences- Mostar, B&H, April, 2013.*
- *"Effective Evidence-based Tactics for Developing Language and Social Skills in Children with Developmental Disorders"; Nirvana Pistoljevic, Stanislava Majusevic, Admira Kaljanac, Lecture given at the 5<sup>th</sup> Medical Symposium of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences- Mostar, B&H, April, 2013.*
- *"How do You Train a Teacher to Become a Better Teacher; How CABAS<sup>®</sup> can Help". Lecture presented at 5<sup>th</sup> CABAS<sup>®</sup> Conference, New York, October 2012.*
- *"From Naming through Learning through Observation; Protocols and Tactics to Induce Higher Order Verbal Capabilities". Paper presented at 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Association of Behavior Analysis. Lisbon, Portugal, September 2012.*
- *"A Procedure to Prepare Students for Learning in Inclusive Setting: Training Teachers in B&H to Replicate U.S. Successes" Nirvana Pistoljevic, Stanislava Majusevic, & Zumreta Jein. Lecture presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Seattle, WA, 2012.*
- *"Current Research on the Development of Language in Children with Developmental Delays". Lecture given at the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences- Medical Section, Sarajevo, B&H, April, 2012.*
- *Chair of the symposium: "Spreading the Science: Applying Teaching as Behavior Analysis in General and Special Education Settings in Order to Advance Student and Teacher Learning and Prepare Children for Inclusive Education" at 6<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Granada, Spain, November, 2011.*
- *"From Columbia University to Mjedenica School in Sarajevo: The Impact of Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Nirvana Pistoljevic. Presentation held at the 6<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Granada, Spain, November, 2011.*
- *"Naming Components and How Naming Changes Effective Instruction". Nirvana Pistoljevic, Ananya Goswami, Claire Cahill, & Fabiola Casarini. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Granada, Spain, November, 2011.*
- *"A Procedure to Simultaneously Induce Observational Learning, Naming, and Increase Spontaneous Speech to Prepare Students for Learning in Inclusive Setting". Nirvana Pistoljevic, Stanislava Majusevic, & Zumreta Jein. Presentation held at the 6<sup>th</sup> International ABAI Conference, Granada, Spain, November, 2011.*
- *Chair of the symposium: "International Seminar in Child Psychiatry/Psychology", Seminar held at the Third Congress of Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences (BHAAAS), Zenica, B&H, October, 2011.*
- *"Evidence-based Education for Children with Autism and Other Developmental Delays- Project CABAS<sup>®</sup> in Mjedenica, Sarajevo". Lecture given at the 3<sup>rd</sup> BHAAAS Congress Medical Section, Zenica, B&H, October, 2011.*
- *"From Fred S. Keller School to Mjedenica School in Sarajevo; 1 year data review". Paper presented at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Denver, Colorado, June 2011.*
- *"From Fred S. Keller School to Mjedenica School in Sarajevo- Bringing Evidence-based Education to Bosnia and Herzegovina", Nirvana Pistoljevic. Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International CABAS<sup>®</sup> Conference, New York, NY, February 2011*
- *"Verbal Foundational Cusps: I Hear What You Say, I Listen to What You Say, I Do What You Do, I Say What You Say, and I Tell You What to Do", Nirvana Pistoljevic, R. Douglas Greer, Jessica Dudek, Claire Cahill, Lin Du, Jo Ann Delgado, Jacqueline Lewis, Jinhyeok Choi, Matthew Howarth, Fabiola Casarini, Dollene-Day Keohane. Presentation held at the European Association for Behavior Analysis Conference at Crete, Greece. September, 2010.*
- *"From Naming through Learning through Observation: Educational Procedures and Tactics to Induce Higher Order Verbal Capabilities in Students with and without Developmental Delays" Nirvana Pistoljevic, R. Douglas Greer, Claire Cahill, Mara Oblak, Jalene Moreno, Fabiola Casarini, Ananya Goswami; Paper presented at the European Association for Behavior Analysis Conference, Crete, September 2010.*



- *Chair of the symposium: "Educational Procedures and Tactics to Induce Higher Order Verbal Capabilities in Students with and without Developmental Delays", Symposium held at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at San Antonio, Texas, May 2010.*
- *"Baby Naming: The Effects of Multiple Exemplar Instruction with Three-Dimensional Stimuli on the Emergence of Naming in 2- and 3-year-old Children" Nirvana Pistoljevic & Ananya Goswami - Paper presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis, San Antonio, USA, May 2010.*
- *"A comparison of Multiple Exemplar Instruction with and without Demonstration Component on the Acquisition of Full Naming Repertoire" Nirvana Pistoljevic & Claire Cahill- Paper presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at San Antonio, Texas, May 2010.*
- *Invited discussant for a symposium on: Research on Writer Immersion: Developing Functional, Structural, and Aesthetic Writing in Elementary Age Students"- Symposium held at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis,, Texas 2010.*
- *"Conditioning Adults Voices as Reinforcers for Observing Responses for Three Preschool Students Diagnosed With Autism" R. D. Greer, Nirvana Pistoljevic, Claire Cahill, and Lin Du – Paper presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at San Antonio, Texas, May 2010.*
- *"From Learning to Observe to Learning through Observation"- Paper Presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Oslo, Norway, August 2009.*
- *"The Effects of a Peer-yoked Contingency Game on the Acquisition of Observational Learning, Naming, and Verbal Operants in Preschool Students" Nirvana Pistoljevic & Mara Oblak; Paper Presented at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis, Phoenix, 2009.*
- *"The Effects of the Speaker Immersion Procedure on the Numbers of Vocal Verbal Operants Emitted in Non-Instructional Settings" Nirvana Pistoljevic, Claire Cahill, & Fabiola Casarini; Paper Presented at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis, Phoenix, 2009.*
- *"The Effects of Multiple Exemplar and Intensive Tact Procedures on acquisition of Naming in Preschoolers Diagnosed with Autism and Other Language Delays" R. Douglas Greer & N. Pistoljevic. Paper presented at the European Association for Behavior Analysis Conference, Madrid 2008.*
- *"Acquisition of Naming for 2 and 3-Dimensional Contrived Stimuli in Preschoolers: A Comparison of Multiple and Single Exemplar Instruction" Nirvana Pistoljevic & R. Douglas Greer. Paper presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual International Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, 2008.*
- *"The Effects of Intensive Tact Instruction on the Emergence of Naming Repertoire and Frequency of Emission of Independent Vocal Verbal Operants" Nirvana Pistoljevic & R. Douglas Greer. Paper presented at the Verbal Behavior Symposium, at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual International Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Chicago, 2008.*
- *"Emergence of Naming in Preschoolers: A Comparison of Multiple and Single Exemplar Instruction" R. Douglas Greer, Lauren Stolfi, and Nirvana Pistoljevic- Paper presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at San Diego, 2007.*
- *"The Effects of Listener Emersion Prerequisite Programs and Listener Emersion Procedure on Learn Units to Criteria" R. Douglas Greer, Lauren Stolfi, and Nirvana Pistoljevic- Paper presented at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis at Atlanta, 2006.*
- *"The Effects of Daily Intensive Tact Instruction on Preschool Students' Emission of Pure Tacts and Mandes in Non-Instructional Setting" Nirvana Pistoljevic & R. Douglas Greer. Paper presented at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the Applied Behavior Analysis, Atlanta, 2006.*

