

## **All About High Scope – FAQ’s**

We receive many inquiries each week, either through our Web site or e-mail address, asking about HighScope Foundation “basics.” Even persons who know about HighScope in one context, such as research, are curious and even surprised to learn about our other activities, for example, staff training or publishing. But the majority of queries concern the hows and whys of the HighScope early childhood educational approach. That’s why we’ve put together the following list of questions and answers, starting off with a brief summary of how we got started and all that we do and then highlighting the major components of how we approach educating young children.

### **What is the HighScope Educational Research Foundation?**

The HighScope Educational Research Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization, established in 1970, with headquarters in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The Foundation promotes the development of children and youth worldwide and supports educators and parents as they help children learn. The Foundation's mission is to lift lives through education. HighScope engages in the following activities:

- Develops curricula (instructional programs, professional development programs, and assessment instruments)
- Trains teachers, caregivers, and youth workers
- Conducts research in education and interprets and publishes what it discovers
- Publicly supports programs and policies that benefit children and youth
- Publishes educational books, videotapes, and other materials

### **What is the HighScope Curriculum?**

HighScope's educational approach emphasizes “active participatory learning.” Active learning means students have direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children’s interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. Children take the first step in the learning process by making choices and following through on their plans and decisions. Teachers, caregivers, and parents offer physical, emotional, and intellectual support. In active learning settings, adults expand children’s thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions.

### **How does the HighScope approach differ from other early childhood programs?**

The HighScope educational approach is consistent with the best practices recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Performance Standards, and other guidelines for developmentally based programs.

Within this broad framework, however, HighScope has unique features that differentiate it from other early childhood programs. One is the daily **plan-do-review sequence**. Research shows that planning and reviewing are the two components of the program day

most positively and significantly associated with children's scores on measures of developmental progress.

A second unique feature is our **curriculum content**, the social, intellectual, and physical building blocks that are essential to young children's optimal growth. Our content areas are organized in five main categories that correspond to state and national learning standards; the five categories are (1) approaches to learning; (2) language, literacy, and communication; (3) social and emotional development; (4) physical development, health, and well-being; and (5) arts and sciences. HighScope has further divided the arts and sciences categories into the subjects of mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts.

Within these preschool content areas are 58 **key developmental indicators (KDIs)**, formerly called key experiences. The KDIs are statements of observable behaviors that define the important learning areas for young children. HighScope teachers keep these indicators in mind when they set up the environment and plan activities to encourage learning and social interaction. They also form the basis of HighScope's child assessment tool — the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR).

### **What are HighScope's goals for young children?**

HighScope is a comprehensive educational approach that strives to help children develop in all areas. Our goals for young children are:

- To learn through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas
- To become independent, responsible, and confident — ready for school and ready for life
- To learn to plan many of their own activities, carry them out, and talk with others about what they have done and what they have learned
- To gain knowledge and skills in important academic, social, and physical areas

HighScope provides children with carefully planned experiences in reading, mathematics, and science. For example, curriculum materials and staff development in the area of literacy are compatible with the latest findings from research and practice. Our key developmental indicators in mathematics and our Preschool COR assessment items are aligned with the early childhood standards of the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics.

Social development is another important learning area in HighScope programs. Studies continually demonstrate that children in HighScope classrooms show high levels of initiative. Teachers further support social development by helping children learn how to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development stresses that all these areas of academic and socioemotional growth are essential for school readiness.

### **What is the evidence that the HighScope approach works?**

Almost 40 years of research shows that HighScope programs advance the development of children and improve their chance of living a better life through adulthood. National research with children from different backgrounds has shown that those who attend HighScope programs score higher on measures of development than similar children enrolled in other preschool and child care programs. The Foundation is perhaps best known for the HighScope **Perry Preschool Project** study, which compared low-income children who attended our program with those who did not. As adults, preschool participants had higher high school graduation rates, higher monthly earnings, less use of welfare, and fewer arrests than those without the program. In addition to benefiting the individuals who attended preschool, these results show that preschool leads to savings for taxpayers: for every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education, society saves \$13 in the cost of special education, public assistance, unemployment benefits, and crime. Research also shows that HighScope training with teachers and caregivers is highly effective. In a national study, teachers with HighScope training had higher quality programs than did similar teachers without such training. Higher quality programs were in turn linked to better developmental outcomes for children.

### **Who uses HighScope?**

The HighScope approach serves the full range of children and families from all social, financial, and ethnic backgrounds. The approach is used in public and private agencies, half- and full-day preschools, Head Start programs, public school prekindergarten programs, child care centers, home-based child care programs, and programs for children with special needs. The HighScope approach for grades K–5 is used in school districts around the country and is approved as a Comprehensive School Reform model. In addition to the programs throughout the United States using HighScope, HighScope Institutes operate in Great Britain, Ireland, Mexico, The Netherlands, South Africa, Singapore, Korea, and Indonesia.

