

PRISM Training Modules

Supporting Active Engagement

Pyramid Resources for Infant-Toddler
Social-Emotional Development
Juniper Gardens Children's Project
University of Kansas

Adapted from:
The Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
Vanderbilt University



These materials were supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R324A170118 to University of Kansas. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education. You may reproduce these materials for training and information purposes.

PRISM Training Module Series

Introduction & Understanding
Social-Emotional Development

Focusing on Relationships

Responsive Routines,
Schedules, & Environments

Understanding Behavior

Teaching About Feelings

Supporting Active Engagement

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Challenging Behavior

PRISM Training Modules*: Supporting Active Engagement

Welcome to the Supporting Active Engagement Module! In this module you will gain knowledge on how to sustain active engagement and engage the unengaged with infants and toddlers in child care settings.

Learner Objectives

Identify strategies that promote children's engagement in interactions and why this is important to social-emotional development.

Learn about strategies to sustain engagement in young children.

Discover ways to help engage children that are unengaged in the classroom.

Agenda

- I. Setting the Stage: Review - 10 minutes
- II. Goals of Active Engagement - 10 minutes
- III. Strategies for Sustaining Active Engagement - 15 minutes
- IV. Engaging the Unengaged - 15 minutes
- V. Wrap-up & Reflection - 5 minutes

My Notes:



Training Preparation

- Print PRISM Engage - All Handouts, 1 copy per participant, or print each handout listed below individually
- Review videos
- Prepare and print certificates of completion

Handouts

- PRISM Engage - 1 PowerPoint
- PRISM Engage - 2 Agenda
- PRISM Engage - 3 Sustain Engagement
- PRISM Engage - 4 Classwide Engagement
- PRISM Engage - 5 Practice Implementation Checklist (CAE)
- PRISM Engage - 6 Training Feedback

Videos

- PRISM Engage - Active Engage Scarf
- PRISM Engage - Active Engage Outdoors
- PRISM Engage - Engaging the Unengaged

Materials Needed:

Technology

- PowerPoint File
- Video Files
- Computer
- Projector

Printables

- Handouts
- Certificates of Completion
- Sign-in Sheet

Supplies

- Name tags
- Pens
- Snacks and drinks
- Chart paper/white board and markers
- Tape
- Table fidgets/manipulatives

Other Items

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Slide 1: Active Engagement

Welcome to your next session in the PRISM Training Series, where we are going to learn about supporting active engagement. These trainings are meant to be used hand-in-hand with the practice-based coaching model. We'll give you an overview at these trainings, but you'll get into more specifics with your coach.

I am (name) and (give some personal background history relevant to training). Here with me are (introduce rest of team).

Let's get some logistics out of the way before we begin

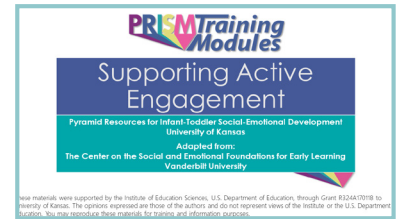
Breaks:

Lunch/Snack:

Parking:

Restrooms:

Last, you should have a set of materials that includes handouts, slide notes, and other useful information. We'll reference some of these throughout the training, so keep them handy. If you don't have the materials you need, please let us know.



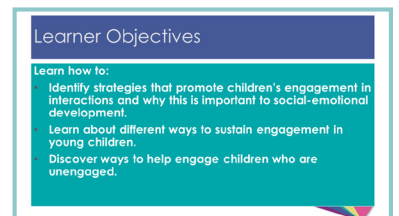
Presenter Notes:

Depending on how familiar members of the training team are with the participants, it may also be important to have participants do introductions, and include classroom, and their role in the classroom, if appropriate.

You may want participants to ask questions when they think of them, or have them write questions down to ask at the end of sections.

Slide 2: Objectives

Today, we will talk about strategies that promote children's engagement in interactions and why this is important to social-emotional development. We will learn about strategies to sustain engagement in young children as well as ways to help engage children that are unengaged in the classroom. We will discuss how you can create opportunities throughout your daily routines for children to stay actively engaged.

