

Promoting Child Engagement

Children's engagement with peers, materials, and activities in the classroom is very important to their learning. Children who are actively engaged are less likely to have challenging behavior. When children lose interest in an activity, if an activity continues for too long, or is developmentally inappropriate, children's engagement decreases and the tendency to exhibit challenging behaviors that disrupt the activity increases (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014).

Engagement is responding, talking, playing, and interacting with people and/or materials

Positive descriptive feedback about engagement might include adults saying things like, "Thanks for listening to your friend tell us about his trip", "You are working so hard on your painting!", "You had a good idea to tape the ends together. It works better now."

Strategies to Promote Child Engagement (EI 27.1 Focus). Ensure that

- activities are appropriate for children's age, abilities, interests, and experiences
- the classroom has child-sized furniture and conversation occurs at the child's eye-level
- large-group activities offer numerous opportunities to respond, interact with materials, and allow movement
- materials are offered that promote engagement and support children in making choices
- assistance is provided to the child who exhibited challenging behavior, so as they become *reengaged* with an activity or interaction



Teachers can make small modifications and adjustments, such as:

- Having children sit next to the teacher
- Providing visual supports in the classroom
- Providing novel or high-interest items to hook in and capture children's attention
- Allowing children who have difficulty with engagement to respond first

References:

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

Hemmeter, M., Fox, L., & Snyder, P. (2014). *Teaching pyramid observation tool for preschool classrooms manual, research edition*. Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes Publishing Co.

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.