

Using the Engagement Model to assess and capture Engagement in children with Severe Learning Difficulties within a mainstream additionally resourced provision.

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Introduction

Coined by O'Brien (2020) as a 'wicked problem', inclusion is a highly controversial and heavily debated area of educational practice. It is a field in which there has been considerable change over the past century and a term which is still being defined differently across the education profession alongside developments in governmental policy.

This paper will consider the trajectory on which the inclusive education model is heading, whether this can be truly 'inclusive' and how schools can cater for a wide range of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in a results driven market. It will focus on the model of additionally resourced provision (ARP) within mainstream education, and question whether this emphasis on the inclusion of high needs pupils is actually beneficial for the pupils themselves, as well as other learners.

The research carried out will then discuss an example of how children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) have been included within an ARP and explore how the use of the newly introduced 'Engagement Scale' (Department for Education (DfE), 2020) can provide meaningful assessment within a mainstream setting. It will then consider how children with SEND are assessed, achievement is celebrated and next steps are identified within this new governmental framework for capturing pupil progress for children with high needs.

Is Inclusion truly inclusive?

When defining the term 'inclusion', one must consider the journey which SEN Education has taken. The widely accepted view on what 'inclusion' encompasses has been impacted by systemic change, driven by national policy and multi-national agendas.

Over the past century, the key messages from Education policy makers have reflected the substantial change in the interpretation of inclusion in schools. Whilst the work of Warnock and others placed an emphasis on the importance of education within mainstream settings (Warnock Report, 1978), the right for all children to have an education, whether within mainstream or in more specialists settings, was only introduced a century beforehand through the Forster Act (1870) during the Industrial Revolution. However, it could be argued that this shift in policy simply highlighted the challenges inclusion presents, with many children with SEND struggling to make progress within 'normal' schools (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). The mission to provide an education for all continued through the Education Act of 1944, but encouraged segregation, categorising children by their special educational need and even classing those who were 'severely sub-normal' as uneducable (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009).

It was only following the Warnock Report (1978) that the education profession moved towards the first examples of 'inclusive' practice, where it was recommended that children should be supported within mainstream schools, if their needs could be reasonably met (Education Act, 1981). This was emphasised further through the Salamanca Statement (1994), which stated that 'those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs' (UNESCO, 1994, pVIII). However whilst the government called for change, resources were not delivered alongside their words; additional funding and staff training were not provided, resulting in inconsistent practice across the country dependent on local authorities (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). As a consequence of this drive for the education for all within mainstream settings, the call for a paradigm shift within special needs education strengthened.

As discussed by O'Brien (2020), the resulting convictions from these policy changes, focused on inclusion for all, may have risked more harm than benefit for young people with SEND. The concept of full inclusion, in which specialist settings would be closed and all children would be educated within mainstream schools, had the potential to silence large groups of professionals, parents and carers and most importantly children. Policy makers continued to have conflicting ideas; the Green

Paper (1997) stated that 'Specialist provision should be seen as an integral part of overall provision' whilst the United Nations Disability Community (2017) criticised the UK's mission; arguing that they both provided and promoted segregation (O'Brien, 2020). This concept of full inclusion, whilst not reflected in UK policy, can be seen in other localities; New Brunswick in Canada is a province in which 'segregated' education is prohibited, although whether the impact of this significant policy change has been positive is still unclear (Bennett, 2017).

The contrasts in inclusive practice globally reflect the challenges school leaders have in defining inclusive practice in their settings. Within the British schooling system, following policy change through the Education Act (1981) and more recently the SEN and Disability Act (2001), schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of all children with SEND. As inclusive practitioners, educators celebrate and value difference in schools which are barrier-free and accessible (Swain and Cook, 2001).

The school in which this research will be conducted states that its 'Inclusion empowers learners to strive towards their full potential & embrace differences & achieve fulfilment', supporting Swain and Cook's (2001) emphasis on the celebration of difference in our neurodiverse society. The school's policy references the graduated approach and this is seen across the school through the use of support plans to assess, plan, implement and review interventions which meet each child's specific learning needs. A unique element of inclusive life at this school is the ARP, which caters for 12 children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in which the primary need is SLD. This is the first of its kind within the local authority, with the primary aim of piloting a model in which children with high needs access their mainstream classrooms throughout their primary education, where appropriate for them.

Whilst defined as inclusive practice by school leaders, one must consider this against the generally accepted views on what inclusion is. Whilst Kalambouka et al (2007) suggests that these children are included through their 'placement in a regular school', is this true inclusion if the pupils are spending most of their learning experiences within another area of the building? Does inclusion literally mean to be included within the mainstream education system? Whilst it could be argued that children having their needs met in a specialist classroom or provision could be more segregative than inclusive, 'an inclusive school is not a mainstream school into which some disabled students

have been integrated' (Swain and Cook, 2001, p186); true inclusion is a complex paradigm in which a 'one size fits all' model cannot be applied.

When debating whether the model of specialist resource provision demonstrates outstanding inclusive practice, Salend's (2011) literature review was considered. This paper suggested four key principles by which inclusion is put into practice. Firstly, inclusive provision challenges learners with an engaging curriculum, it also responds to their individual strengths and challenges, uses reflective practice and establishes a community of collaboration (Salend, 2011). At this school, a modified and personalised curriculum is delivered within the specialist provision; one which arguably could not be delivered in the same way within a class of 30 mainstream peers. Collaboration is encouraged between professionals; the class teachers and specialist team plan together, meeting each child's mainstream and more specialist needs. The specialist provision therefore appears inclusive according to this criteria. However the impact on other children must also be considered; children with complex needs were educated in medical institutions as recently as 40 years ago (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). It was only following the Education (Handicapped Children) Act (DfE, 1970) that the responsibility for 'educationally sub-normal' children was transferred from the health to education authorities. Does the inclusion of pupils with such high needs within the mainstream classroom impact the academic and social progress of others?

Research focused on the impact of inclusion on neurotypical peers has produced mixed findings. O'Brien and Roberts (2019) state that inclusion benefits all children, Kalambouka et al (2007) reported neutral findings whilst Fletcher (2010) found a decrease in the progress made by other students in Maths and Literacy. In addition to this, the impact on the child with SEND could be detrimental within the mainstream classroom. Hansen (2012) reflects that whilst there may be a benefit for the pupil's social development, progress in their learning often comes secondary.

Whilst the true inclusiveness of the model of specialist provision within mainstream schools is still to be determined, the number of high needs pupils in mainstream schools is increasing, with Ofsted (2006) stating that 'mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils academically, socially and personally' (Ofsted, 2006). With high and complex needs increasing, the skillset of mainstream class teachers in their planning and assessment will need to change to meet their class' increasingly complex needs.

