

Young children often need help in extending the amount of time they are able to engage in and attend to a task. Attention, persistence, and engagement are important components of school readiness, indicating emerging self-regulation. Engagement and attention to task involves watching or listening to someone else; persistence involves children pursuing their own goals and using the resources at hand to achieve them (Epstein, 2014).

- Sometimes children will need help to maintain a focus.
- Teachers can use encouragement to get children to extend the amount of time that they are engaged in an activity, such as “Let’s color for one more minute, before we put the crayons away.”
- Teachers can also extend children’s attention to task through story time. With each reading of a story, the teacher can interject more questions and elicit children’s participation in discussing the story, thus prolonging the children’s attention a bit further each day.

(EI 27.1 Focus; 18.1 Self-Control)



Novelty in the Learning Environment

- Teachers can design the learning environment around extending engagement and attention to task.
- Providing a variety of materials and activities, especially rotating in new items, can spark engagement. Novelty, whether in room arrangement, play options, or learning materials, is a hook for attention.
- If the children are not showing interest in a particular area of the classroom, try adding new materials and books, rearranging the materials and furnishings, or introducing a new way to explore materials.
- Create spaces in the classroom where complex play can continue and expand, such as an area for constructions that can be ongoing.

Scheduling

- Provide ample time in the daily schedule for children to be able to fully engage in play and learn in depth.
- Minimize the number of transitions
- Allow children to remain with a chosen activity, as long as they are fully engaged.
- Avoid setting up special activities or projects during “choice time” that will pull children away from their ongoing activity.

References:

Epstein, A., (2014). *The intentional teacher: Choosing the best strategies for children’s learning*. NAEYC / HighScope Press: Washington DC.

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

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