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION and CERTIFICATION**

- Regular Education Teacher, birth-6<sup>th</sup> grade, New York State
- Special Education Teacher, birth-6<sup>th</sup> grade, New York State
- Senior Behavior Analyst - CABAS®
- Assistant Research Scientist - CABAS®
- President Bosnian-Herzegovinian-American Academy of Arts and Sciences
- International Association of Applied Behavior Analysis
- European Association for Behavior Analysis
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Serious Games Society
- International Developmental Pediatrics Association
- Society for Research in Child Development
- Member of UNICEF Technical Advisory Group on Young Child Wellbeing
- Chair *Days of BHAAAS in BIH, Largest Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference in Balkans*
- Co-Chair *Sarajevo Green Design Conference and International Green Design Conference*
- Director – “*Riders of Hope*” Non-for-Profit organization helping children in B&H.

## **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Senior Advisor- “*At the shadow of war*” (2015). Awarded documentary film on the tremendous effects of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina on children even 20 yrs after its ending.
- Conceptualized and published children’s interactive book “*The Wolf in Love*” (2015).

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY OF DR. PISTOLJEVIC'S WORK

In 2010, after several years of collaboration with educators and parents in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), I decided to take a year off in the USA, write a project proposal, move to B&H, teach a semester at the University of Sarajevo, School of Pedagogy, and train 10 educators on how to work with children with severe disabilities. Up until then, children with sever ASD in B&H were rejected from special education and mostly left in institutions or at home. I spent that year teaching students and teaching teachers, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, pedagogysts, parents and children. I spent a year in a public institute "Mjedenica" in the classrooms with 20 children and 10 educators and assistants. I have done so for the last 7 years, teaching more and more children, educators and parents. Now, over **1000 children and 400** educators have gone through EDUS's, evidence-based educational programs that I developed and implemented in partnership with the public school and health systems.



*Sarajevo, B&H 2010. Working directly with a teacher and a child*

Part of the EDUS program is continual staff education. The **staff of 60** educators that work daily with children ages 18 months through 16 years old are held to rigorous educational standards. We hold staff development weekly and try to catch up with the world's trends in the science of teaching.



*EDUS Staff Education, Sarajevo 2016*

I consider myself an applied scientist, most of my work with teachers is done through direct demonstrations and observations with feedback. Working directly with educators and children is part of my every day work; it is what makes us better at our job- teaching.



Working with children in EDUS Early Intervention Program, 2015



## RAISING AWARENESS AND PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS



### #WhereIsMySchool? Parents Fight for Proper Education for Children with Disabilities in Bosnia

(<https://globalvoices.org/2017/09/27/wherismyschool-parents-fight-for-proper-education-for-children-with-disabilities-in-bosnia/>)

proper-education-for-children-with-disabilities-in-bosnia/

Posted 27 September 2017 19:57 GMT



"Where is my school?" billboard in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Photo courtesy of #WhereIsMySchool campaign, used with permission.

In Sarajevo, a group of parents is campaigning (<http://odjejejojaskola.ba/>) for adequate preschool education for children with cognitive disabilities. If their #GdjeJeMojaSkola? ([https://www.facebook.com/GdjeJeMojaSkola/?fref=etab&hc\\_location=ur&fbclid=IwAR1...](https://www.facebook.com/GdjeJeMojaSkola/?fref=etab&hc_location=ur&fbclid=IwAR1...)) effort succeeds, it will be the first of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The ethnic divisions (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45251486>) in Bosnia and Herzegovina's highly decentralized educational system have long been in the public eye. Meanwhile, little attention has been paid by either decision makers or the general public to a different kind of discrimination, equally pervasive across ethnic and administrative lines: that of children with disabilities, specifically those with developmental disorders.

By 2015, EDUS has mobilized many communities throughout the country, and parents started actively fighting for their children's rights to an education. A major campaign "Where is My School" was launched by the parents whose children attended EDUS classrooms and due to governmental funding, were closed. Parents became strong advocates for their children's rights, and we still fight the government and relevant ministries to provide education for ALL children in B&H.





EDUS organizes a 5K run each year and through such public activity engages communities in accepting and including all children.

Each year for April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Autism Awareness Day, EDUs lights up the most important public monuments in the country in order to raise awareness that these children exist and deserve an education like all their peers. As of this year, parents associations throughout the country have spear headed this event and taken over.



### WORK IN STATE OF PALESTINE

EDUS has partnered with UNICEF-Palestine and until 2020 will continue working on the multidisciplinary staff training, building competencies across various public sectors, making Palestinian materials and publications, creating a system to support early childhood development and education.

As the programs we have developed and implemented in B&H were presented at conferences with proven results, other countries became interested in the trainings and materials for



their systems of health, education and social care. For three years now, I have been working with UNICEF and governments of the State of Palestine on developing policy, trainings and materials to advance early childhood development in their country.



*Village of Al-Jiftlik, West Bank, Palestine, 2017, Working with a child, parent and an educator at a village health center.*

I am working with educators and parents directly. Demonstrating how to provide stimulation for young children.

Also, many of the materials I have written have been translated and published in Arabic. **Parent Education Curriculum** one example and the Early Childhood Development Guides: What Every Educator and Parent Should Know. Some sections these materias are published and posted in health clinics, preschools and daycares in Palestine.



*Gaza, State of Palestine, 2018*

I have presented preliminary data on the developmental risk factors on the Palestinian children's development and on the effectiveness of training conducted thus far in the State of Palestine to the various ministries, policy makers and key stakeholders in the Middle East Region.

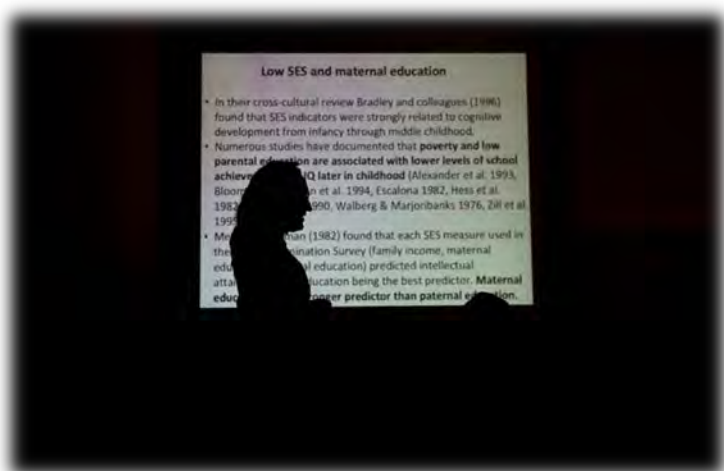


*UNICEF and WORLD BANK CONFERENCE Ramallah, West Bank, 2017*

I have worked with UNICEF and several universities in Gaza on advancing their curricula for programs and majors that are focusing on early childhood development. I have provided trainings for various faculty members on the new advances in the science of early childhood development and education. Also, I have worked and provided trainings for several NGO's and public systems on inclusion of children in programs and parent education.