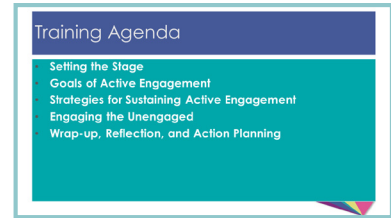


Slide 3: Agenda

You can find our training agenda for today on [Handout 2](#).

While the learning objectives represent what we hope you receive from the training, the agenda represents how we are going to get there.

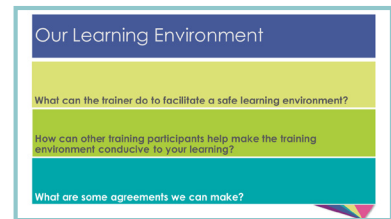
At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about the training. We look forward to receiving this input, as it will improve the training for others.



Slide 4: Our Learning Environment

We'll be spending a lot of time together throughout this training and future trainings. It's helpful to decide together what sorts of agreements are important to the group. Think about what makes a positive learning environment for you. What are those things?

Pause for responses.



Presenter Notes:
If participants don't have suggestions, suggest some of the typical shared agreements listed on the next slide.

Slide 5: Possible Shared Agreements

With that in mind, what are some agreements we can make about how our learning environment should look? You can use the agreements on the slide as a jumping point.

Pause for responses, then summarize agreements.



Presenter Notes:
Post the list of shared agreements the group created and/or review the list of potential shared agreements on this slide to help generate ideas.



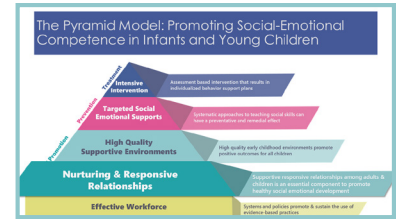
Slide 6: The Pyramid Model

Let's review where we are on the Pyramid. Our first trainings focused on creating positive relationships between caregivers and young children and ways to nurture and support the social-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and families.

At the base of the Pyramid, we highlight universal practices which encourage and promote social-emotional development for all young children and families.

Briefly review what was discussed at your last PRISM Training Session.

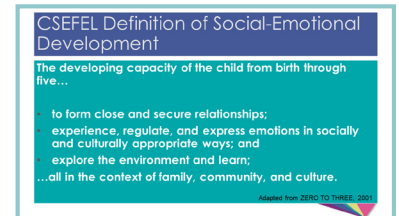
Today, we are going to talk about facilitating relationships between infant and toddler peers, and how to support active engagement in young children.



Slide 7: Definition of Social-Emotional Development

Let's look again at the CSEFEL working definition of social-emotional development.

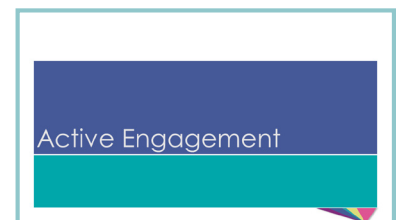
Read definition from slide.



Slide 8: Active Engagement

Let's talk about Active Engagement and how it relates to social-emotional development. Active engagement means that children are involved and engaged – that might mean engaged in an activity, in interactions with teachers or peers, or with materials.

Even more than simply being involved, it refers to a state of being interested and inquisitive, curious, and ready to explore. When children are engaged, this helps expose them to opportunities for learning and exploration. This then can contribute to increases in concentration and attention span.



Slide 8 cont.

Engagement is a key ingredient for any type of learning. In order for children to benefit from opportunities to observe, listen, and practice new skills throughout their day, it is important that they are engaged.

But when children are actively engaged, how does this foster social-emotional development? What is the connection between being actively engaged in activities and a child's ability to form and maintain relationships and develop social-emotional skills?

Active engagement increases children's ability to listen, observe, and respond to others, and engage in activities either alone or together. It supports the development of emotional regulation and promotes executive function, which includes memory, planning and thinking, and self-control. It is an important component of a child's social-emotional development.