Measuring Engagement in Children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)

Assessment for learning is a crucial element of teaching. However whilst it provides a beneficial pedagogy of the graduated approach, where next steps are identified, implemented and then reviewed, assessment systems have led to a climate of competitiveness, where 'league tables of academic performance remain a powerful feature of the educational landscape' (O'Brien, 2020, p6). This had had a detrimental impact on those with SEND, and unfortunately also on those schools who consider themselves 'inclusive'. As stated by O'Brien (2020, p7), 'In a market-defined system of exceptionalism there are no prizes for being inclusive.' Those with SEND, particularly those with complex needs have been at risk of becoming an 'afterthought'. The mainstream school in which this research is based, which provides alternative provision for children with SLD, is currently faced with this dilemma. This section will ask and consider: How do we capture meaningful assessment for children with SLD so that these children do not become the 'afterthought' O'Brien (2020) refers to?

In September 2019, the school opened its ARP, which would cater for 12 children, all with a primary need of cognition and learning, more specifically 'severe learning difficulties' (SLD). SLD can be defined as a child whose IQ range is between 20-35 and their diagnosis will impact further abilities, including the potential to perform everyday activities. Turner (2011) suggests that these children will require constant supervision in order to succeed. This learning difficulty will also impact other areas, including social, emotional and mental health, as children with SLD will find 'relationships more difficult to establish and friendships more difficult to sustain' (Turner, 2011, p18). One of the main challenges for this population of children is the inability to concentrate on a stimulus, with almost all children with SLD having shortened levels of attention and concentration (Turner, 2011). Consequentially, these children will make smaller steps of progress than their mainstream peers.

When considering how best to capture this progress in learners with SLD, it is important to remember that these pupils do not learn in the same way as their neurotypical counterparts. Activities may need to be repeated for learning to occur and engagement and attention are both severely impaired (Turner, 2011). Therefore regular formative assessment is essential for educating students with SLD. This evidence could also be captured in a variety of ways, including the use of video and photo, rather than paper observations.

Once opened, the ARP devised a vision which would meet each learner's specific needs. It stated that 'moments of wonder are celebrated in the children...and each small step of progress is celebrated'. As a team, the process of recognising, celebrating and assessing small steps was considered, alongside the statutory requirements for data collection. The school's assessment systems were inappropriate as these did not adequately represent the progress that was observed in these truly unique individuals. Using these assessment systems would have left these learners permanently 'significantly below' age related expectations for their school life. This pattern of 'underachievement' in learners with SEND highlights the challenges of assessing using a linear assessment framework, such as the P Scales, introduced by the government to assess progress made for children working below the national curriculum. When introducing the EYFS framework, the DfE explained that progress is 'not linear' (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2013). Therefore, particularly for children with severe and complex needs, educators must 'arrange a curriculum to fit each child rather than arrange the child to fit the curriculum' (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2013, p29).

The Routes for Learning (an assessment framework for children with complex needs) assessment guidance states:

Assessment should celebrate the different abilities of learners with the most complex needs, rather than trying to fit them into an existing framework not developed with these needs in mind... Providing equal opportunities is about meeting individual needs - not treating everybody in the same way.

(RfL Additional Guidance, WAG 2006 in Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2013, p31)

This resonated with the ARP team. Therefore, alongside the SEN teacher and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), a more meaningful method of capturing progress was sought, resulting in the use of the Engagement Scale (Carpenter et al, 2011; DfE, 2020) which was implemented as part of this research.

Carpenter et al's (2011; 2015) work in this area has highlighted the importance of developing engagement as a foundation for progress to take place. Carpenter (2011, p18) suggests that 'without engagement, there is no deep learning, effective teaching, meaningful outcome, real attainment of quality progress', however engagement, similarly to inclusion, can be hard to define. Children all demonstrate engagement in different ways. Newmann (1986) argued that engagement is difficult to define operationally however educators 'know when we see it, and we know when it

is missing.’ It could present itself as a child sustaining their attention when writing a story or an eye gaze or bodily response to a sensory stimulus for a pupil with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). Whilst the spectrum is broad, Carpenter et al (2011, p68) define engagement as ‘a journey which connects a child and their environment to enable learning and achievement’.

The cohort focused on in this study comprised of a group of five children with SLD, all with unique personalities and learning styles. Whilst one child was unable to engage with adult led activities at all, another would sit down on their chair for up to ten minutes during a group activity. Although this child may appear to be ‘more engaged’, the National Research Council would suggest that sustained attention to an activity is only one facet of engagement, which is a much broader term (Carpenter, 2011). It was therefore decided that engagement must be considered different for each child which led to thought-provoking questions. What does engagement look like in each learner? How can it be measured if each learner’s behaviour for learning is different?

Following the Engagement Scale and Profile, an assessment model defined by Barry Carpenter and colleagues (2011) and subsequently published as guidance by the Department for Education (2020), the engagement of this group of children with SEND will be baselined, and then assessed following the graduated approach. The team will consider what each learner’s engagement looks like at its earliest form, implement interventions to increase engagement and review the progress made.

Measuring Engagement in Attention Autism through the Engagement Scale

The concept of an engagement model being used in educational settings followed the publication of the Rochford Review (2016), in which Rochford proposed that P Scales were no longer fit to meet the needs of learners with severe needs. She stated that P Scales do ‘not acknowledge the non-linear progression for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties... and progress can often look quite different’ (Rochford, 2016, p14). Subsequently, the Department for Education released full guidance on the Engagement Model, with the recommendation for statutory use of this assessment framework from September 2021. The specialist provision decided to pilot the use of the Engagement Model (DfE, 2020) during this non-statutory year, developing the staff’s understanding of each aspect of engagement and the observation and assessment process.

The Engagement model (DfE) encourages greater ownership by schools over the assessment process and doesn't provide detailed guidance on frequency of observation and how to present these findings. The team therefore looked at the work of Carpenter et al (2011), which formed the basis of the Engagement Model recommended through the Rochford Report (2016).

Carpenter et al (2011; 2015) discussed the use of both the Engagement Profile and Engagement Scale to form an overall picture which enables practitioners to shape child-centred, personalised learning pathways. The Profile consisted of the description of a child's 'highest possible engagement for learning behaviours during their most absorbing-interest activity' (Carpenter, 2015, p52). This was also a beneficial tool for the schools which took part in the DfE Pilot (DfE, 2018) and was therefore the starting point for this specialist provision.

