



## Using a Be-Active Box

### What is a Be-Active Box

The idea of a Be-Active Box (or Little Room) was devised by Lilli Nielson for children with sensory difficulties and help bring the environment closer to the child so it is easy for them to see, touch and hear the objects and engage with them. They can be used for a child with limited mobility, encouraging exploration and movement, cause and effect, object permanence and other early play skills. They can also support the development of listening and visual skills.

Objects can be securely suspended from the top so they hang within the child's reach and textured materials attached to the sides.

A purpose-made Be-Active Box can be bought from Suffolk Playworks or you can make your own from a large cardboard box.



If you are working with an older child in a wheelchair try using a very large cardboard box (e.g. a washing machine box) that you can position the child in seated in their chair.

### Why use a Be-Active Box?

It provides:

- A safe, secure environment within the busy classroom
- The Be-Active Box can be set up to provide a consistent environment each time the child uses it
- It can support the development of visual and listening skills
- It stimulates movement
- It encourages independent play and exploration, including an understanding of cause and effect
- It allows the child to learn at his/her own rate without outside interference

## **Some suggestions for materials to use**

- Use objects that you know are motivating for the child
- Choose black and white patterned objects, objects of a single block of colour, objects with reflective light surfaces
- Coloured lights- including those that contain an element of movement to encourage visual attention, e.g. fibre optics, chasing lights
- Use objects that create sound- bells, crunchy foil, rattles etc. that give good auditory feedback to the child about his/her actions
- Use objects with different textures to provide a range of tactual information
- Use everyday objects such as keys, wooden spoons, etc.

## **Some suggestions for what to observe**

- Which hand does the child use, how does s/he use his/her hands (e.g. separately, 2 hands together)?
- Does the child use his/her feet, singly or together, etc.?
- What other body parts does the child use to explore?
- How does the child explore? E.g. What movement- pushing, swiping, banging, grasping and pulling, sliding?
  
- What are the favourite materials and objects?
- What are the materials/objects the child responds to visually and where were they positioned?
- What are the sounds s/he responds to?
- Is the child more vocal whilst using the Be-active Box?
- Where are the objects positioned that the child responds to? (Which side, or which hole suspended from?)
- Is there any difference in the child's behaviour before or after using the Be-Active Box?
- What happens when you introduce a new object or change the position of familiar objects?
- Does s/he show a strong dislike to any of the materials/objects used?

## **Things to remember**

- Be careful not to overwhelm the child with too many stimuli- be careful of creating visual clutter and make sure there are clear contrasts
- Use the Be-Active Box as a learning environment, not a minder
- Be careful not to interfere with the child's explorations. Let him/her discover the Be-Active Box for him/herself
- Observe regularly and systematically and use your observations to plan how to support the child to move on in their explorations (e.g. encouraging the child to use both hands together; transferring their attention between two objects you have identified as being enjoyed)
- Don't wait for the child to get bored or distressed before finishing the sessions

May 2016