Gaza, State of Palestine, 2018



Al-Quds University, Abu Dis, Jerusalem 2018

Two-day training for the multidisciplinary faculty of Al-Quds University at Jerusalem with the goal to start a reform of the curricula for all majors tied to early childhood development. Also, working on developing partners for research on the quality of programs for children in Palestine in order to aid policy makers to achieve reform by 2020.



As President of the most academically influential association of B&H diaspora, I organize the largest scientific interdisciplinary conference in Balkans.

Building bridges of knowledge and sharing it with colleagues from all over the world is our mission and the organization has over 230 members that meet yearly in B&H.

The DAYS of BHAAAS is a largest scientific gathering on Balkans and with over 375 presentations and cultural events, bringing the academics, artists, scientists and professionals together. Each year I organize a transdisciplinary symposia in education and early childhood development. Professors and scientist from all over the world volunteer their time and pay their own trip to come and share their experiences.



Countries impacted by the work of Dr. Pistoljevic





## SELECTED SAMPLES OF PUBLISHED WORKS



SciVerse ScienceDirect

Procedia Computer Science 15 (2012) 4 – 16

Procedia  
Computer Science

Recent Advances in Information Science

Virtual Worlds for Serious Applications (VS-GAMES' 12)

### “LeFCA”: Learning framework for children with autism

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#### Abstract

Teaching children with autism requires special set of tools and methods, due to decreased level of attention towards stimuli presented and lessened capability to learn in the ways typical children do, which is manifested within this population. It has been previously shown that computer-assisted intervention is not only an effective method for developing various skills, allowing both learning with teachers and practicing on their own time without the teacher's direct attention, but it nonetheless increases the motivation and results in faster acquisition of these skills.

In this paper we present the first step in developing the LeFCA framework, that will be used for teaching children with autism basic skills and concepts. Within the pilot project, we produced four games for developing matching, pointing out (based on visual and auditory stimuli) and labeling skills, which are considered to be primary skills needed for learning. The results of our preliminary study showed that the created software in native language is completely clear and user friendly for kids with Autism and other special needs, and that is systematically and developmentally appropriately sequenced for learning. Additionally, we found that children were able to generalize learned skills, through a transfer to a new medium or environment without any needed training (i.e. computer). All four participants mastered all programs without any instructional tactic needed.

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*Keywords:* learning; autism; learn units; shapes; interaction

### Teaching children with and without disabilities school readiness skills

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*Abstract:* We know that computer assisted educational curricula are much more attention captivating and interesting to children compared with a classic paper and pencil approach to teaching. Educational computer games can easily engage students, captivate and maintain their attention allowing them both learning with teachers and practicing on their own time without the teacher's direct attention. Overall, computer based instruction increases the motivation and results in faster acquisition of skills. Also, teaching children with developmental disabilities requires special set of tools and methods, due to decreased level of attention towards stimuli presented and lessened capability to learn in the ways typical children do. Therefore, computer based instruction seems to be a good match for these diverse learners because it offers multiple exemplars, interesting and interactive practice with constant feedback, multiplied learning opportunities without direct teacher engagement, and customization to each child's needs. In this paper we present the expanded LeFCA framework that was proven successful for teaching children with autism basic skills and concepts, and we now tested it across various levels of learners with and without disabilities across 3 different languages: Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BHS), Italian and English (US). Within the pilot project, we produced four games for teaching matching, pointing out (based on visual and auditory stimuli) and labeling skills, which are considered to be primary skills needed for learning. We then expanded the frame with adding four more games that teach sorting, categorizing, sequencing and pattern making. The results of our user study, done with 20 participants in three different languages, showed that the created software in native language was completely clear and user friendly for kids with and without special needs, and that is systematically and developmentally appropriately sequenced for learning. Additionally, we found that children were able to generalize learned skills, through a transfer to a new mediums or environments and their teacher reported that children were very motivated and enjoyed playing the games.

*Key-Words:* Educational software, autism, learn unit, learning shapes, interaction, multilingual

SLP- ABA

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## Effects of a Speaker Immersion Procedure on the Production of Verbal Operants

*Nirvana Pistoljevic, Claire Cahill, and Fabiola Casarini*

### Abstract

We studied the effects of a Speaker Immersion Procedure on the numbers of vocal verbal operants emitted in non-instructional settings (NIS) by two preschoolers with language delays. Prior to the intervention, the participants emitted low rates of vocal verbal behavior in NIS. The dependent variables were the numbers of vocal verbal operants emitted in three different NIS and the numbers of mands emitted in the presence of contrived establishing operations. The independent variable was the Speaker Immersion Procedure, an instructional tactic using contrived and naturally occurring establishing operations to increase opportunities to teach speaker behavior. Results showed an increase in numbers of vocal verbal operants emitted by participants following the implementation of the Speaker Immersion Procedure (SIP).

**Keywords:** Speaker Immersion Procedure, Verbal Behavior, Establishing Operations, Motivating Operations, Vocal Verbal Operants, Mands, Tacts, Echoic, Spontaneous Speech, Language

## The Effects of Daily Intensive Tact Instruction on Preschool Students' Emission of Pure Tacts and Mands in Non-Instructional Setting

Nirvana Pistoljevic and R. Douglas Greer  
Teachers College, Columbia University

### Abstract

We tested the effects of an intensive tact instruction procedure on numbers of tacts emitted in non-instructional settings (NIS) using a multiple probe design across 3 participants (3 and 4-year old boys with autism). The dependent variable was tacts emitted in NIS before/after the mastery of sets of 5 different stimuli. The non-instructional settings included the toy area of the classroom, lunchtime, and the school hallway during transition. All probe sessions were conducted daily for a cumulative 15 minutes, 5 minutes in each NIS. Intensive instruction involved increasing the tact instructions to 100-tact learn units above the daily learn units students were receiving daily. The intervention increased vocal verbal operants (tacts and mands) emitted by the target students in NIS.