We often recognize when children are engaged, but what does it look like when children are not engaged? What are the signs?

A child who is unoccupied, watching or staring around the room, wandering around the room, crying or aggressive behavior – these are all signs of a disengaged child. Are there other signs that a child is not engaged?

Slide 9: Goals of Active Engagement

Now that we have identified what engagement and non-engagement looks like, there are two different goals we want to keep in mind when increasing active engagement in the classroom.

The first is to **engage the unengaged**.

This requires being aware of all of the children in the room, especially quiet children. All children do not need to be engaged in the same activity or in the same way, but all children should be engaged in exploring their environment, interacting, and learning in some way.

And, there's another step to this, because we want not only for all children to be engaged and learning, but we want to **encourage sustained engagement**.

In other words, we want to increase the time children spend in activities in age appropriate ways over the course of their day. That engagement might look different for different children, or even for one child, throughout the day, but our goal is to support sustained engagement.

We have a great video showing you an example of this.



Slide 10: Active Engagement Video

You're going to see a teacher playing with her class. They are playing with scarves as a group. Watch to see the ways she helps support engagement and after the video we'll talk about what you noticed.



 **Play PRISM Engage - Active Engage Scarf**

What strategies did this teacher use to encourage active engagement? How did she support the children in staying engaged in these activities?

Pause for responses, then summarize the discussion.

Let's look at some specific ways you can encourage active engagement in your classroom, some of which you may have seen in the video.

Presenter Notes:
Held objects at child level
Gave Choices
Used child names
Varied pace
Touched child

Slide 11: Strategies for Sustaining Active Engagement

There are a number of ways teachers can help children stay engaged in an activity.

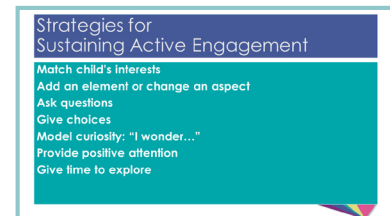
Match Child's Interests

Matching and following the child's interests is another way to support engagement. When you observe and support child-directed activities, children are more likely to be engaged.

- The teacher in the video was flexible when children lost interest. Although she did try new ways to engage with the scarves, she was also willing to move on to another activity of interest.
- Matching a child's interests may also help children stay with an activity longer. For example, if a child is more interested in pointing at pictures in a book than listening to you read, point and talk about the pictures.

Add or Change an Element

Introducing new elements to an activity, such as new materials, or just using the materials in a new way, can support sustained engagement.



Slide 11 cont.

Ask Questions

Asking questions can be effective in supporting engagement.

- Have you ever had a child in your classroom who eats for two seconds, then wants to get up and play, but two seconds later, seems to be hungry again?
- Keep children interested in each other and the process of eating by letting them share their wealth of knowledge about food with you.
- Asking open-ended questions, like “Where’s your bottle?” or “Where does milk come from?” are great ways to extend engagement during meal time.
- You might not get an answer, or you may get jibber jabber. Regardless, asking questions not only keeps children involved in activities longer, but it also encourages exploration, curiosity, and shows you are interested in what they have to say – even if they can’t use words yet.

Give Choices

Providing choices is an effective strategy for keeping a child engaged with an activity and engaging an unengaged child.

- Offer a choice of two different items, holding them out so they are easily visible. Have duplicates in case multiple children choose the same item.
- For babies, you can hold the objects farther apart from each other so you can see which object the child is gazing at longer. This will help you know what choice the child is making.
- Other indicators of a choice are reaching, pointing, or naming, depending on the child’s stage of development.
- You can also offer choices about how to play with a toy: “Do you want to clap it or shake it?” Make sure to model the actions you are suggesting as you propose the choices.

Slide 11 cont.

Model Curiosity

We've talked a bit about how asking questions encourages curiosity, but you can also model curiosity.

