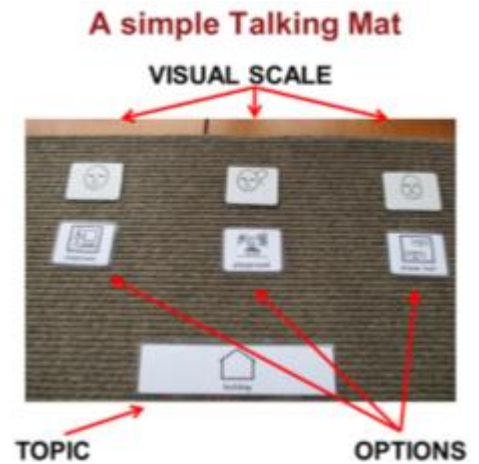


Talking Mats

What is a Talking Mat?

- A well-researched communication tool.
- Enables children to express their views.
- It supports children to understand, reflect and organise their thoughts and can be used to help develop positive interactions.
- Can be used with different children in a variety of settings.
- Provides a way for children to effectively express themselves in a visual way that can be easily recorded.
- A useful tool in supporting transition



Why can a "Talking Mat" be more successful than conversation? ...even for more able students

- Provides a structured framework for open questions
- Supports language processing → visual!
- Reduces memory demands.
- Reduces distractibility.
- Avoids direct confrontation and direct interaction as it doesn't require eye contact etc.
- Gives the child some control.
- Allows the child to observe their thoughts as they emerge.
- Allows the child to change their minds.
- Reduces leading.

What to Do.....

Name the topic you are going to talk about

1. Present the options **ONE AT A TIME** using **OPEN QUESTIONS** e.g. "What do you feel about?"/ "What do you think about?" **RATHER** than "Do you like?"
2. Give **TIME** to respond... Don't rush, silence is OK!
3. Encourage physical participation where possible.
4. **ADD IN BLANKS** where appropriate.....prompted by "Anything else?"
5. Take a **PHOTO** and copy for child's file
6. Have fun!



Things to consider....

- Distractions
- Language processing and speed
- Difficulty in thinking, listening and doing
- Visual needs
- Low mood
- Motivation
- Interest in the topic
- **IS ANYONE LISTENING? / IS ANYONE GOING TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?**
- Handling any conflicts
- Issues of vulnerability

Talking Mats in action

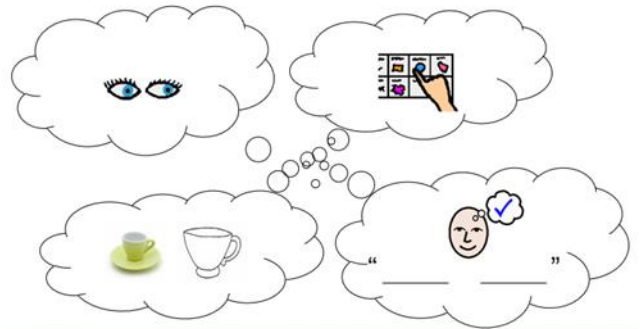


Early Years Inclusion Team

Getting Started

- How do they express a preference?
- Do they have a way of expressing yes or no - or even don't know?
- Can they make a choice in any way?

Skills that are needed....



If not -



- Gather information from those who know them well - start with parent/ teacher/ support worker/ speech and language therapist - EHC plan.
- Spend time with them to try to see things from their point of view- their experience/responses

Gaining the Voice of the child

There is never any excuse not to obtain and record a child's wishes and views – every child makes their wishes/likes/dislikes known in some way. We should never assume anyone does not have an opinion or view and it is our challenge to find ways to secure this



Talking Mats video on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqPBHxxLerA>

Some useful tips for you to watch.....