### An Interactive E-book with an Educational Game for Children with Developmental Disorders: A Pilot User Study

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**Abstract**—Children diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as one of the most complex neurodevelopmental disabilities, are characterized by different brain and functioning development, distinct interaction with the environment and different learning patterns, language and social skills, repetitive, and restrictive auto-stimulating restricting behaviors. It has been shown that computer-assisted intervention is much more attention capturing and interesting to children compared with a classic approach to teaching, allowing for faster acquisition of skills. This makes these tools and the technology highly suitable for teaching children with autism basic developmental skills. In addition, interactive electronic books showed positive outcomes for comprehension and information acquisition in children with ASD, while decreasing inappropriate children behavior in the classroom. In this paper a pilot user study on an e-book with an embedded educational game for children with developmental disorders was presented. The results show that the e-book can be efficiently used for teaching children with ASD basic developmental skills and that the learned skills can be efficiently transferred to new media and environments. The framework will provide preschool children with and without disabilities with appropriate educational software, to build up their early cognitive abilities and school readiness skills, and promote incorporating technology as part of the educational and pedagogical process in schools.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Children diagnosed with developmental disabilities account for a large spectrum of neurodevelopmental disorders like autism, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, etc. The main characteristic of this neuro-atypical development is that these children and later adults, interact with the environment in different ways, their brains develop and function differently, so they learn in a different way. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the most complex neurodevelopmental disorders, which characteristics like impaired language and social skills development, and repetitive auto-stimulating restricting behaviors, interfere with ones overall functioning [1]. The spectrum means that overall functioning of the individuals with ASD can be anywhere between high functioning or mild severity, when only some language delay or lack of social skills is apparent, to severe disability with no vocal verbal communication skills or eye contact and interest in social

interaction. This, in turn, greatly affects the way individuals on the spectrum learn and the way learning environment and curricula need to be designed and arranged.

Computer science contribution to this population has been great already, but there is still a vast land of research opportunities barely tapped into. Applications of technologies like eye-tracking [2], [3] and skin conductivity sensors [4], [5] have just begun to shed the light on the way people with autism, for example, visually scan their environment and learn, and what levels of anxiety they feel during those interactions.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that children with ASD acquire skills faster when instruction is delivered via computer vs. the traditional teaching strategies, and are more interested and motivated to learn through computer-assisted instruction [6], [7]. In recent years, significant amount of work in serious games community has contributed in this domain [8].

In this work a pilot user study on teaching effectiveness of the previously developed interactive electronic book for children with and without autism [35] is presented. The study was based only on the game portion of the interactive e-book. We wanted to test whether children with disabilities like ASD will acquire basic learning concepts (i.e. pointing to colors and numbers or basic vocabulary from the story) by going through the e-book and playing the game and will they be able to transfer that knowledge, i.e. is it generalizable.

There are several contributions of this work. The results of the pilot study indicate that this highly motivating and engaging game-based environment can be used for teaching children with ASD basic developmental skills. Furthermore, it has been shown that the learned skills can be efficiently transferred to new media and environments. Finally, this work promotes incorporating technology as part of the educational and pedagogical process in all schools.

#### II. RELATED WORK

It has been shown that computer-assisted interventions can provides children with developmental disorders an opportunity to work on building of basic developmental skills. In addition,

Nirvana Pistoljevic

Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Teachers College

Several reports have demonstrated the emergence of the Naming capability as a function of multiple exemplar instructions (MEI). We compared singular exemplar instruction (SEI) and (MEI) on emergence of untaught listener and speaker responses (Naming) by preschool children who were missing Naming using combined experimental-control group and nested single-case multiple probe designs. We taught training sets of pictures using MEI to 4-participants and the same sets using SEI to another 4-participants with numbers of instructional presentations for SEI participants matched to the MEI participants. Naming emerged for the MEI group but did not for the SEI group. Subsequently, the SEI participants received MEI and Naming emerged. Instructional histories that involve the rotation of speaker listener responding appear to predict the emergence of Naming. We discuss the findings in terms of the relation of the MEI as the source of Naming as a higher order operant and whether or not Naming is a relational frame.

**Key words:** Naming, multiple exemplar experiences, emergent productive language, verbal behavior, verbal development, observational learning

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## Effects of a modified speaker immersion procedure on the increase of spontaneous speech in children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder

Nirvana Pistoljevic & Eldin Dzanko

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### ABSTRACT

We studied the effects of a modified speaker immersion procedure (SIP) on the spontaneous speech emitted across three non-instructional settings (NIS) by three kindergarteners diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Participants were 5-year-old who emitted very low levels of vocal verbal operants. Two dependent variables in this study were the numbers of vocal verbal operants emitted across three NIS and the number of target mands emitted as responses to the contrived establishing operations (EOs). SIP is an instructional tactic during which we used multiple contrived EOs and echoic-to-mand training in order to increase mand repertoires for the three participants. Results showed an increase in spontaneous speech emitted by all three participants during the NIS probes, and the increase in target mands in the presence of contrived EOs. The SIP used in the study was fast, easily implemented, and effective in expanding participant's vocal verbal repertoires.

KEYWORDS: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), speaker immersion procedure (SIP), spontaneous speech, motivating operations, establishing operations (EOs), verbal operants, mand

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## Reference Module in Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Psychology 2017



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Refers to

Jessica Singer-Dudek

[Exceptional Students](#)

Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology, 2004, Pages 845-852

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### Abstract

According to the United States Department of Education (2015), exceptional students comprise nearly 20% of all American school-aged children. This figure includes students with diagnosed disabilities, as well as those who have been identified as gifted. The education of students with disabilities in the United States is governed for the most part by Public Law 94-142, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA sets minimum standards for exceptional students and

# Emergence of Naming in Preschoolers: A Comparison of Multiple and Single Exemplar Instruction

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Several reports have demonstrated the emergence of the Naming capability as a function of multiple exemplar instructions (MEI). We compared singular exemplar instruction (SEI) and (MEI) on emergence of untaught listener and speaker responses (Naming) by preschool children who were missing Naming using combined experimental-control group and nested single-case multiple probe designs. We taught training sets of pictures using MEI to 4-participants and the same sets using SEI to another 4-participants with numbers of instructional presentations for SEI participants matched to the MEI participants. Naming emerged for the MEI group but did not for the SEI group. Subsequently, the SEI participants received MEI and Naming emerged. Instructional histories that involve the rotation of speaker listener responding appear to predict the emergence of Naming. We discuss the findings in terms of the relation of the MEI as the source of Naming as a higher order operant and whether or not Naming is a relational frame.

**Key words:** Naming, multiple exemplar experiences, emergent productive language, verbal behavior, verbal development, observational learning

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Original scientific article

## CURRENT STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOLOGY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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### Abstract

The goal of this research was to determine the current state of child and adolescent psychiatry and psychology in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and based on the findings, point out some possible future prospects in these fields. For this purpose, a questionnaire regarding the existing state of services provided in the child and adolescent psychiatry and psychology in the country was designed and disseminated across the country. The representatives of 18 different governmental institutions (Psychiatric Clinics, Mental Health Centers, Health Clinics and Centers for Early Childhood Development) across Bosnia and Herzegovina completed the questionnaire. The data were collected from a total of 143 professionals and focused on minors, children ranging in age from birth through 18 years old. Professionals reported that 47.47% of their applied work with patients was with typically developing children, compared to working with children with special needs, where the average percentage across the institutions was 52.53%. A total of 143 experts who worked with the preschool children and minors reported that 35 of them (24.47%) worked directly with the children over 50% of their work-time, and 34 of them (23.77%) worked exclusively with children and minors. Based on the data collected and a descriptive analysis conducted, some recommendations were made for the future.

