

The Leuven Well-being and Involvement Scales

The tool focuses on two central indicators of quality early years provision: children's 'well being' and 'involvement'. Well-being refers to feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions and is crucial to good 'mental health'. Well-being is linked to self-confidence, a good degree of self-esteem and resilience. Involvement refers to being intensely engaged in activities and is considered to be a necessary condition for deep level learning and development.

Using the Assessment of Well-being and Involvement Scales

Leuven's has created a 5-point scale to measure both well-being and involvement. If there is consistent low level of well-being and/or involvement, it is likely a child's development will be threatened. The higher the levels of well-being and involvement we can achieve for the child, the more we can add to the child's development. When there are high levels of well-being and involvement, we know that deep level learning is taking place.

The evaluation starts with assessing the levels of well-being and involvement using the tables. The procedure is simple and can be compared to 'scanning'. Observe the children individually or as a group for about 2 minutes then give a score for well-being and/or involvement using the 5 point scale. Unless children are operating at 4 or 5, learning will be limited. It is unrealistic to suggest that children will be operating at levels 4 or 5 all of the time as levels will fluctuate throughout the day. However, it is useful to observe how well practitioners tune in to the children's levels of well-being and involvement and respond to low levels sensitively. Even a low level of well-being or involvement can become a learning opportunity, which can result in higher levels.

THE LEUVEN SCALE FOR WELL-BEING

Level	Well-being	Signals
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 The child does not respond to the environment avoids contact and is withdrawn.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 or 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 LEUVEN SCALE FOR INVOLVEMENT

Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely Low	Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. The child seems absent and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.
2	Low	Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be moments of non-activity when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around them.
3	Moderate	Mainly continuous activity. The child is busy with the activity but at a fairly routine level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and can be easily distracted.
4	High	Continuous activity with intense moments. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are not easily distracted.
5	Extremely High	The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.