Before baselining each child using the Engagement Profile, the team familiarised themselves with each aspect of engagement, as shown in Figure 1 below. The Pilot study (DfE, 2018) identified potential barriers in developing staff confidence, particularly for a mainstream school with an SEND unit. Whilst special schools had a wealth of experience and staff to discuss and reflect on engagement, one mainstream school which was described in the pilot study 'had relatively few staff they could involve in assessments' (DfE, 2018, p40). At our setting, it was therefore essential to involve the whole specialist team in the continuous professional development (CPD). The team were trained on each aspect of Engagement as recommended by the new DfE publication, which focused on five aspects rather than the original seven recommended by Carpenter et al (2011). This adaptation made by the DfE followed the findings of the 2018 School pilot, in which schools reported that the process was 'very time-consuming' (DfE, 2018, p42).

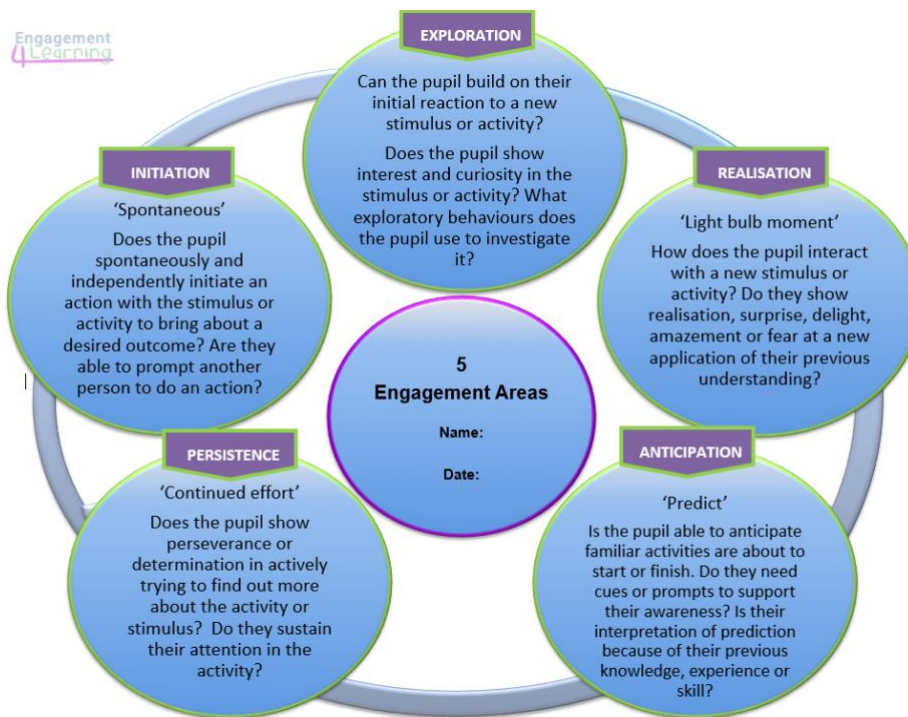


Figure 1: The 5 aspects of Engagement (Engagement 4 Learning, 2019)

It was apparent that it would take time to embed the use of the language of engagement in the setting, as reflected in the pilot which observed that 'Confidence...grew as the pilot progressed as it took time for schools to develop this understanding, often over several months' (DfE, 2018, p39). A guidance sheet (see Appendix A) was therefore created to support staff in using the language associated with engagement in daily observations.

Staff became more confident and familiar with the five aspects of engagement with practice, however some aspects were easier to identify through observations from others. The initial findings in the ARP mirrored those of other schools involved in the pilot. Aspects such as Anticipation and Persistence were easy to observe, whereas Realisation and Initiation often overlapped. This resulted in interesting discussions which encouraged the reflective practice which the Engagement Model promotes.

Once staff were more familiar with the aspects of engagement, the pilot study was designed. Over the duration of four weeks, the engagement profile, followed by the engagement scale, would be completed. The study aimed to examine how the use of this assessment framework would impact on the children's progress, but additionally how it would provide greater opportunities for reflection within the specialist team. The study was conducted primarily by the lead SEND practitioner

alongside an HLTA, however the rest of the team within the ARP were involved in discussions and reflections. Carpenter et al (2011) recommended observations to be recorded once or twice a week, rather than daily, and therefore this model was followed.

Once the frequency and duration were established, the team discussed the target children involved. Three children were chosen to assess in a small group of five children who access the specialist provision. All of the children have an EHCP for SLD and Autism, however these three children were chosen due to their different engagement behaviours. Carpenter et al (2011) state that all children show engagement in different ways. Whilst Child A finds it challenging to engage in formal learning opportunities, Child B displays high levels of sensory seeking behaviour. Child C can work more formally, however his retrieval of taught information is inconsistent and therefore it is undetermined as to whether he is truly engaged in and embedding the learning that is taking place. These children are also working on a non-subject specific curriculum, which focuses primarily on their communication and interaction. They are therefore prime candidates for the trial of this new assessment model and meet the criteria suggested by the DfE (2020).

For this initial pilot, assessment will focus on one activity, repeated on the same day at the same time for four weeks. This will allow staff to assess whether modifications to the activity will enable the children to access the learning and therefore display greater engagement in the stimuli. Following the graduated approach as detailed in the SEN Code of Practice (2015), staff will assess each child's engagement in the activity through a baseline in which no intervention will be provided before planning modifications to the group activity to increase each child's engagement. The activity will then be repeated before reviewing each child's engagement using the Engagement Scale (Carpenter et al, 2011). An example of this graduated approach can be found in Appendix D.

The activity, in which the children's engagement will be assessed, has been planned carefully, based on the Attention Autism Programme. This social and communication intervention programme was developed by Gina Davies, a speech and language therapist, and focuses on developing communication, interaction and attention and listening skills (Buckingham, 2012). The session traditionally consists of four stages, where the pupils' attention is engaged, sustained and shifted. These sessions are progressive and focus on developing joint attention, which develops atypically in the Autistic population (Patten and Watson, 2011).

Whilst the terms joint attention and joint engagement may appear interchangeable, it is essential within the context of this study to differentiate between them. Joint engagement refers to the ability to engage with another person or object and can be seen as a precursor to joint attention (Wells, 2016). As the child develops their ability to engage, they can then develop joint attention, which refers to the desire to share the experience of an interesting stimulus with someone else. The children within this context are at the early stages of displaying engagement and therefore, according to these definitions, not yet ready for Attention Autism, which focuses primarily on joint attention. These sessions will therefore act as a precursor to Attention Autism, with the Engagement model capturing and assessing the engagement skills the children are developing.

The sessions planned (see Appendix B) will focus on engagement with water, which is a motivator for every member of this group. Using a motivator as the main stimulus is key to developing personalised learning (Carpenter et al, 2011). The session will begin with an Attention 'grabber', the phonics box, which exposes the children to different objects beginning with the same sound. Whilst the objects may change weekly, the box remains the same, providing the predictability which should encourage anticipation. The next stage will focus on watching and exploring pouring water before each child participates, holding an umbrella over their head and watching the water fall.