- Try using "I wonder..." statements, pausing to see if the children you're interacting with decide to explore what you are wondering about.
- If the child doesn't respond, model how to seek out an answer to the question you are wondering about. For example, during hand washing ask, "I wonder what happens to the soap when we rub our hands together really fast?"

Provide Positive Attention

When children **are** engaged, provide positive attention by taking time to follow their lead, and comment on what you are seeing.

- For instance, at circle time, notice and comment on how well children are participating. Respond to their initiations, and engage in back-and-forth conversations to support continued engagement.

Give Time to Explore

While there are many different ways to support engagement, sometimes the best strategy is to give time to explore.

- Sometimes we are so busy moving from one activity to another, or we get busy talking and forget to leave space for children to think, respond, and come up with ideas. Build in times for children to choose their own activity, or have time to explore and make their own choices.

As you can see, there are many ways to sustain engagement in young children. [Handout 3](#) provides a concise list of some of these strategies we have discussed.

How do you start to build these strategies into your classroom? This week, pick a child to observe. Give her time to explore without prompting, and watch how she reacts. Notice where she is looking and how she makes decisions about what to do next. What factors help support engagement and what factors result in that child being unengaged?

Slide 12: Active Engagement Video

Let's watch one more video of a teacher supporting engagement. This time, we are going to see two children in different developmental stages, both engaged in a very common outdoor activity - playing with grass and dirt. While you're watching, note the different strategies the teacher uses to keep the children interested in the activity.

Play PRISM Engage - Active Engage Outdoors

How did you see the teacher support the children in staying engaged while they were checking out the clump of grass? Did this differ in any way for each of the children?

Leave time for responses, then summarize and share any of the strategies in the Presenter Notes that weren't covered.

If the teacher wasn't following the children's lead and positioned so she was at eye-level with them, she could have easily missed the opportunity for this interaction. Or, she might have directed the activity in a way that did not promote interest and engagement.



Presenter Notes:

Followed the child's interest by repeating and adding to what child said.

Provided more complexity for the older child.

Moved down to child's level and made eye contact.

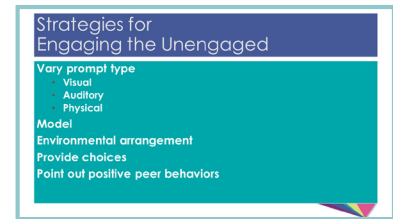
Ask questions that helped the child direct the activity.

Gave opportunity to feel, touch, be active.

Used children's names.

Slide 13: Strategies for Engaging the Unengaged

In the videos we've watched, we don't know if the children were engaged when the activity started, or if they needed help getting engaged. We may see unengaged children during transitions, play, or more structured activities.



Vary Prompt Type

We often see children have different ways of engaging. This tells us our strategies for engaging children should also vary.

- Children may respond to cues differently, so if you have a child that is difficult to engage, you can try using different types of prompts.
- For example, you might provide a **visual cue**, along with a verbal prompt. When making a transition to a painting project, you can show paint brushes as you introduce the activity.
- You can try making **fun sounds** that go with the action of an object or activity, or **narrate** what the other children are doing within the activity. For example, "Joy thinks this game is fun. She's hopping up and down!"
- Last, some children may need a **gentle physical prompt** to help them engage, either due to delays in their physical development, or to help them know what to do. Physical prompts should be respectful of the child and be used only to the degree necessary.

This might involve holding children in such a way that they can see what is going on around them or engage with materials, or modifying the setting to provide greater access.

Let's take the example of a game where the children jump together. If you have a child that cannot jump yet, an appropriate way to help the child engage could be to physically assist by gently bouncing the child up and down.

However, watch for the child's cues. If the child protests or pushes away from you, or doesn't seem to enjoy it, consider alternative ways to keep the child involved.

Slide 13 cont.

Model

Another strategy we hinted at earlier is to use modeling as a way to engage a child.

- This can be you modeling with another peer, having a peer show a child what they are doing, or you doing the modeling with the unengaged child.
- For example, during block clean-up time, point out on the action of children who are helping to clean up. "Joseph is putting all the blocks in the bin. Thanks Joseph!" followed by "Dorian, can you help Joseph?"