**Key words:** child psychology, child psychiatry, Bosnia and Herzegovina, adolescent psychiatry.

### Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 15% of world population live with some form of disability, while the data from the World Bank (WB) indicate

## A Curriculum for Developing Serious Games for Children with Autism: A Success Story

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**Abstract**—Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder, detectable early in development and characterized by the lack of socialization, development of language and patterns of rigid, repetitive, auto-stimulating behaviors that interfere with overall functioning of a person. Due to reduced level of attention and different style of learning, teaching children with ASD requires a particular set of tools and methods. Studies have shown that computer-based intervention, typically in form of serious games, can be effectively utilized for developing various skills, allowing children with disabilities both learning with teachers and practicing on their own time, when the taught concepts are presented in a fun, informal, and engaging way. Nonetheless, there is a limited amount of appropriately designed serious games for children with ASD, especially in less spread languages native to the children. In this paper we present a complete curriculum for final year Computer Science (CS) undergraduate students, aimed at developing web-based serious games for teaching children with and without autism basic concepts. In addition, we present multiple outcomes of such course taught by the authors, computer scientist and a psychologist and a special educator. We believe that inclusion of such curriculum in CS undergraduate programs could benefit both the students, children with ASD, teachers of both groups and the community in general.

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND WORK

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a group of complex neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by the difficulties in social interaction and communication and distinctive patterns of repetitive, auto-stimulating and rigid behaviors that interfere with everyday functioning of an individual [1]. Children with ASD process stimulation differently and thus learn in a different way, so the design of education curricula for such learners has been a challenge. In addition, we know that children with ASD spend significantly more time using screen-based media than any other free-time activity [2], [3]. Maravek and Wenstrup [3] analyzed TV, video game, and social media use in children with ASD compared to their typically developing siblings and found that children with ASD spent approximately 62% more time watching TV and playing video games than all other free-time activities like reading or playing with friends. This is consistent with the diagnosis of ASD, being that the social and communication skills are impaired. Given such strong evidence for preference and enjoyment in playing video games among children with

ASD [4], clinicians and educators should maximize this and use screen-based media to motivate young learners with ASD.

#### A. Teaching machines and the learn unit

In order to introduce computer scientists with proper learning theories, we based our game design on the work by Skinner, who argued for the benefits of *teaching machines* decades ago, identifying them as capital equipment used by educators to save time and labor, permitting a learner to play an active role in the learning process [5]. He stated numerous benefits of teaching machines, like student led and paced instruction, machine being a teacher with infinite patience providing individualization of learning, its adaptability for students with special needs, continuous and immediate feedback they provide to each learner, and therefore being a highly motivating educator.

As for the principles of the learning theory, we put emphasis on the fundamental measure of teaching and learning, a learn unit [6], which consists of an exchange of antecedents-behaviors-consequences between a teacher (device) and a student, and it has been utilized in designing computer based instruction [5], [7], [8]. One part of the curriculum for students was learning about the learn unit and rules of the appropriate design that induces learning. All games designed were based on the learn unit, an interlocking three-term-contingency where a device presents a visual and auditory antecedent and delivers feedback to the students behavior emitted to the task presented, as a part of the learn unit, consequence brings about learning [5], [6]. In our curriculum, emphasis was placed on the corrective feedback following each incorrect response and providing positive reinforcement following each correct response, in addition to the score keeping.

#### B. Educational and health serious games

The concept of game-based learning and using serious games in education has been present for decades [9], [10]. Serious games, with a main goal of learning and therefore improving real life outcomes, focus on skills acquisition and generalization beyond the game itself. A systematic and extensive review of serious games, with an emphasis on the positive aspects of gaming on learning and skill enhancement, has been presented by Connolly et al. [11]. In their work they showed

## SAMPLES OF MATERIALS AND ASSESSMENTS

Since B&H did not have any validated screening and assessment tools for monitoring early childhood development and identifying children at Risk or with developmental delays, I have set out to develop the B&H development norms and a screening tool for children ages 1 month- 6 years old. We are completing the validation study currently, and have trained over 400 educators, nurses, pedagogues, psychologists and pediatricians to use it. It is shared **for free** and is being used in the health clinic, preschools and daycares throughout the country. We have developed the tool with the support from Ministries of Health, Education and Social Care of B&H.

Currently we are conducting a validation study for the scales in Palestine. The goal was to create a simple, evidence-based, observational tool that will be available for free, with a short

### RAZVOJNE BIHEVIORALNE SKALE

ZA PROCJENU RAZVOJA DJETETA

Dr. Nirvana Pistojevic  
Dr. Smail Zubčević  
Mr. Eldin Džanko

### مقاييس تقييم التطور السلوكي لتقييم تطور الطفل (من عمر شهر حتى ستة سنوات)

العمر من 12-18 شهرا

#### الكلام/التواصل

5, يستطيع تسمية شيئا واحدا مألوفاً على الأقل.

#### 1-3 أشهر

#### مقاييس تقييم التطور السلوكي للطفل

تقييم الرضع من عمر شهر واحد حتى أربعة أشهر من العمر

اسم الطفل واسم العائلة:	الجنس:
العمر:	الشهر:
تاريخ الميلاد:	البلد:
تاريخ التقييم:	العنوان:
(اسم الوالد أو ولي الأمر واسم العائلة مظلوماً)	
الرقم:	
البلد:	
المنطقة:	
البلد:	
التاريخ:	

الهدف من الاستخدام المقبول: تصنيفية، كمية مطلقة لتقدير مستوى نمو الرضيع حتى سن 3 سنوات. ملاحظة: يجب ان يكون احد الوالدين أو ولي الأمر جزءاً من عملية التقييم. جزيواً كل مهارة عدة مرات مع الرضيع ووالديه أو ولي أمره وتقييم المهارات التي تعمل علامة - أسوأ أو الثاني أو ولي الأمر.

ملاحظات	7 مثلاً نقطة 0	اجابات مهارة ثلاثة نقطة 1	تعدد دائماً نقطة 2	تطور الكلام والاتصال والتطور الاجتماعي العاطفي
				1. يبدأ بالانتماء للأشخاص المقربين (عندما يمشون أو يركضون أو يركضون).
				2. يتابع ويستمع (يستمر بصوت).
				3. يصدر أصوات معنى (صوت ياء).
				4. يتواصل بالأعين (يبتلع في وجه الشخص الذي يتحدث).
				المجموع: 2 الكلي
				تطور الكلام، الاتصال والتطور الاجتماعي العاطفي
				8 /
				تاريخ إعداد الاختبار:
				إعداد الاختبار: تعزلاً
				7

ملاحظات	7 مثلاً نقطة 0	اجابات مهارة ثلاثة نقطة 1	تعدد دائماً نقطة 2	تطور المهارات الحركية
				1. يركب الرضيع رجليه ويديه وهو مستقل على ظهره، ويدها وبشكلها من ثامه نصفه (اليمين واليسار) بالتساوي.
				2. يركب راسه جالساً وهو مستقل على ظهره، يركب يديه.
				3. يرفع الراس لتكافئ وهو مستقل على ظهره أو يركب يديه.
				4. يركب راسه جالساً وهو مستقل على ظهره، يركب يديه.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT BEHAVIOURAL