Following the graduated approach, the Teacher and HLTA planned this sensory group activity based on the children's main interests. The next section will outline how, by following the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle, the engagement of the children was measured and reflected upon, leading to greater outcomes for all involved.

What does progress in Engagement look like for pupils with severe learning difficulties?

This pilot of the implementation of the Engagement Model (DfE, 2020) took place over the space of four weeks. Using the interests of the children as the main stimuli of the recorded session, staff baselined on the first week, before reviewing the engagement behaviours demonstrated in each session and planning accordingly for the following week.

My role throughout this study was fluid, consisting of both operational and strategic capacities. As defined by Curran (2019), the operational role of the SENCO focuses on the 'day to day' in contrast to the strategic role, which prioritises 'SEN provision in a more developmental sense across the

school' (Curran, 2019, p24). At an operational level, I was involved in the teaching of the group, alongside the HLTA, and leading discussions as part of the review element of the graduated approach which was the foundation for capturing meaningful assessments. Whilst being involved in the operational elements of this pilot, the strategic aspects were equally important. As suggested in the SEN Code of Practice, SENCOs should be closely involved in the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision (DfE, 2015). These findings will therefore result in the training and implementation of the Engagement Model across the school for other pupils with severe or complex needs.

Each session which took place was recorded via a video camera. Video recordings can be an important piece of evidence, which does not always need to be paper based (Turner, 2011). The recording of sessions allows for staff to pick up on behaviours for learning which they might have missed (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2016). Videos can also provide an excellent discussion for team meetings and in this study, these videos were invaluable in developing the reflective practice in the team involved. Whilst formative assessment throughout the session provided both myself as the teacher and the support staff with some clear next steps on our initial reflections, rewatching the session through the video highlighted several engagement behaviours which were missed. Child A's communication during Session 2 was a prime example of the importance of video recording. His engagement fled during the session and it was only after watching the video that we noticed his reduced engagement followed the lead adult saying "One more time", whereas he was displaying full engagement for the two minutes prior. It was concluded that Child A was attempting to communicate that he wanted to explore the activity more and didn't want it to end, yet this would have been missed without the video being carefully reflected upon.

During the reflective sessions, staff discussed their observations, one child at a time. These observations were then uploaded onto the Engagement Profile and Scale. The team used the iPad application 'Evidence for Learning' to record this data, which then generated the progress charts in Figure 2 and Appendix C. The Engagement Scale, devised by Carpenter et al (2011), provided the quantitative element of this assessment framework. Each aspect of engagement is given a score between 1-4, with 4 being fully engaged in the activity. Using Evidence for Learning, the engagement scale and engagement profile, which contained qualitative data about the child's engagement behaviours, were combined, as shown in Appendix D. Whilst this provided a valuable representation of each child's progress, it is important to remember the purpose of the Engagement model as a

vehicle for reflection rather than a quantitative tool. This assessment system could enter the dangerous waters in which the P scales found themselves, where they fitted into the world of hyperaccountability described by O'Brien (2020), restricting teacher creativity. As a team, these numerical results were therefore analysed carefully alongside the qualitative data, which provided the most impact in adapting the learning to meet each pupil's needs.

Overall, all children in this pilot study made progress across the five aspects of Engagement defined in the Engagement Model (2020), as shown in Figure 2 (below). Whilst they all made progress from the baseline observation to the most recent assessment, each trajectory looked different, which was to be expected given that all children show engagement in different ways (Carpenter et al, 2011). This led to different areas of intervention for each child. Whilst the team reflected on all aspects of engagement when observing each of the pupils, specific aspects became a primary focus for each of them. For Child C, engagement behaviours surrounding their realisation, or 'how they interact with a new stimulus or activity' (DfE, 2020, p10), became an aspect to prioritise during team reflection, and therefore the review and plan phase of this approach involved considering: 'What about this experience can we change to stimulate the child's realisation?' (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2016, p49). In contrast, Child B's realisation behaviours increased as the study progressed, whereas their anticipation and initiation regressed in the second session. Interventions were then planned and implemented. In this case, Child B was given more processing time when the lead adult said 'Ready, steady, go!' And given more opportunities to predict what would happen next. During the review stage of the graduated cycle, the team considered that 'for those with severe...learning difficulties, deep learning takes time, and often a considerable amount of time' (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2016, p202), in addition to the increased processing time required by children with a diagnosis of Autism. Whilst these modifications may seem insignificant and minute, they had a

significant impact in enabling this pupil to access the learning and resulted in greater anticipatory responses in the subsequent session.