Environmental Arrangement

Both the way a room is arranged and the way you use classroom materials can help an unengaged child get involved.

- By ensuring the environment meets children's developmental and physical needs, you are more likely to promote engagement.
- Consider vision issues, as well as physical needs. You may need to place objects closer or farther away from a child to best encourage interaction and curiosity.
- Bring out toys that have been in storage or are new to try to get children interested. When bringing new items into the classroom, model how they can be used.
- Place high-interest toys and materials strategically, so they can get an unengaged child's attention.

Provide Choices

Having choices about toys or materials also helps children participate and become engaged.

Offering two choices is less overwhelming for a child, and can help them get involved in an activity more easily.

Point out Positive Peer Behaviors

Notice and talk about children in the classroom who are actively engaged with materials or activities.

Slide 13 cont.

- When you do this, the unengaged child may become interested and decide to join in.
- For example, if Joe is unengaged, and Asia is building a tower, say “Asia is building a big tower. I wonder if she would like help?”

When we support children in becoming actively engaged, we are encouraging their ability to listen and respond to others, engage in activities together, and to develop emotional regulation.

Slide 14: Engaging the Unengaged

To sum up this section, let’s watch a video of a child who is unengaged. Her teacher steps in to help her get comfortable and find an activity she’s interested in. As you are watching, note the strategies the teacher used to get the child engaged.



Play PRISM Engage - Engaging the Unengaged

What behaviors did you notice that showed the child was unengaged?

Pause for responses, then summarize the discussion, covering any from the Presenter Notes that weren’t part of the participant discussion.

What strategies did this teacher use to encourage the child to become engaged?

Pause for responses, then summarize the discussion, covering any from the Presenter Notes that weren’t part of the participant discussion.

Handout 4 provides some information on these different strategies we have discussed to make sure you have class-wide engagement.

Presenter Notes:

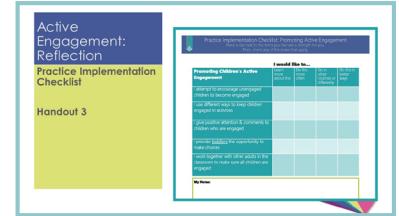
Staring off
Not looking at item in hands
Length of time not playing with friends or materials
No verbalizations

Established physical and visual contact
Pointed to activities
Provided only a couple of choices
Gave time to respond

Slide 15: Active Engagement - Reflection

Now that we've had a chance to discuss active engagement, you're going to have the opportunity to do some self-reflection.

Take out **Handout 5**. This is your Practice Implementation checklist, a tool you can use to reflect on your own teaching practices. This is the same type of checklist you've had in past trainings. This time, it's focused on strategies to keep children actively engaged. First, star items you feel are strengths for you. Then, check any of the boxes that apply. You may even find you want to check some boxes for items that are a strength for you. This checklist is just for your information; we won't be collecting it. However, you may find you'd like to follow up with your coach on some items.

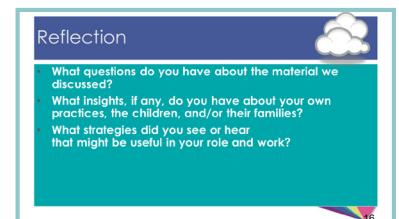


Slide 16: Reflection

We're about to wrap up this session with some reflection time, but before we do, do you have questions about the material we've covered today?

We've talked about ways to keep engagement going in your classroom and ways to support children who are unengaged,

Today we've learned strategies that promote children's engagement in interactions, how those can be used to set the stage for positive interactions and friendships, and why this is important to social-emotional development.



Slide 17: Major Messages to Take Home

Today we've talked about ways to keep children actively engaged and ways to encourage participation from children who are unengaged.

We've learned strategies that promote children's engagement in activities and interactions, how those can be used to set the stage for positive interactions and friendships, and why this is important to social-emotional development.