### **What do teachers and other adults do in a HighScope program?**

In HighScope programs, adults are as active in the learning process as children. A mutual give-and-take relationship exists in which both groups participate as leaders and followers, speakers and listeners. Adults interact with children by sharing control with them, focusing on their strengths, forming genuine relationships with them, supporting their play ideas, and helping them resolve conflicts. Adults participate as partners in children's activities rather than as supervisors or managers. They respect children and their choices, and encourage initiative, independence, and creativity. Because adults are well trained in child development, they provide materials and plan experiences that children need to grow and learn.

### **What does a HighScope program setting look like?**

The space and materials in a HighScope setting are carefully chosen and arranged to promote active learning. Although we do not endorse specific types or brands of toys and

equipment, HighScope does provide general guidelines for selecting materials that are meaningful and interesting to children. The learning environment in HighScope programs has the following characteristics:

- Is welcoming to children
- Provides enough materials for all the children
- Allows children to find, use, and return materials independently
- Encourages different types of play and learning
- Allows the children to see and easily move through all the areas of the classroom or center
- Is flexible so children can extend their play by bringing materials from one area to another
- Provides materials that reflect the diversity of children's family lives

### **What happens each day in a HighScope classroom?**

HighScope classrooms follow a predictable sequence of events known as the daily routine. This provides a structure within which children can make choices, follow their interests, and develop their abilities in each content area. While each HighScope program decides on the routine that works best for its setting, schedule, and population, the following segments are always included during the program day.

***Plan-do-review time.*** This three-part sequence is unique to the HighScope approach. It includes a 10–15-minute small-group time during which children plan what they want to do during work time (the area to visit, materials to use, and friends to play with); a 45–60-minute work time for carrying out their plans; and another 10–15-minute small-group time for reviewing and recalling with an adult and other children what they've done and learned. In between “do” and “review,” children clean up by putting away their materials or storing unfinished projects. Generally, the older the children, the longer and more detailed their planning and review times become. Children are very active and purposeful during “do” time because they are pursuing activities that interest them. They may follow their initial plans, but often, as they become engaged, their plans shift or may even change completely.

***Small-group time.*** During this time a small group of ideally 6–8 children meet with an adult to experiment with materials and solve problems. Although adults choose a small-group activity to emphasize one or more particular content areas, children are free to use the materials in any way they want during this time. The length of small group varies with the age, interests, and attention span of the children. At the end of the period, children help with cleanup.

***Large-group time.*** Large-group time builds a sense of community. Up to 20 children and 2 adults come together for movement and music activities, storytelling, and other shared experiences. Children have many opportunities to make choices and play the role of leader.

***Outside time.*** Children and adults spend at least 30 minutes outside every day, enjoying vigorous and often noisy play in the fresh air. Without the constraints of four walls, they feel freer to make large movements and experiment with the full range of their voices. Children run, climb, swing, roll, jump, yell, and sing with energy. They experience the wonders of nature, including collecting, gardening, and examining wildlife. During extreme weather or other unsafe conditions, teachers find an alternative indoor location for large-motor activity.

***Transition times.*** Transitions are the minutes between other blocks of the day, as well as arrival and departure times. Our goal is to make transitions pass smoothly since they set the stage for the next segment in the day's schedule. They also provide meaningful learning opportunities themselves. Whenever possible, we give children choices about how to make the transition. For example, they may choose how to move across the floor on their way to small-group time. With a consistent daily routine children know what is going to take place next, and it is not unusual for them to announce the next activity and initiate the transition.

***Eating and resting times.*** Meals and snacks allow children to enjoy eating healthy food in a supportive social setting. Rest is for quiet, solitary activities. Since both activities happen at home as well as school, we try to respect family customs at these times as much as possible. Our main goal is to create a shared and secure sense of community within the program.

### **How does HighScope help children learn how to resolve conflicts?**

Conflict is inevitable during the course of children's play, whenever they become frustrated or angry. This does not mean children are bad, selfish, or mean. They simply have not yet learned how to interpret social cues, understand other viewpoints, or match their behavior to the situation. To help children learn how to work out their disagreements together, HighScope teachers are trained to use a six-step process to solve problems and resolve conflicts:

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions or language — A calm manner reassures children that things are under control and can be worked out to everyone's satisfaction.
2. Acknowledge feelings — Children need to express their feelings before they can let go of them and think about possible solutions to the problem.
3. Gather information — Adults are careful not to make assumptions or take sides. We ask open-ended questions to help children describe what happened in their own words.
4. Restate the problem — Using the information provided by the children, the adult restates the problem, using clear and simple terms and, if necessary, rephrasing hurtful words.

5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together — Adults encourage children to suggest solutions, helping to put them in practical and concrete terms. We accept their ideas, rather than impose our own, thus giving children the satisfaction of having solved the problem.

6. Give follow-up support as needed — Adults help children begin to carry out their solution, making sure that no one remains upset. If necessary, we repeat one or more steps until all the children return to their play.