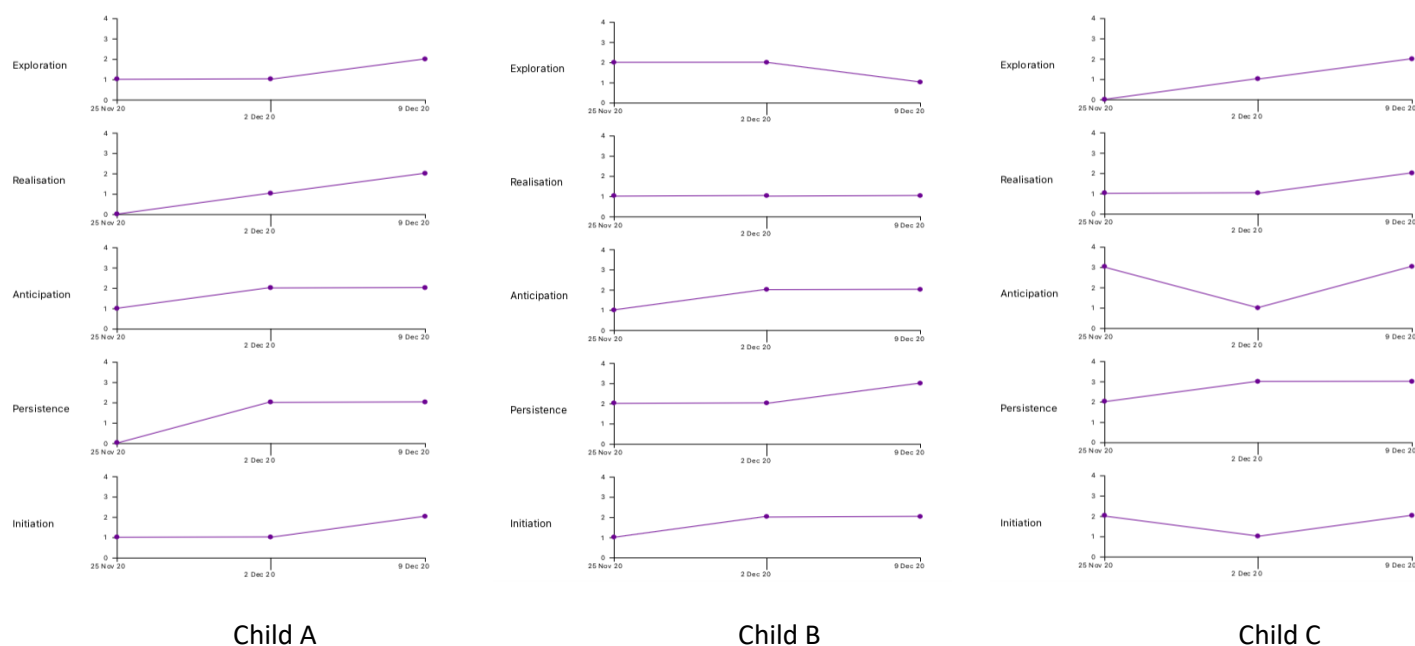


Figure 2: Engagement scales scores for the three target pupils with SLD over the three recorded sessions.

Whilst these results show positive progression for all children in their levels of engagement over time, it is important to consider the short duration of this pilot study. We know that for children with SLD, ‘some things may take months and maybe even years of constant practice to...achieve’ (Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2016, p77) and we therefore must be cautious in our conclusions of the progress made. Additionally, evidence should be gathered from a ‘range of activities’ (DfE, 2020) to examine the generalisation of engagement behaviours more closely, therefore this pilot study is aware that only the tip of the iceberg has been explored. To truly personalise learning pathways for these children, their engagement must be analysed across activities and contexts and observed for a greater length of time.

Parental involvement will be essential in the process. As outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (2015, p104), ‘schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them’. Whilst a legal requirement, ‘parents will understand their child in a way that no professional can ever do’ (Carpenter, 2015, p104) and therefore will help the specialist team build a more holistic picture of each pupil’s learning behaviours and needs, increasing the amount of personalisation for

their learning pathway at school and home. To embed the use of the Engagement Model for these pupils, this setting will introduce the aspects of Engagement to parents through the regular coffee mornings, and encourage parents and carers to share videos of their child's engagement from home.

Despite the areas for development, such as the duration and breadth of this pilot, the initial findings of this implementation of the Engagement Model have been positive in demonstrating progress in these pupils in a very short period of time. The progress shown during this short study would have been reflected very differently using a less appropriate assessment system, such as the Pre-key stage standards (DfE, 2020) or another model of best fit. The Engagement model also appears to be a positive move away from a world of 'marketisation and league table competition' as stated by O'Brien (2020, p6), with the framework designed to help practitioners reflect on the unique needs of their pupils, opposing the idea of assessment being 'more about teacher accountability than it is about learning and progress to inform future teaching' (O'Brien, 2020, p6). The Engagement model is a step in the right direction, however the reflective practitioner must now consider how it can be used more broadly to meet the needs of these unique pupils.

Conclusion

The term progress is hard to define and particularly complex when assessing the learning taking place for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Imray and Hinchcliffe (2013, pXII) suggest that 'if the curriculum is appropriate and meets pupils' needs, pupil progress should be clear, achievable and quantifiably measurable.' Yet the measurement of progress in children with SEND is often a stumbling block for educators within mainstream settings, with 'whole-school summative assessments being too broad-brush for...pupils with SEN who are making very small steps of progress' (Ward, 2019, p135). In addition to this, assessment systems which have attempted to meet these children's needs, such as the P Scales, resulted in a rigid, assessment driven curriculum, which 'restricted the kind of creativity and innovation that should be used to engage these pupils' (DfE, 2016, p3).

This initial pilot has delivered an important reminder to this specialist team: the primary aim of assessment is to deliver a curriculum which is as personalised and relevant as possible to the pupils involved. The Engagement Model (2020) has encouraged staff to think more creatively about how to enable children with SLD to access learning. Some would argue that this model of provision, in

which learning is personalised to the child, rather than the child blended into their mainstream classroom, is truly inclusive. However the definition of inclusion in its truest form is still incredibly hazy. Despite this, as a result of this study the school now has a greater understanding of how to meet the increasingly complex needs of its cohort and through reflective practice and detailed observation, the curriculum for these pupils with SLD will only become more meaningful and relevant, giving them the highest chance of succeeding amongst their mainstream, neurotypical peers.

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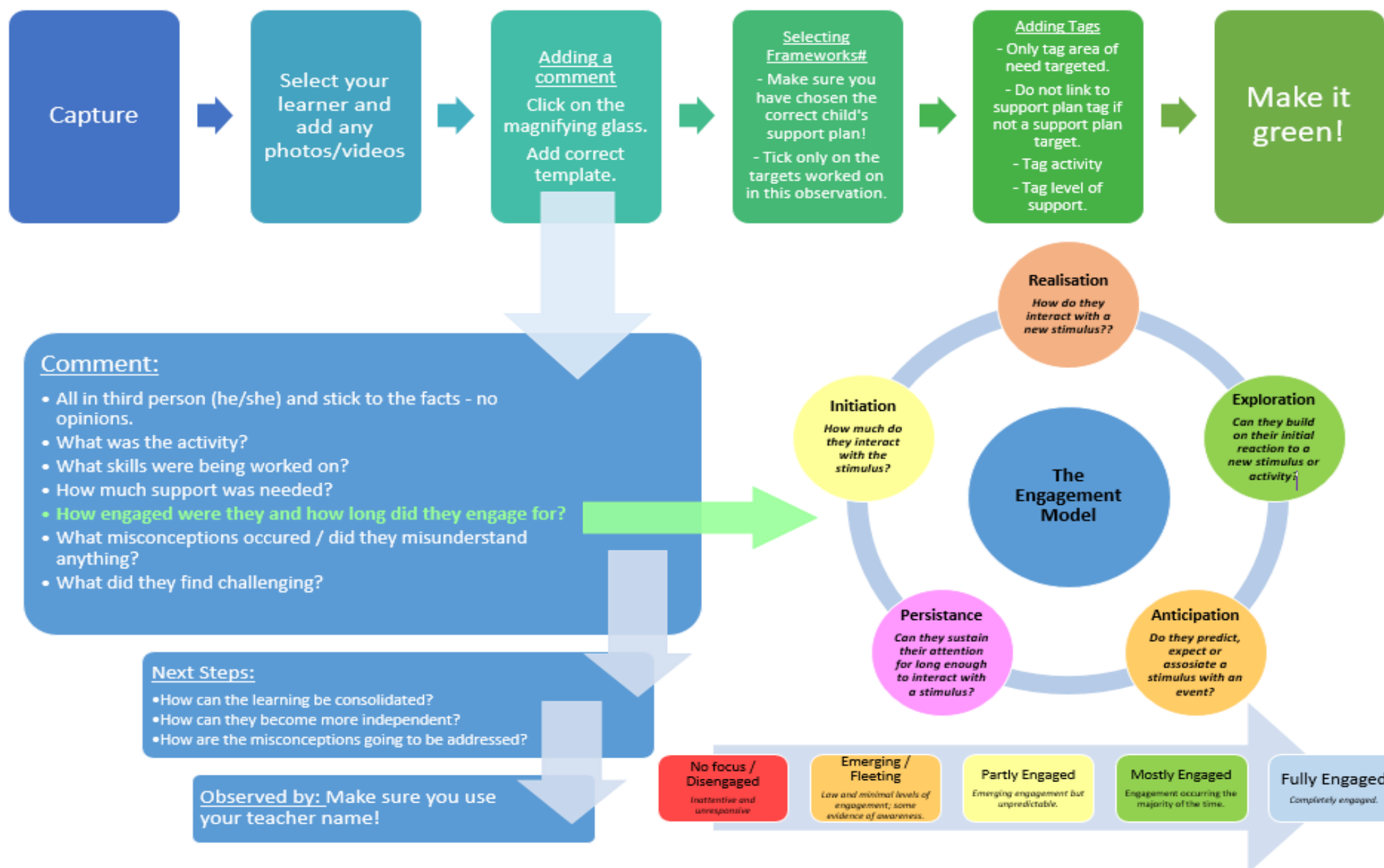
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Appendix A: Guidance sheet to guide the specialist team in writing Engagement-focused observations.

