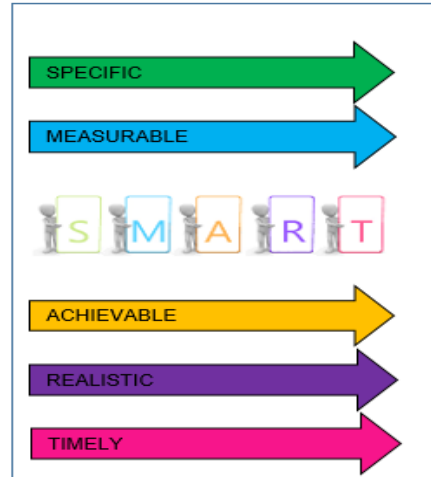# Tips for Teachers in Supporting Pupil Engagement and Motivation during Remote Learning

## Set SMART Targets



**S**pecific to pupils' skills, strengths and interests and personalised to their needs. Review the pupil's support plans to identify aspects of the programme that can be worked on in the home environment. Schedules – First/Then, preferred activity following any non-preferred activity, use reinforcers specific to individual pupils to encourage engagement in tasks.

**M**easurable through photos of a piece of work, the pupil demonstrating a particular skill, the end product (piece of art, baked goods, mowed lawn etc…).

**A**ttainable tasks/work that is within the pupil's level of ability. Emphasising opportunities for pupils in special schools/classes in particular to learn in their home environment, including participating in structured activities related to life skills and independent living. Advise parents and guardians on how to support their children's learning with 'achievable' learning activities that have a clear focus on home-learning rather than on home-teaching.

**R**ealistic, the tasks or work assigned should be manageable in the home environment without adding additional stress and anxiety to the pupil and their caregivers. Actively communicate and agree the programme of work with the pupil's parents and guardians, taking account of their capacity to communicate in English or Irish. The role of the parent is to support the child's engagement in learning to the extent which is feasible and practicable.

**T**imely, designate a set time each day for the tasks to be completed and a definitive start and finish time for tasks that can be flexible to fit in with family life. Ensure there is time and space available every day for the child to engage in learning. Physical space is very often a challenge too with overcrowded houses etc so where possible try to designate a work space/station for learning.

Be mindful that many parents are working from home or working out of the home and there may not be available technology for the pupil to use or there may not be anyone available or capable of assisting individual pupils with their work.

The internet and phone signal in many parts of the country is very poor, so engagement via internet based platforms may not be possible. Therefore, identifying and using technological and resource options available to the teacher and the pupils to support learning is advised. Provide regular opportunities for the pupil to engage with the class teacher/SET using various platforms as appropriate and available.

Where possible, share specific resources or individualised supports with parents and guardians. For example, share resources/strategies that are calming and regulating for pupils with autism. Let parents know the activities that their child does in school to assist them with emotional-regulation and self-regulation. Build in lots of movement breaks and sensory activities into their schedules.

**Here are some practical ways in which special education teachers can engage with their pupils:**

- Phone
- Provision of hard copy work packs to parents and guardians
- E-mail
- Online video communication apps such as Skype and Seesaw (it is possible to upload photos of work to seesaw)
- Audio-visual online platforms so they can talk with and see the parent and the pupil and provide online learning support.

Affirm what parents and guardians have done to date and reassure them that there are many opportunities for their child to learn in and around the home through, for example:

- Physical activities (ball games, balance games, using ride-ons, walking, running, swings, slides),
- Social skills (board games, sports with siblings)
- Manual dexterity (Lego, art, gardening)
- Personal care skills (brushing teeth and hair, washing hands)
- Life skills (cooking, cleaning, housework, using a washing machine or dishwasher, writing shopping lists, helping to order food online)

Emphasise the importance of play, both structured and unstructured, especially for younger learners

Encourage parents and guardians to mind their own health and wellbeing as the wellbeing of children with SEN starts with that of their parents and guardians and carers

Involve the pupils, where possible, in agreeing the extent of the work programme

Support parents and guardians to install child friendly web-browsers and internet filters or to access digital learning tools

Advise parents and guardians on appropriate prompts, approaches to best methods for their child that are similar, in so far as that is possible, to the approach taken in the school environment. Use of Visuals to aid pupil understanding of schedules and daily routines

Additionally, schools could examine the feasibility of linking with locally-based support or community agencies, including disability organisations, to assist in that regard.
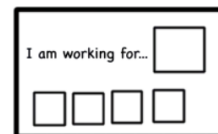
Finally, remember ... if you don't have a productive day, there's always tomorrow!

**Some links that might be helpful in supporting pupil engagement**

- Parent Booklets https://ncse.ie/parent-primary-promoting-learning-and-behaviour-at-home (tips for promoting positive behaviour, developing routines at home, reward systems and behaviour contracts). The NCSE have a theme each week and release resources in line with each of these.

- Use of FIRST THEN NEXT schedules will aid completion of tasks
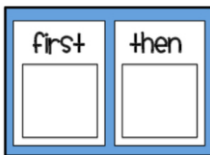


- **Timers**-sand-timers or egg timers can be used. On the IPAD students can be locked in to specific apps in the accessibility section.  https://www.online-stopwatch.com/classroom-timers/

- Many links to **free  apps** available on NCSE website- https://ncse.ie/online-resources-for-teachers

- Students need to be motivated- **Reinforcer check list**-https://sesa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Reinforcer_Checklist.pdf **Token Economy**-https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Behaviour_Resource_Bank/Advice_Sheet_37_Token_Economy.pdf



- **Sensory activities** https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen-sensory-and-physical-needs/sen-sensory/sen-sensory-activities-and-games

- Schedule for **self care** https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/schedule.htm