

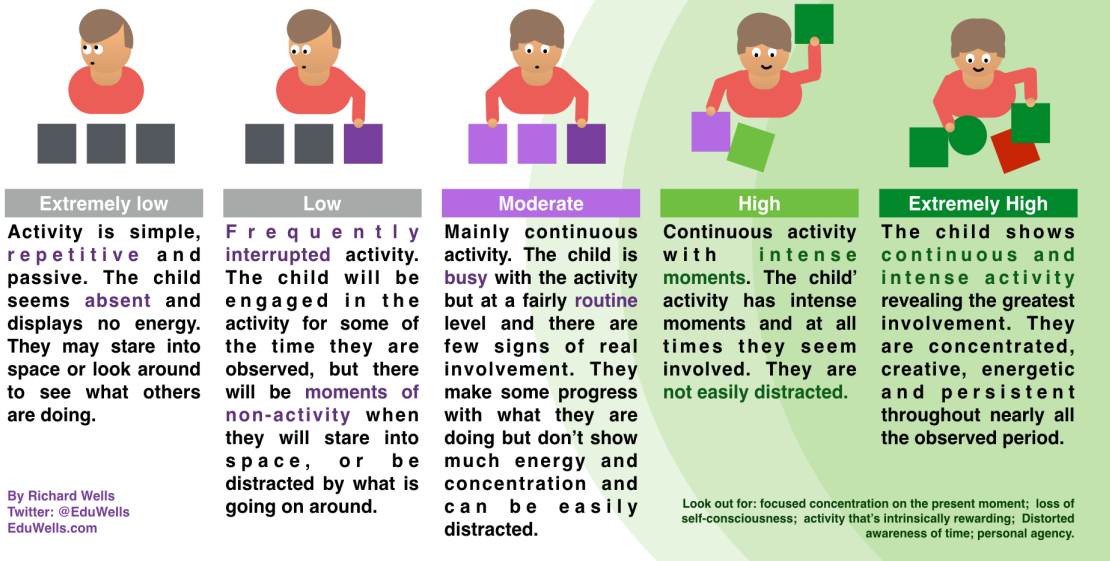
Emotional well being and involvement scales.

The Leuven Scale for Involvement (in learning)

It's time for an honest observation of your students

Based on: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/documents-ldtoolkit/leuven.pdf>

Let's hope teachers are designing and evaluating classroom activities with an aim that every learner might reach a state of **flow**.



Emotional well being

Well-being focuses on the extent to which pupils feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence. It is a crucial component of emotional intelligence and good mental health.

The Leuven Scale for Well-being

1) Extremely low

The child clearly shows signs of discomfort such as crying or screaming. They may look dejected, sad, frightened or angry. The child does not respond to the environment, avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/herself or others.

2) Low

The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.

3) Moderate

The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.

4) High

The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.

5) Extremely high

The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may talk to him/herself, play with sounds, hum, sing. The child appears relaxed and does not show any signs of stress or tension. He /she is open and accessible to the environment. The child expresses self-confidence and self-assurance.

The rationale underlying the focus on these two process dimension is that high levels of well-being and involvement lead in the end to high levels of child development and deep level learning. This latter concept is centred around the notion that learning should result in significant changes in a pupils capacity leading to better outcomes in the way that he or she approaches work, relationships and life in general.

Level of involvement

Involvement focuses on the extent to which children are operating to their full capabilities. In particular it refers to whether the child is focused, engaged and interested in various activities.

The Leuven Scale for Involvement

1) Low Activity

Activity at this level can be simple, stereotypic, repetitive and passive. The child is absent and displays no energy. There is an absence of cognitive demand. The child characteristically may stare into space. N.B. This may be a sign of inner concentration.

2) A Frequently Interrupted Activity

The child is engaged in an activity but half of the observed period includes moments of non-activity, in which the child is not concentrating and is staring into space. There may be frequent interruptions in the child's concentration, but his/her Involvement is not enough to return to the activity.

3) Mainly Continuous Activity

The child is busy at an activity but it is at a routine level and the real signals for Involvement are missing. There is some progress but energy is lacking and concentration is at a routine level. The child can be easily distracted.

4) Continuous Activity with Intense Moments

The child's activity has intense moments during which activities at Level 3 can come to have special meaning. Level 4 is reserved for the kind of activity seen in those intense moments, and can be deduced from the 'Involvement signals'. This level of activity is resumed after interruptions. Stimuli, from the surrounding environment, however attractive cannot seduce the child away from the activity.

5) Sustained Intense Activity

The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest Involvement. In the observed period not all the signals for Involvement need be there, but the essential ones must be present: concentration, creativity, energy and persistence. This intensity must be present for almost all the observation period.

Measuring well-being and involvement

The evaluation process begins by assessing the levels of well-being and involvement using the scales outlined above. Practitioners /teachers must observe children as a group or individually for a period of approximately two minutes then give a score for wellbeing and/or involvement. It is thought that unless children are operating at 4 or 5, learning will be limited. However, it is natural for levels of well-being and involvement to fluctuate throughout the day and it is unrealistic to expect children to operate at levels 4 or 5 at all times.

The initial observation is the starting point for further analysis concentrating on children with lower levels of well-being and / or involvement. This analysis should inform practitioners /teachers about the quality and suitability of their work and it should provide some sort of framework for intervention toward individual children.

Measuring a child's wellbeing and involvement can also empower and energise teachers and practitioners. If they can see that their efforts are leading to a high level of wellbeing involvement in their children then it's likely that this will serve as a galvanising force and result in a cycle of continual improvement.

The Centre for Research in Early Childhood published an interesting article detailing how to carry out the Leuven Scale observations: Effective Early Learning Programme Child Involvement Scale.

The Research Centre for Experiential Education (RCEE) has produced list of 10 action points that should help practitioners to focus the learning environment on the well-being and involvement of children:

1. Rearrange the classroom in appealing corners or areas.
2. Check the content of the areas and make them more challenging.
3. Introduce new and unconventional materials and activities.
4. Identify children's interests and offer activities that meet these.
5. Support activities by stimulating inputs.

6. Widen the possibilities for free initiative and support them with sound agreements.
7. Improve the quality of the relations amongst children and between children and teacher(s).
8. Introduce activities that help children to explore the world of behaviour, feelings and values.
9. Identify children with emotional problems and work out sustaining interventions.
10. Identify children with developmental needs and work out interventions that engender involvement.

In addition to the action points Professor Ferre Laevers (director of the RCEE) highlights the importance of the way in which adults interact with children. He believes that this is key to the achievement of well-being and involvement and recommends the use of the Adult Style Observation Schedule (ASOS), which is made up of three components: stimulation, sensitivity and giving autonomy. Writing in an article published in the Encyclopaedia of Early Childhood Development, Dr. Laevers defined the three components in the following terms:

“Stimulating interventions are open impulses that engender involvement, such as: suggesting activities to children, inviting children to communicate, asking thought-provoking questions and giving rich information. Sensitivity is evidenced in responses that witness empathic understanding of the child. Giving autonomy means: respecting the children’s initiative, acknowledging their interests, giving them room for experimentation, letting them decide upon the way an activity is performed and letting them participate in the setting of rules”.