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TRUST in Children's Play

By Beth Marshall, Director, HighScope Early Childhood Department

Editor's Note: *The articles in this issue were originally published in the January/February 2001 issue of Extensions. As the value of children's play is of timeless importance, we are presenting these articles again with updated references to the key developmental indicators (KDIs) and new sidebars added by HighScope staff.*

At HighScope, I answer many phone inquiries about our curriculum and its everyday implementation at a variety of sites. Many of these calls center around the increasing pressures on early childhood programs to measure results by required child outcomes and performance standards.

Often, a program's funding depends on the ability of its staff to document how well it is reaching these goals for children. As a result, many dedicated, effective teachers are second-guessing their current practices. I hear many comments such as the following from teachers: "I know it's not right for the children, but maybe I should just teach to the test." "I really want to do HighScope, but it seems like I'll have to be more directive to 'cover' these outcomes."

What is a teacher to do? The pressures for documented results are very real. Should teachers

"teach to the tests" against their better judgment about what is best for children? Are there ways to meet assessment needs that don't require teachers to compromise their



This teacher listens closely as the child tells her about his interest in playing with woodworking tools.

educational values? This article explores these questions and describes how programs can meet required standards while using the child-centered HighScope approach.

Insights From the Children

During this same period, I did a stint substituting in the HighScope Demonstration Preschool. This experience reinforced my belief in the active learning philosophy I have been recommending to the teachers I train. It also convinced me once again that assessment doesn't have to conflict with good teaching practices. As is so often the case, it was listening to and learning from the children that sustained my beliefs.

In daily team planning sessions, my team teacher, Mary, and I discussed and recorded our observations of children — a usual practice in HighScope programs. We wrote many *anecdotes*, or brief, specific reports about individual children's actions and words. These notes and other information about the children served as the basis for generating our next day's lesson plans. (For more about this anecdote-writing and planning process see Epstein & Hohmann, 2012.)

During one day's planning session, Mary and I talked about some interesting water play I had observed at work time. Several of the children — Michael, Kodah, Adam, and Lauren — had been working in the water table with the eyedroppers. They had discovered that squeezing the eyedroppers under water would make bubbles in the water. Their excitement about this discovery gave me the idea to do something with bubbles at small-group time the next day. I decided to give each of the children in my small group some simple materials: a straw and a bowl filled with a mixture of water and dish detergent. (We planned a different activity for Mary's small group.)

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When children pursue their curiosity while working with open-ended materials, the opportunities for learning are almost unlimited!

The 5 Ingredients of Active Learning

- Materials
- Manipulation
- Choice
- Child language and thought
- Adult scaffolding

The next day's small-group time was a hit with my group! The children were active, engaged, and delighted to discover that they could make a heaping bowl of bubbles, squeeze the bubbles in their hands, and blow more bubbles. As I moved from child to child, their squeals, excitement, and new discoveries were seemingly endless:

"Mine's getting bigger and bigger and bigger and biggest."

"Look, I blew really hard and three [bubbles] are stuck together!"

"Mine disappear."

"If you blow really fast, you get tons of little bubbles."

"I'm cutting my bubbles in half like she did. Then they're going to spill all over the table."

"Mine are bigger than the bowl now!"

"Adam did one huge bubble."

"I made 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. I made 7 bubbles."

"When Grammy gives me a bath, I get smelly bubbles."

"Her bubbles feel soft like my bubbles."

And, from a child in the other small group, "Can we do this at our small group tomorrow?"

I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing! I observed the children engaging with key developmental indicators (KDIs) in the curriculum content areas **Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Language, Literacy, and Communication; Mathematics; and Science and Technology** — all because the children were interested, engaged, and having fun as they explored the bubbles! I was bowled over once again by the power and magic of play. (Note: the key developmental indicators are the building blocks of thinking, reasoning, and learning at each stage of development — see "The Bubble Play," on pages 9–11, for a listing of the key developmental indicators involved in the bubble play.)

I immediately thought back to the phone calls I had been getting at the office. This experience was a strong reminder that, for me or any teaching adult, one of the most important roles we play in the preschool classroom is to be supporters of young

“As teachers or caregivers, we need to take our cues from the children – instead of thinking ‘What child outcome, learning goal, or rubric must I cover today?’ we need to find that sense of wonder and curiosity in ourselves.”

children’s active learning through play. And it’s our job to find and support the content or learning that happens in that play.

