



THE ARCHETYPE APPROACH / CASE STUDY LIBRARY

AA-CS-001

Regulation Before Expectation

How Predictability Helped a Child Access Their Strengths

CASE TYPE	Transition & Regulation
AGE / CONTEXT	4 years - settling in
DATE RANGE	09/25-12/25
PRACTICE SITE	Children of Towan Kindergarten
PRACTITIONER	Oliver Riddett

EMERGING AA PRINCIPLE

Regulation can restore access to capacities that overwhelm temporarily hides.

OBSERVE

What is happening?

RECOGNISE

What pattern is this?

BALANCE

What is missing?

INTEGRATE

What has emerged?

Observe -> Recognise -> Balance -> Integrate

What was happening?

The pattern as it first appeared



INITIAL PRESENTATION

A child presented with fluctuating emotional regulation, particularly during transitions, changes in routine, and periods of sensory overwhelm. They often struggled to stop preferred activities and move into group expectations without distress.

RECURRING PATTERNS

- Overwhelm during rapid transitions
- Difficulty stopping preferred play
- Emotional dysregulation during routine changes
- Sensory sensitivity in busy environments
- Refusal when overwhelmed
- Fluctuating participation depending on emotional state

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURS

The child frequently became distressed during transitions and unpredictable moments. Engagement varied significantly depending on environmental conditions, sensory load and emotional preparation.

CONTEXTS AND TRIGGERS

- Sudden changes
- Busy sensory environments
- Group expectations without preparation
- Unpredictability
- Rapid shifts between activities

WHAT WAS THE CHILD SHOWING US?

The child appeared to need predictability, preparation, pacing and emotional safety before participation could remain accessible.

What pattern emerged?

Seeing beneath the behaviour



PRIMARY PATTERN

Mover / Planner fluctuation

SUPPORTING PATTERN

Watcher / Friend sensitivity

BRIDGING FUNCTION

Thinker through preparation and reflective pacing

SHADOW / IMBALANCE PRESENTATION

Mover responses became overwhelmed during rapid transitions, while Planner needs became more visible when predictability was lost. Refusal often appeared as a protective strategy rather than deliberate opposition.

POSSIBLE UNDERLYING NEEDS

- Predictability
- Emotional safety
- Co-regulation
- Transition preparation
- Sensory pacing
- Relational anchoring
- Time to process change
- Emotional containment

DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

The difficulties appeared state-dependent rather than fixed. When emotionally supported and appropriately scaffolded, the child demonstrated flexibility, collaboration and thoughtful participation.

PERCEPTION SHIFT

The key perception shift was from 'This child will not transition' to 'This child is losing access to balance during rapid change.'

What was introduced?

Keeping the strength - widening access



ADULT APPROACH

- Use calm co-regulation and emotionally predictable responses.
- Join play before directing it wherever possible.
- Prepare the child before transitions rather than introducing expectations at the point of change.
- Allow observation and processing time before participation.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLAY ADJUSTMENTS

- Visual sequencing and timers
- Slower transition pacing
- Movement opportunities before group expectations
- Reduction of sudden transition pressure
- Collaborative storytelling and sequencing activities

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Mover -> Thinker, supported by Planner -> Imagineer flexibility

Preparation, pacing and reflective sequencing created a pause between activation and action.

BALANCING SEQUENCE

Anchor -> Watch -> Plan -> Act

The aim was not to make the child more compliant. It was to make regulation available before expectation.

What became newly available?

Growth without losing the original strength



OBSERVABLE CHANGE

When supported appropriately, the child increasingly demonstrated flexible adaptation during change, collaborative imagination, sustained concentration, reflective thinking and greater emotional recovery.

WHAT BECAME VISIBLE

- Improved tolerance of transitions and disruption
- More consistent group participation
- Greater peer access when regulated
- Improved expression of needs during challenging moments
- Increased confidence navigating change when prepared
- Greater flexibility without losing the need for structure

WHAT EMERGED OVER TIME?

The child's strengths were not created through intervention. They became more consistently accessible through emotional preparation, environmental adaptation and thoughtful pacing.

INTEGRATION

Regulation widened access to abilities that were already present.



Regulation Before Expectation

Children may not lack developmental capacities entirely. At times of overwhelm, they may temporarily lose access to them. Preparation, predictability and co-regulation can help those capacities come back online.

AA SNAPSHOT

PRIMARY PATTERN

Mover / Planner

BALANCING RELATIONSHIP

Mover -> Thinker; Planner -> Imagineer

BALANCING STRATEGY

Preparation, pacing, co-regulation and sequencing

CASE CATEGORY

Transition & Regulation

SUPPORTING PATTERN

Watcher / Friend

MAIN PRESENTATION

Transition overwhelm and fluctuating regulation

OUTCOME THEME

Access to strengths through regulation

AGE / CONTEXT

4 years - settling in

CLOSING REFLECTION

“Children do not unfold through correction alone. They unfold through relationship, balance, safety, rhythm and being deeply seen.”

AA TAGS

Mover

Planner

Watcher

Friend

Thinker

Transition Regulation

Sensory Pacing

Co-Regulation

Flexibility

Preparation Before Action

AA EVIDENCE THEMES

- Behaviour reveals perception
- Regulation before expectation
- Environment shapes access
- Adult pacing influences outcomes
- Balance rather than correction

AA DEVELOPMENTAL REFLECTION | EVIDENCE STRENGTH: 5 / 5

This is a particularly strong early AA case because it separates developmental capacity from access to developmental capacity. The child could show flexibility, reflection and participation when regulated; these capacities became less available under overwhelm. Repeated examples of the same pattern across different transitions would strengthen the case further.