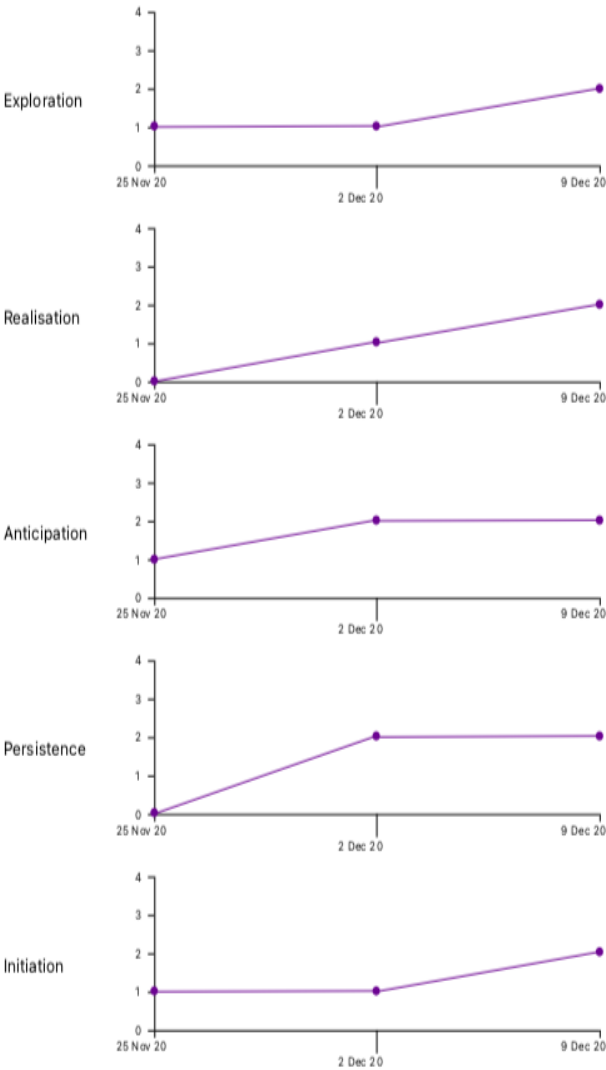


Appendix B: Initial Plan for the Session

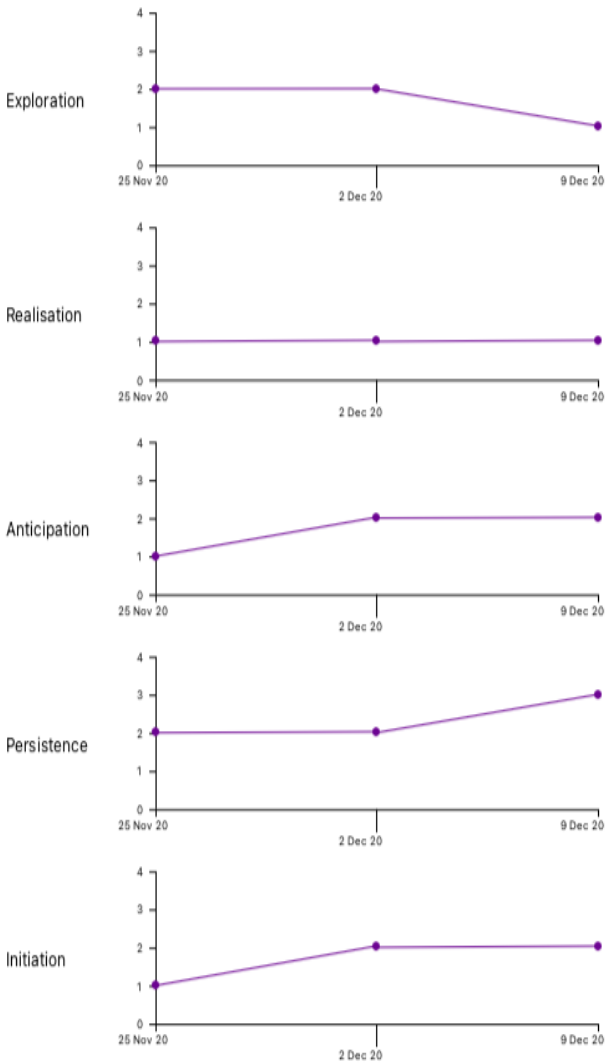
Planned Activity	Adult Deployment	Key Vocabulary
<p>Phonics Box (Attention Grabber):</p> <p><i>Box to contain items beginning with our focus sound 'm':</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wind up monkey - Music shaker - Magnets - Wind up mouse - Mermaid fabric 	<p>Adults to model curiosity and interest. Focus on behaviours such as leaning forward to watch more closely, signing 'more' to indicate enjoyment and over-exaggerated facial expression.</p> <p>Adults to sit in between two children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monkey – animal / twist / ready...steady...go - Music – shake / loud / quiet - Magnet – red / blue - Mouse – twist / ready...steady...go - Mermaid – smooth / colours
<p>Pour the Water (Attention Sustainer):</p> <p><i>Lead adult to show children the jug of water and pour it into watering can (increase height to show water pouring). Adult to pour water on shower curtain to show the droplets and make the sound of rain.</i></p>	<p>Adults to model initiation and exploration of the water by putting their hands out to feel the water pouring.</p> <p>Adults to monitor engagement behaviours from children. If a child gets up to explore the water, allow this initially before non-verbally guiding them back to their seat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rain - Wet - Coat - Pour - Ready...steady...go