### ASSESSMENT SCALE

FOR ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN FROM 35 TO 49 MONTHS OF AGE

3 - 4 YEARS



"EDUŠ" "EDUKACIJA ZA SVE"  
Udruga za razvoj dječje obrazovnosti i  
podršku djetetu sa i bez poteškoća u razvoju

"EDUŠ" "EDUKACIJA ZA SVE"  
Udruga za razvoj dječje obrazovnosti i  
podršku djetetu sa i bez poteškoća u razvoju

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Udruga za razvoj dječje obrazovnosti i  
podršku djetetu sa i bez poteškoća u razvoju

"EDUŠ" "EDUKACIJA ZA SVE"  
Udruga za razvoj dječje obrazovnosti i  
podršku djetetu sa i bez poteškoća u razvoju

NAME AND SURNAME OF THE CHILD:			SEX: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
RESIDENCE:	DATE OF BIRTH:	AGE MONTHS	DAYS:
DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	EVALUATOR:		
I, _____ (PRINTED NAME AND SURNAME OF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN) hereby give my permission for assessment of my child's development.			
SIGNATURE:		PLACE/DATE:	



Materials required for the administration of the scale:

A ball for kicking and throwing, markers, sketch/notes pad without lines, a set of cards with pictures of actions, a set of blocks that fit into each other, a sturdy book with pictures of animals, a child safe pencil, a set of cards with pictures of colours, a set of wooden blocks, a mirror.



NOTE:

You can demonstrate and show each skill to the child and allow the child to try it a couple of times. Note down all the child's answers and attach the child's works to the scale. For assessment of skills marked with **U** ask parents/guardians.

SPEECH/COMMUNICATION	YES always	SOMETIMES emerging skill	NO never	NOTES
	2 POINTS	1 POINT	0 POINTS	
1. Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand.				
2. Speaks using FULL, grammatically correct sentences (4-6 words). <b>NOTE DOWN THE EXAMPLE.</b>				
3. Can name most everyday objects. Ask a child to name at least 10 objects around you or on pictures. <b>NOTE DOWN THE ANSWERS.</b>				
4. Understands questions: "What?"; "Where?"; "Who?"				
5. Understands prepositions ON and UNDER when you make a request: "Put the car ON the table" or "Put the ball under the chair". 2 examples for each request.				
6. Understands "same" and "different" (e.g. draw or show 2 shapes/objects and ask if they are SAME or DIFFERENT. 2 examples for each).				

For preschool and elementary school teachers, I have developed an intense training on basic methodologies and evidence-based tactics for successfully including every child in their classrooms. We have also published a booklet "Guide for applying basic evidence-based tactics with children"

This guide was translated in Arabic also, and the training was held for over 200 nursery and kindergarten teachers in Palestine thus far.



### Early Childhood Development: What You should Know

This booklet I have written for parents and health and education workers in order to follow their children's developmental milestones with some practical advice. A poster was made and it was translated into three languages. The Serbian Pediatric Association has adopted, translated to Cyrillic and published it in Serbia two times already. It has also been translated into Arabic and made into a poster.

# РАЗВОЈ ДЈЕТЕТА ОД РОЂЕЊА ДО 6. ГОДИНЕ 0-6

РАЗВОЈНИ ПОКАЗАТЕЛИ И ПОДСТИЦАЈЕ РАЗВОЈА КОЈИ КУЉЕ

## ما هي أهمية التدخل المبكر؟

إن أهم العوامل المتعلقة بالتنبؤ الأفضل بخصوص حالة الأطفال الذين يعانون من التوحد واضطرابات التطور تكمن في الكشف المبكر والتدخل المبكر والمناسب. وقد ثبت أن العلاجات التعليمية المكثفة في فترة النمو المبكر (1-4 سنوات) قدمت آثاراً إيجابية طويلة الأمد على التطور العام للطفل لاحقاً.

أن التدخل في مراحل التطور المبكرة هو أفضل فرصة للحد من العواقب البعيدة المدى والقصور مدى التي تسببها اضطرابات التطور والإاقات على حياة الطفل وأسرته.

وكلمنا بكثرنا في الكشف عن اضطرابات التطور، نتأكد من بدء التدخل في وقت أبكر حتى لو كنا ما زلنا لم نصل إلى تشخيص نهائي فائدة الطفل والتشالي سنحصل على نتائج أفضل في الحد من تأخر التطور عند الأطفال المعرضين للخطر بالمقارنة مع أقرانهم الاعتياديين وتحسين اندماجهم في المجتمع.

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منظمة اليونسيف  
From the People of Japan

## تنمية الطفولة المبكرة

آليات تحفيز التطور لدى الأطفال أصغر من ثلاثة أعوام. ما الذي نحتاج لعرقته؟

# DISKRIMINACIJA JEDAN POJAM, MNOGO LICA

dr Nirvana Pištoljević i Sanela Lindsay  
EDUS

## “EDUS – EDUKACIJA ZA SVE” I DISKRIMINACIJA DJECE S POREMEĆAJIMA IZ AUTISTIČNOG SPEKTRA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

Gotovo svaka druga osoba u BiH trpi socijalnu isključenost (Human Development Report on Social Exclusion in BiH, UNDP 2007). Među njima, u naročito teškoj položaju visoke ili potpune ovisnosti o drugima, nalaze se djeca i odrasli sa poremećajima u razvoju. Iako evropska zemlja po mnogim kriterijima, Bosna i Hercegovina znatno zaostaje za naprednim zemljama kad je u pitanju ravnopravan tretman djece s posebnim potrebama i njihovih porodica u oblasti obrazovanja, zdravstvene i socijalne zaštite. Zbog prirode poremećaja iz autističnog spektra koji otežavaju ili potpuno onemogućavaju funkcionalnu komunikaciju s vanjskim svijetom, te slabu obaviještenosti ne samo generalne populacije već i stručnih lica, život porodica s djecom s ovakvim poremećajima doista je otežan. Od korištenja javnog prevoza, odlaska u prodavnicu, preko šetnje i posjete igralištu, do odlaska ljekaru i stomatologu, sve je za ove porodice stalno iskušenje. Osim problema prouzrokovanih autizmom kod djeteta (hiperaktivnost, neslušanje vokalnih uputa, neobični strahovi i opsesije, nemogućnost komuniciranja o potrebama, itd.), porodice su stalno izložene i prijekorima, osudi, nekad i otvorenim verbalnim i fizičkim prijetnjama iz okoline, što čini da se povlače i izoluju od društva.

I have also written an article about discrimination of children with ASD in Bosnia and Heregovina. I have seen over 1000 children with ASD from B&H, and have witnessed the tremendous discrimination and difficulties these children and their parents have on a daily basis.