### **How can families use HighScope at home?**

Many of the activities that HighScope teachers offer in their programs can also be done by families at home. For example, parents can provide many different learning materials, often using everyday objects that cost little or nothing. Parents can encourage children to make plans, carry them out, and talk about what they have learned from their experiences. They can try to be more predictable in their routines so children know what to expect. And they can use the steps of conflict resolution to help children resolve disputes with siblings and friends. HighScope classrooms welcome visits from parents and encourage them to participate in field trips and other special events. We are especially eager for parents to share things about their families and culture so they can be incorporated into the program's daily routine. In addition, staff hold regular workshops to help parents understand child development and how it is fostered at school and home. Teachers and caregivers conduct at least one home visit and two conferences with parents each year to share what is happening in the program in general and with their child in particular. In sum, HighScope regards parents and teachers as partners in promoting children's learning.

### **How does HighScope assess children?**

HighScope assesses children's development with comprehensive observations rather than narrow tests, using the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR). Observing a broad range of behaviors over several weeks or months gives us a more accurate picture of children's true capabilities than tests administered in one-time sessions. Using the content areas as a framework, teachers record daily anecdotes describing what children do and say. Two or three times a year, they review these anecdotes and rate each child at the highest level he or she has demonstrated so far on 30 items in six areas of development: initiative, social relations, creative representation, movement and music, language and literacy, and logic and mathematics. Children's COR scores help teachers design learning opportunities tailored to their level of development. The COR is also used to explain children's progress to parents during conferences. Instead of only giving parents abstract scores, teachers share anecdotes illustrating what their children are doing now and how they will continue to grow. HighScope has also used the COR in state and national research projects to investigate the effectiveness of our educational approach and to compare it to other curriculum models.

### **How does HighScope evaluate programs?**

A proven model can only benefit children if it is implemented with high levels of fidelity. To guarantee that programs claiming to do HighScope are indeed using our educational approach, we accredit programs and certify teachers and trainers with the second edition of the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA). Trained evaluators observe in the classroom and interview program staff to record objective notes and complete ratings on 72 items in seven areas: learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interaction, curriculum planning and assessment, parent involvement and family services, staff qualifications and staff development, and program management. The PQA is also an excellent tool for staff development, because detailed examples of “ideal” implementation are built into the scoring system. Like the COR, the PQA is also used in state and national evaluation projects to assess the impact of training and examine the relationship between program quality and children’s development.

### **Is HighScope compatible with standards for which programs are held accountable?**

HighScope's key developmental indicators (formerly key experiences) and assessment tools can be aligned with the teaching standards and child outcomes required by states, school districts, and federally funded programs. For example, the Preschool COR assessment instrument aligns with specific indicators in the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, and computer versions of the COR will generate reports documenting child progress in terms of Head Start Domains, Elements, and Indicators. Similarly, the Head Start User Guide to the PQA (included in the Administration Manual of the second edition of the Preschool PQA) connects each PQA item to the relevant criteria in the Head Start Performance Standards. The HighScope educational approach can also be cross-mapped with the early childhood standards of virtually every local school district or state department of education. As a whole, the HighScope Curriculum and teaching approach are compatible with the best developmental practices recommended by respected practitioner groups. The HighScope Demonstration Preschool is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In developing specific content areas, HighScope also takes into account the standards and guidelines of relevant professional organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

### **How does HighScope train people to use the educational approach?**

HighScope trains administrators, curriculum specialists, teachers, and child care providers in the HighScope approach. We also prepare them to work directly with parents. Training is held at individual program locations and at Foundation headquarters in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where we operate a Demonstration Preschool visited by hundreds of educators each year. In the past 30 years, HighScope has conducted training in every state and in more than 20 foreign countries. We hold an annual international conference on education in Michigan as well as several regional conferences throughout the year.

To accommodate different training needs and schedules, HighScope offers a variety of face-to-face and online courses and workshops ranging from one day to multiple weeks

spread over several months. Training combines theory with practical application. HighScope curriculum courses cover all aspects of understanding and implementing the educational approach with children and youth. Adult training courses enable those in supervisory positions to train and support staff at their own agencies as they use the HighScope model. In addition to these basic courses, HighScope also offers an ever-expanding roster of advanced workshops and seminars on such topics as reading, assessment, conflict resolution, visual and performing arts, and staff supervision.

The Foundation has collaborative arrangements with institutions of higher education, enabling participants to earn undergraduate or graduate credit for attending training. Successful completion of HighScope course work also results in teacher or trainer certification, or program accreditation, based on rigorous evaluation criteria including assessment with the PQA. Anyone with an interest in HighScope can also join the HighScope Membership Association to receive updated information about Foundation activities as well as free periodicals and discounts on Foundation conferences and products.

### **How did HighScope get its name and what does it mean?**

The late David Weikart, HighScope's founder, relates how HighScope got its name in his memoir *How HighScope Grew*. HighScope was originally established as a camp program for talented adolescents. Weikart relates that the name was chosen by the camp's founders "at the end of a long evening of heady and serious discussion about [the program's] purpose and goals." They chose "high" to signify their aspiration level and "scope" to describe the breadth of vision they hoped to achieve.

For a more comprehensive overview of the HighScope, see the publications listed at right, or visit the Training and Conferences section of this Web site to find out about training options. For training information, e-mail us at [training@highscope.org](mailto:training@highscope.org) or for general information, e-mail us at [info@highscope.org](mailto:info@highscope.org).