

# How to Support Engagement – Specialist Teacher Advice

When working with a child or young person using the Engagement Model the first thing you will need to establish is what they look like when they are 'engaged'. Does your child have a favourite activity – one that you know they enjoy, one that appears to engross them, one that they attempt to participate in? Watch your child whilst they take part in that activity and note down the things that show they are engaging.

For example:

- Are they following a moving object (either with their eyes or head) what does this look like, is it sustained?
- Do they move their fingers, hands or arms toward the item, if it is a tactile item do they keep their hands there or move them about?
- Do they vocalise and if so, how do you know this is a happy sound?

If it is easier record your child taking part in their favourite activity and use this as your reference point.

You will use your notes or video to help you as you are working with your child, in order to assess how engaged they are in their learning. What you are aiming for is for your child to demonstrate these responses during their learning.

As you work with your child you will need to systematically alter one thing at a time to create the best possible environment for your child's engagement.

An important note here is that time is not a factor, it may take several sessions to see a small difference in your child's responses.

## An Example

P loves watching disco lights circulate around the room, he demonstrates this through head and eye movement, tracking the light flow around the room. He also vocalises at distinct changes in the pattern e.g. when they change colour. You are using a mirror to help P notice their own features. P is not looking at the mirror or vocalising, against our Engagement scale he is showing no engagement. The first thing you need to do is think about how you will get P's attention focused on the mirror, you could try 'highlighting' P's face by darkening the room and using a soft lamp, his reflection in the mirror should then become more distinct. Note down P's responses, hopefully he will start to look at the mirror, this demonstrates 'exploration' initially this may be fleeting but over time may become more sustained – showing 'persistence'. It is important to note he may not be as engaged as your example, however what you can then do is continue to make small changes over time until he is demonstrating all of the behaviours you would expect. A reminder that this can take several days or even weeks, learning at this level is much slower than standard learning.

Taking this example further, the mirror can be removed from view and then reappear, this may cause surprise 'realisation', it also helps to promote 'anticipation' – 'does P notice the mirror has gone, is he looking for it to reappear – how do you know?' Does P then start to call out if the mirror is gone too long? This shows early 'initiation'.