Play — A Magical Experience

Young children’s play is creative and even magical. Young children bring curiosity as well as a sense of discovery and delight to their play. As teachers or caregivers, we need to take our cues from the children — instead of thinking “What child outcome, learning goal, or rubric must I cover today?” we need to find that sense of wonder and curiosity in ourselves: “I wonder how I can support Dali as he continues to build tall spaceships with the cardboard tubes and boxes?” or “I’m curious about whether and how the children will use the donated cell phones in their play.” If teachers could keep this perspective in mind, perhaps some of the stress and frustration I heard in those voices on the phone would dissipate. These adults could get back to doing what they know is best for children — supporting their active learning by joining in play.

I have come to understand that to be a successful supporter of children’s play and learning, I must truly trust in the process of active learning. I have come to think of this trust in a broader sense, summarized in the letters **T-R-U-S-T**. Let’s take a closer look at what each letter stands for.

TRUST — A Definition

T — Time. *Take **time** to enter children’s play and show children your playfulness.*

In our Demonstration Preschool classroom, the children sing “It’s time to put the books away” as a transition from greeting time to the period when they read the message board. One day, a child added the verse “It’s time to put the teachers away.” The rest of the children were delighted as the teachers joined right in with the giggly singing. More invented verses followed: “It’s time to put the parents away,” “It’s time to put the babies away,” and “It’s time to put the children away.” The adults took time to be playful and to really respond to the children. If they had been too eager to get through the “real business” of the day, they might have rushed through this transition



When teachers respect children's discovery process, relationships and learning can blossom.

“Adults show their respect by entering the play and following the children's lead – by playing in the same way the children do and by allowing children to direct the play.”

and missed out on an opportunity to support children's learning. And what did the children learn? That they can have fun with language, that they can modify and change their songs, that the adults have a sense of humor and can share a laugh with them (further building their relationship), and that school is a pleasant place to be.

R – Respect. *Adults respect the children's intentions and ideas.*

Adults show their respect by entering the play and following the children's lead – by playing in the same way the children do and by allowing children to direct the play. On one day at work time, Chris, an adult, was playing with some children who were pretending to be princesses in a castle. The children were “hiding from a dragon.” Chris put on a hat and a cape (like the other “princesses” were wearing) and called the children “Princess” when she spoke to them. She helped as they arranged pillows on the steps to make their castle. The princesses had decided they needed magic wands (chopsticks) that would “freeze” the dragon if she got too close, so Chris had a “wand” too. Elana, the child who was the dragon, modified the play. First she was a dragon, then she was a “fire dragon” that could melt through the “freezed ice,” next she had her own wand that “freezed” the princesses, and finally she was a “nice dragon” who became their pet.

Chris respected Elana's ideas and followed along with her changes. She helped explain the ideas to the other princesses by repeating and restating Elana's words. (“The dragon says she can melt our ‘freeze wands’ by breathing fire on them – now what will we do?”) The other princesses eagerly played through the new ideas and came up with their own strategies for staving off the dragon. (“We have to go to the basement. There aren't any windows there and the dragon can't get in.”) Because she respected the children's intentions and ideas, Chris encouraged them to do their own problem solving, pretending, building, and most of the speaking. She knew that when the children carried out their ideas, they were the ones doing the thinking and the learning.

U – Unfold. *Watch for and support the key experiences as they unfold in children's play.*

Observe what children do with the materials, the ways they manipulate them, and the choices they make. Decide what these observations tell you about the children's interests, so you will know how to support them. Chris did this when she followed along with each new twist of the dragon play; along the way, she made mental notes of the rich range of key developmental indicators that children engaged with: *pretend*

“Appropriate assessments for young children are based on observational anecdotes of what children are typically doing in play. Therefore, we must be careful not to impose our ideas of what we would like to observe children doing.”



Children engage with many key developmental indicators during their play.

play; observing; classifying; communicating ideas; having fun with language; making and expressing choices, plans and decisions; solving problems encountered in play; cooperating and collaborating; building relationships with children and adults; and more.

S – Shield. *Shield the children from the demands of child outcomes, learning goals, and rubrics.*

Although these may be requirements in your agency, they should not affect children’s active learning and play. It is the adults’ responsibility to recognize and support the key learning experiences that take place during the child’s play and to understand how these connect to the agency’s standards and learning goals. It is the child’s role to have ideas and to try out those ideas in play.