## Kurikulum za edukaciju roditelja:

**namijenjeno za edukaciju roditelja djece uzrasta od rođenja do polaska u školu**



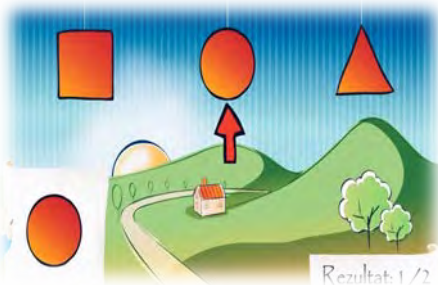
Federalno ministarstvo zdravstva

Federalno ministarstvo obrazovanja i nauke

Federalno ministarstvo rada i socijalne politike

### DEVELOPMENT OF SEVERAL EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL GAMES

Below are samples of several educational video games and an e-book, all created in several languages to support learning of the youngest learners and children with disabilities with built in difficulties levels to attract and be educational for older children as well. All games are tested, presented at international conferences, and published. Of course, they are all available for free.





# SAMPLES OF PRESS COVERAGE

Over the years, the struggles to create programs for children that are on the margins of the society in B&H, has brought a lot of media attention to our work. These are some of the samples from B&H, Italy, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Austria, Australia, etc.

## NJENIH 5 MINUTA

Razgovor sa: **Masha Durković**  
Foto: **Džemat Drekević**  
arhiva **EDUS-a**

Nirvana Pištoljević, izvršna direktorica EDUS-a

# Autizam nije

**DANI** Povodom 2. aprila, Svjetskog dana autizma, organizacija EDUS - "Edukacija za sve", pokrenula je kampanju sa sloganom "Tako te ne gledam, vidim te. Vidiš li i mene?" koji su ciljevi ove kampanje, sponornim osvrtnom na BiH i njene građane, ke i djecu koja žive u autističnom spektru i kako je ovaj dan obilježiti u BiH?

**PISTOLJEVIĆ** Povodan ciljeve kampanje je podizanje svijesti javnosti BiH, jer je ovdje, nažalost, autizam i dalje nesvijetle porijekla. (Bude li u autizmu i različite porijekla u našim zajednicama društva, kako ih je te godinu u godinu sve više - incidencija autizma

zna, ali prije svega, sagledavanje te oha iz autističnog spektra u njihovoj cjelosti, a ne samo kroz prizmu poremećaja, kako je sigurno za sve naše karakteristično i hipogigijene dječijeg pogleda, njihova i percepcija radnišnje udruženoj, i po običaj i po potrebnosti. Često se nazivaju "autistični", što je pogrešno i neprecizno. Jedna od glavnih barijera redukcija samostalnog i nezavisnog funkcioniranja, a sadašnje servise njima prilagoditi, počevši od zdravstva (diagnostički i psihološki tretmani), socijalne skrbi (podrška i organizacija društva), kao i u te godinu u godinu sve više - incidencija autizma

čna koordinatorka. Naše istovremne aktivnosti su usmjereni na napredni model obrazovanja i terapijskog tretmana za publiku djecu sa izvanrednim potencijalima, kroz direktan rad s djecom, odobravaju stručnog kadra i stručnjaka, te suradnju sa širim profesionalnim zajednicom u BiH i svijetu. U okviru ovog programa i gator su uključili uz pomoć međunarodnih organizacija, EDUS je dosad pružio ranu intervenciju i obrazovanje za preko 100 djece uzrasta od 18 mjeseci do 13 godina, od kojih je najviše broj s autizmom. Djeca ovako direktno dobivaju individualni, multi-disciplinarni tretman po naprednim naučnim standardima, a pritom se vrši i trening 25 stručnjaka i volontera, što je jedna od najvećih prednosti, jer kadra po poslodavcima sam danima Univerziteta Columbia u New Yorku, čija je pisalo preko 50 publikacija relevantnih profila (pedagogi, specijalni edukatori, psiholozi, nastavnici, učitelji, socijalni radnici, logopedi, fizikalni terapeuti).

Trenutno kroz projekte uspostavljamo odličan program rane intervencije, te osvajamo predškolski program i razlika između osnovne škole u okviru U.D. "Medicina: Zbog čega se čitanja koja se ne skraćuje, jer nemamo dovoljno sredstava da primamo sve koji su potrebni program, od dvije godine pražniti i servise: globalne nastave i tretmana za djecu koja po hadaju redovne i druge specijalne vrste škole. Poduzetom mrežu funkcionirajućih specijalnih edukatora, psihologa, nastavnika, učitelja i volontera nastati, servise se veliki interes za EDUS-ove aktivnosti, pa smo svoju podršku proširili i na druge gradove u BiH - prvo kroz ciklus edukacija i razvoja u skladu sa svjetskim

Profesorica i doktorica nauka iz primijenjenog bihevizmizma u obrazovanju Nirvana Pištoljević, svoje znanje i stručnost stečene u New Yorku, gdje je dugo živjela i radila, danas koristi u Sarajevu kako bi pomogla edukaciji djece u autističnom spektru. Osnovala je i koordinirala prve učionice za djecu iz autističnog spektra u Sarajevu i BiH u sklopu nevladine organizacije EDUS, gdje danas educira stručni kadar, roditelje i sprovodi naučna istraživanja iz oblasti rane s djecom s poremećajima u razvoju. Održala je veliki broj predavanja i osvajala suradnju s Kliničkim centrom u Sarajevu gdje s odeljima Dječije psihijatrije i Neuropedijatrije suraduje na razvijanju rane detekcije, dijagnoze i intervencije. Za Dane govori o potrebama djece u autističnom spektru, načinima njihove edukacije, teškoćama s kojima se suočavaju porodice te savjetuje šta je potrebno učiniti kako bi se odnos društva prema osobama iz autističnog spektra poboljšao

u 2012. bila je jedna od 88 djece, dok se u mnogobrojnim zemljama i zajednicama iz SAD-a (jednastotinom) za ostale zemlje, s obzirom na to da je autizam gotovo uopšte nezastupljen u našim zajednicama, gdje ima preko 50 djece školske dobi (2% ima smetnje koje ukazuju na postojanje poremećaja iz autističnog spektra, Ovakva statistika upravo ukazuje na svojevrstnu

oblasti kako stvari sada stoje. Medijima kampa organizirano uz podršku NATO-a, a za naše medijne organizatorima smo u saradnji sa Centrom za djecu i NVO Prosvjetu, gledajući crtanog filma i zabavu. Također, u saradnji sa Zavodom "Zaštititi" i šinjali Luci, osvajamo predškolski i učionice za pripremu potpore djece za inkluziju u redovne obrazovne ustanove. Doktorica nauka

## ŽENA KAO INSPIRACIJA

sam otišla zbog konflikta u našoj zemlji, ali i zbog obrazovanja. Tamo sam završila fakultet, tri magistarska i doktorska. Moj cilj i prije odlaska u USA, još dok sam bila dijete, je bio odlazak studiranja u USA. U BiH sam se vratila samo na godinu. Zamisao je bila da predajem kao gostujući profesor i da uspostavim novi model rada po najmodernijim standardima u New Yorku s djecom dijagnostičarom s poremećajima iz autističnog spektra. Nažalost, model rada još postoji kao nevladina organizacija, ja sam još tu i ne mogu da se vratim u USA jer više od 100 djece svakodnevno ima programe unapređenja ranog rasta i razvoja zbog organizacije koju sam osnovala.