<p>Rain on You (Attention Shifter):</p> <p><i>Children to take turns to sit on the chair under the umbrella and have the water poured on top. Sing song: 'Today it is raining on you...'</i></p>	<p>Adult to have first turn to model engagement behaviours: singing along / putting hand out to feel water and realising they can't feel it / looking up at the umbrella to watch droplets fall.</p> <p>Adult to sit under umbrella with child if child is unsure about participating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rain - Umbrella - Coat - Rain on you - Drip - Drop
<p>If You're Happy and You Know It</p> <p><i>Phonics focus: Body Percussion (L&S Phase 1)</i></p> <p><i>Children to sing happy and you know it in the circle, copying the lead adult in clapping, stomping feet and patting head.</i></p>	<p>Adults to sit next to children and sing and sign along, monitor if children are participating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Happy - Clap your hands - Stomp your feet - Pat your head

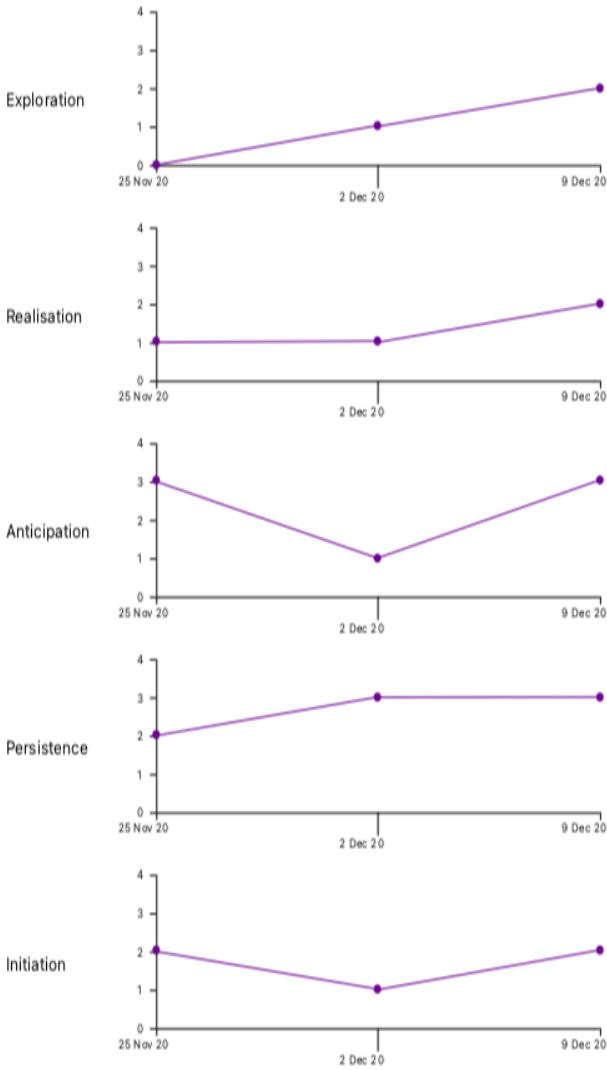
Appendix C: Quantitative Data produced using the Engagement Scale and Evidence for Learning.



Child A



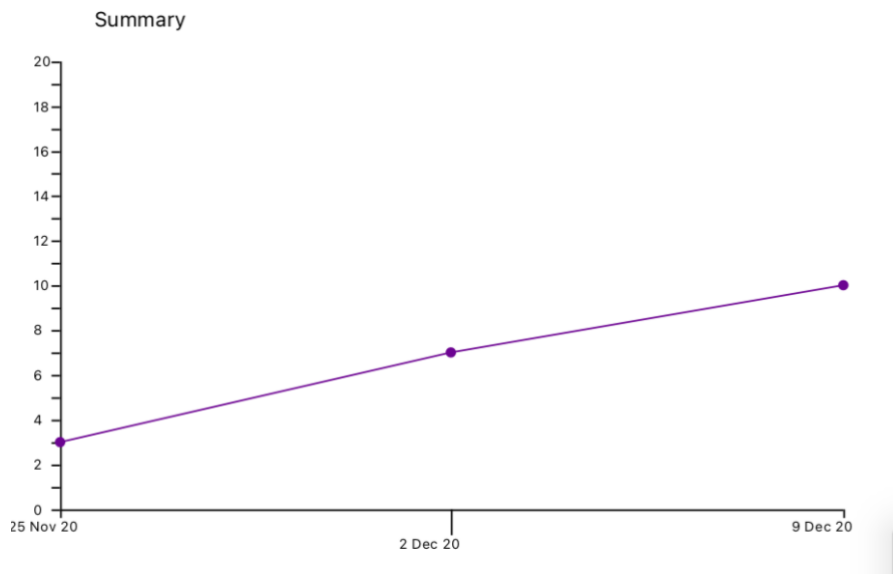
Child B



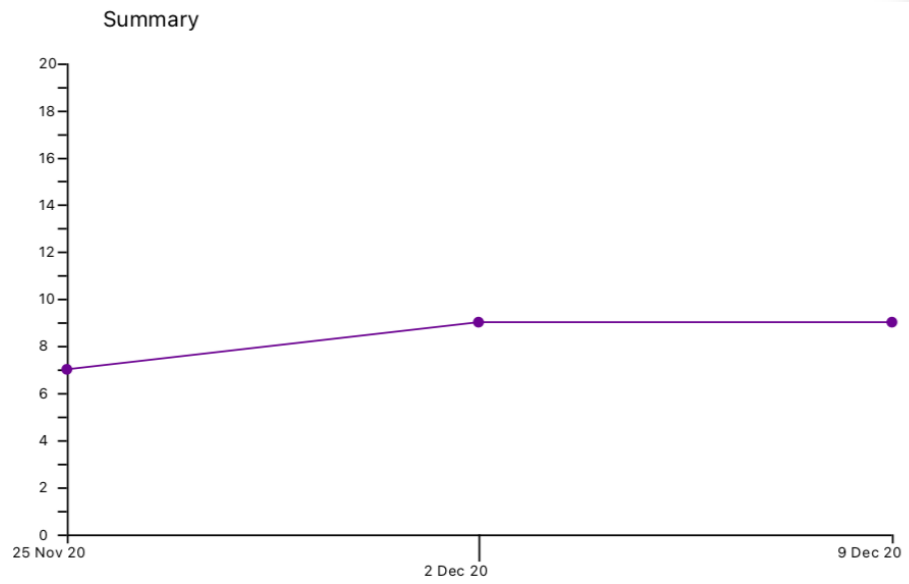
Child C

Overall Combined Engagement Score per week:

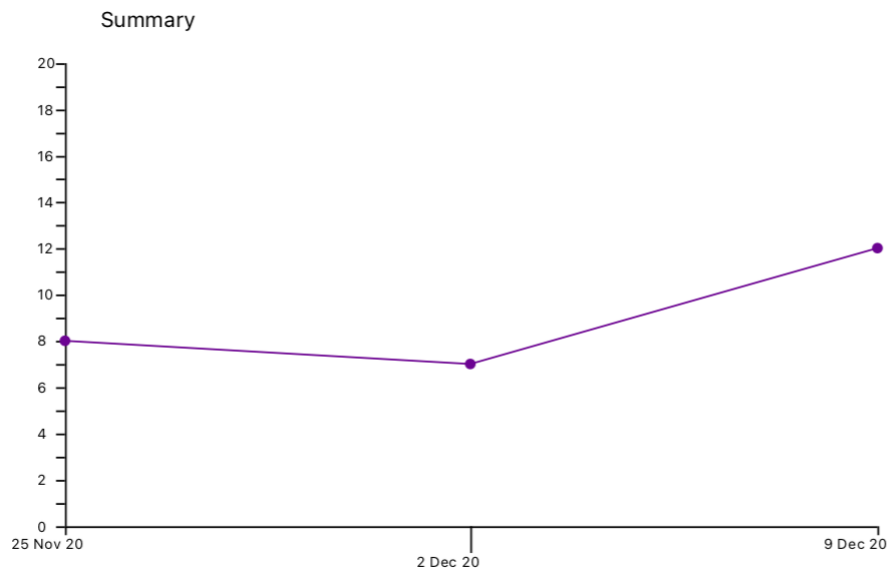
Child A:



Child B:



Child C:



Exploration: Fleeting (1)

25 November 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ was able to return the activity each time his attention fleeting for approximately 5 seconds each time. He built on his initial reaction to the water by extending his arm to feel it on his hand. This reaching out with an open palm showed he was curious about the feeling of the water.

Possible future adaptations:

Use more pouring water on his hands to encourage engagement.

BASELINE

Exploration: Fleeting (1)

2 December 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ explored the water being poured through eye gaze and by sticking his tongue out. He looked at the different objects from the phonics box and sat amongst the group for parts of the session. He refused to take part in singing.

Possible future adaptations:

To choose a song which ■■■■ enjoys listening to.

To pour the water in different ways to see which engaged ■■■■ the most.

Exploration: Partly Sustained (2)

9 December 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ watched some of the box toys particularly the monkey and the music. He responded to the phrase ready steady go consistently. When the music was being played, he smiled to show his enjoyment and press his hand out to shake the shaker with the lead adult. During the water part of the circle time and he stuck his tongue out consistently to enjoy the sensation of the water on his face and vocalised more on six occasions throughout this part of the session. During rain on you, he tolerated the umbrella over him but then moved the umbrella so that he could continue to feel the water on his face.

Possible future adaptations:

Have a supporting adult with ■■■■ during rain on you to model how to look at the rain on the umbrella.

■■■■'s engagement fledged on the second occasion with the wind-up monkey, next time use each toy on one occasion and make the box quicker.

Realisation: Disengaged (0)

25 November 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ had his back to the session and was rocking, however the rhythm of his rock changes each time the group song the Raining on you song, or at times the rock stops altogether, suggesting that he is listening or engaged by the music. ■■■■ also ha his chair forward when the rain was proving, but moved it back when the water stopped. When it was his turn, he came to sit down but another child was also in his personal space so he refused.

Possible future adaptations:

To make sure ■■■■ has his turn earlier in the session.

Realisation: Fleeting (1)

2 December 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ realised that he could catch the water with his mouth and opened his mouth when the water was being poured close to him. However ■■■■ was unable to engage in the other aspects of the activities, such as holding the umbrella and dancing to the song.

Possible future adaptations:

Supporting adult to have their turn with the umbrella next to ■■■■ to see if he tolerates this.

Realisation: Partly Sustained (2)

9 December 2020

What happened?:

■■■■ interacted with the musical shaker and realised that he could shake it alongside the adult, reaching out for it and requesting it. During rain on you, ■■■■ realise that if he moved the umbrella, he could feel the water on his face.

Possible future adaptations:

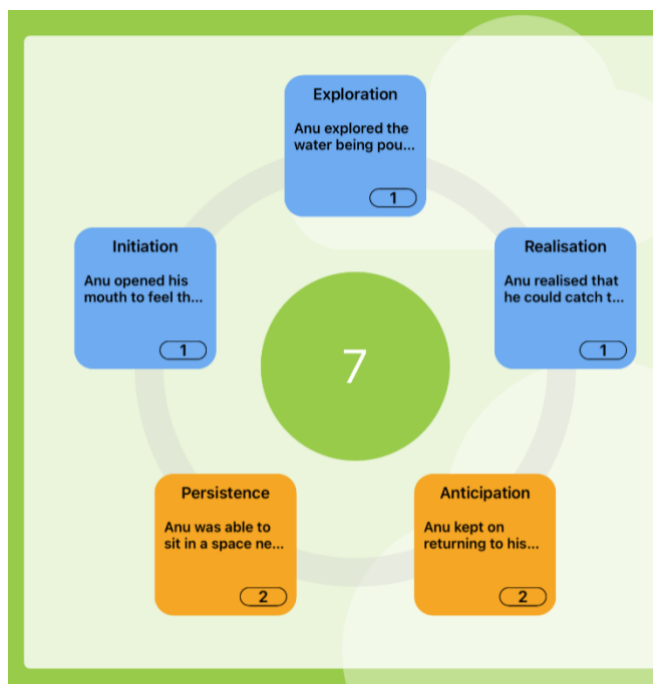
In the box section of the circle time, use more musical instruments as these are clearly motivating to ■■■■
Try to use musical instruments in the song part of the circle time to see if this encourages ■■■■ to participate.

Appendix D: Exemplar of the Reflection and Review Process following sessions: The assessment system used for this pilot (Evidence for Learning)

25th November 2020



2nd December 2020



9th December 2020