*Danas ste jedan od poznatih stručnjaka za rani razvoj djece, ne samo u BiH, nego u svijetu, predajete na fakultetu u USA, specijalni ste edukator, psiholog, predsjednik BHAAS-a, izvršna direktorica EDUS-Edukacije za sve, i možemo još nabrojati... Kako gledate na svoje dosadašnje životne rezultate i kako ste, uopće, sve to postigli?*

Nemam baš vremena sjesti i to nabrojati ili sagledati gdje sam to i otud ja ovdje, jer u suštini, uvijek radim. Tako da sve što mogu reći je da sam sve postigla radom i samo radom. Dok sam studirala, radila sam puno radno vrijeme u modnoj industriji, a zatim dok sam bila na magistarskim i doktorskim studijima, radila sam puno radno vrijeme s djecom. Ja sam transdisciplinarni naučnik, bavim se naučnim istraživanjima iz oblasti primijenjenog obrazovanja, inkluzije, razvoja govora, upotrebe tehnologije u

obrazovanju, ranom detekcijom i intervencijom, itd. Poenta je nikada ne prestajati učiti, i ne prestati širiti dijapazon interesiranja, i to vas konstanto gura naprijed. Nikad nisam prestala učiti nove stvari i otkrivati nove izazove, svaki dan sam okružena djecom, i svaki dan me gura da otkrivam bolje metode u radu s



com i edukatorima, a navečer, zbog vremenske razlike, predajem u USA i radim na publikacijama... Također, kroz EDUS ili kroz individualni angažman, puno predajem po svijetu. Tako da sam u Sarajevu nekad samo par dana u mjesecu, a stižemo raditi na unapređenju sistema rane detekcije i intervencije i ranog učenja u zemljama u regionu, Italiji, ali i Palestini, naprimjer.

*Čini se da je za sve bilo presudan Vaš životni izbor tj. psihologija. Šta Vas je motiviralo da se izaberete psihologu kao svoj životni put?*

S 14 godina sam pročitala knjigu Sigmunda Frojda «Psihopatologija svakodnevnog života» i znala sam čime želim da se bavim. Tokom studija dolazila sam u BiH i na odmor čitala sve stručno što sam mogla i tako



shvatila da želim raditi s djecom, a naročito me zainteresirao autizam. Jasno je već tada bilo da želim da se bavim naučno-istraživačkim radom, za šta mi je bio potreban doktorat. Pitanje je bilo da li ću u USA upisati medicinu, pa lići na psihijatriju ili se baviti psihologijom, to se odlučuje tek s upisom postdiplomskih studija u USA. Ali sam onda zaključila da u suštini, i psihijatar i klinički psiholog



njima i edukatorima. Tako da, nema stajanja, nauka ne čeka, svaki dan se nešto novo otkrije, da bih pratila svjetske trendove i doprinosila istima, moram i ja učiti i raditi kontinuirano. Preko dana radim s dje-

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### All for the love of Harry

Coming to terms with an autistic child has been a massive challenge for an Australian family based in Sarajevo, writes **Jessica Hand**

### Rainmaker's identity a truly Aussie mystery

**SHANNON** **WILLIAMS**

# SKRB O OSOBAMA IZ SPEKTRUMA AUTIZMA - POTREBE I MOGUĆNOSTI Ono što bi svaki roditelj trebao znati

**Sve je više djece kojima se dijagnosticira neki od poremećaja iz autističnog spektra. Autizam se najčešće dijagnosticira kod dječaka, pa će na pet dječaka biti tek jedna djevojčica u poremećajima iz autističnog spektra**



**Porodice** koje imaju dijete s nekim od poremećaja iz autističnog spektra često se suočavaju s velikim izazovima. Najveći je nedostatak informacija. Roditelji često ne znaju što očekivati i kako najbolje podržati svoje dijete. U ovom tekstu pokušat ćemo odgovoriti na neka od najčešćih pitanja koja se javljaju roditeljima.

Autizam je poremećaj koji utiče na način na koji osoba percipira svijet oko sebe i komunicira s drugima. Nije to bolest, već različit način funkcioniranja mozga. Autizam se najčešće dijagnosticira kod dječaka, ali sve više se otkriva i kod djevojčica.

Autizam se najčešće otkriva u prva tri godine života djeteta. Roditelji mogu primijetiti neke znakove, kao što su ograničena komunikacija i neobičan interes za određene stvari. Važno je što prije potražiti stručnu pomoć kako bi se djetetu pružila najbolja podrška.



# KAKO JE NIRVANA PIŠTOLJEVIĆ POSTALA NAJVAŽNIJI SARADNIK UNICEFA Iz gimnazije u Pančevu za katedru Kolumbije



Školovanje u Americi je bilo teško, ali to nije bilo dovoljno da se odrekne svoje kulture i jezika. U Americi je nastavila svoju karijeru i postala jedna od najvažnijih saradnica UNICEFA. Ona je svojim radom pomogla mnogim djeci iz cijelog svijeta.

Nirvana Pistoljević je rođena u Beogradu, ali svoje školovanje završila je u Americi. Ona je jedna od najvažnijih saradnica UNICEFA, koja se bavi podrškom djeci iz cijelog svijeta. Ona je svojim radom pomogla mnogim djeci iz cijelog svijeta.

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**Karijera u modi**

Ona je nastavila svoju karijeru u modi i postala jedna od najvažnijih saradnica UNICEFA. Ona je svojim radom pomogla mnogim djeci iz cijelog svijeta.

**BAVI SE RAMM**  
RAZVOJEM  
DECOM OD 18 MESECI  
DO PET GODINA

# DR. NIRVANA PIŠTOLJEVIĆ Sarakja koja je imala uspješnu karijeru u New Yorku i vratila se u Sarajevo da pomogne djeci s razvojnim poremećajima

Dr. Nirvana Pistoljević je jedna od najvažnijih saradnica UNICEFA. Ona je svojim radom pomogla mnogim djeci iz cijelog svijeta. Ona je svojim radom pomogla mnogim djeci iz cijelog svijeta.



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## SELECTED ONLINE RESOURCES



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XzI-bp68n4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPL2FAsvNX4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FGlsyUmlIE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYYVegk77o>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nM\\_4ytUsOs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nM_4ytUsOs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Ca4XxdMDI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo2QCe3SSBc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGqwpBwFHvY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcQJWUooU4w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFJp-OZ2nM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEDAX5JnoUY>

Al Jazeera Objektiv: Na vrhovima prstiju

(Ne)poznato lice sa Arminom - Gošća Nirvana Pištoljević – TV1

prof.dr. Nirvana Pištoljević- Unapređenje ranog rasta I razvoja – UNICEF BiH

U tuđoj avliji - Nirvana Pištoljević

Nirvana Pištoljević o uključivanju roditelja i intersektorskoj saradnji – UNICEF SRBIJA

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prof.dr. Nirvana Pištoljević o značaju stimulacije u toku prvih 1000 dana