Appropriate assessments for young children are based on observational anecdotes of what children are typically doing in play. Therefore, we must be careful not to impose our ideas of what we would like to observe children doing (for example, turning a child’s painting experience into a “count the spots” activity because we want to see

“As an adult in the classroom, I must be an advocate for children's play. I can do this by sharing – with parents, administrators, or funders – the key developmental indicators that I've observed children engaging with during a play event.”

how high the child can count today). A good rule of thumb is to try to stay true to the child's *intent* in a play situation rather than imposing our own intent.

T – Translate. *Translate the child's play into learning statements that will make sense to adults.*

As an adult in the classroom, I must be an advocate for children's play. I can do this by sharing – with parents, administrators, or funders – the key developmental indicators that I've observed children engaging with during a play event. At the end of one day, Mary, a classroom adult, told Adam's mom about how he “read” the message board that morning. On the board, there was a circle with a slash through it taped to a teacher's picture – he had “read” this correctly as a message that one of the teachers was out sick (KDI 26: Reading: Children read for pleasure and information).

Mary also reported how Adam later wrote a similar “no” symbol on a piece of paper and taped it to his spaceship to tell other children not to come aboard (KDI 29: Writing: Children write for many different purposes). She also explained to Adam's mom how his use of the “no” symbol was actually an early form of reading and writing.

For longer-term assessment, Mary could also have translated her observations of Adam into data using COR Advantage, the latest online version of HighScope's child assessment tool, the Child Observation Record (COR).



When teachers translate their observations into learning statements, they can communicate these to others in terms of child development and meaningful outcomes.

What TRUST Means

T – Time: Take time to play and be playful with children.

R – Respect: Respect children's intentions and ideas.

U – Unfold: Watch for and support the HighScope key developmental indicators (KDIs) as they unfold in children's play.

S – Shield: Shield the children from the demands of child outcomes, learning goals, and performance standards.

T – Translate: Translate the child's play into “learning statements” (such as those in the HighScope KDIs and COR Advantage, the HighScope Child Observation Record) that will make sense to parents, supervisors, and funders.

Communicating Required Information

The example in the preceding section illustrates how, by translating our child observations into learning statements (such as those provided by the KDIs and COR Advantage), we can help others understand why supporting children's play in active learning settings is the best way to support children's development. This approach allows programs to meet their required standards in ways that are appropriate for the children and consistent with what the research shows us to be best for children in the long run (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997).

So, TRUST the process of active learning through play, trust your children, and trust yourself as a knowledgeable supporter of children's play. To meet mandated child outcomes, standards, and rubrics, I would also encourage you to trust in the HighScope KDIs and COR Advantage. With few exceptions, the KDIs and COR Advantage will cover what is required in the various standards.

Together, these sets of developmental benchmarks provide a framework that tells us how children actually develop and learn. This approach contrasts with other ways of measuring program effectiveness, which focus on where children should be at the end of the learning process. I've decided that my role in the classroom isn't to “get children to perform” but rather to support and encourage children as they develop. Being a supportive partner with children in their play is by far the best way for me to accomplish this.

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The HighScope key developmental indicators (KDIs) are a framework adults can use to identify and understand what abilities children are developing and how they are learning from their play activities.

The Bubble Play: Using the Key Developmental Indicators and COR Advantage to “Find the Learning”

The HighScope key development indicators (KDIs) are a framework adults can use to identify and understand what abilities children are developing and how they are learning from their play activities. The key developmental indicators are closely tied to COR Advantage, the latest version of HighScope’s online child assessment tool. Below are some examples of things children said during the bubble play described on pages 2–3. Following the statements below, we show how the key developmental indicators and COR Advantage can be used to identify the developmental accomplishments reflected in each child's statements. (The corresponding COR Advantage items are given next to each statement; the key developmental indicators are listed at the end of each group of statements.)

Statement:

- “I’m cutting my bubbles in half like she did. Then they’re going to spill all over the table!” (Category: Language, Literacy and Communication, Item L. Speaking, level 4)

Key developmental indicator — 48. **Predicting:** Children predict what they expect will happen.

Statements:

- “If you blow really fast, you get tons of little bubbles.” (Category: Science and Technology, Item CC. Experimenting, predicting, and drawing conclusions, level 3)
- “Mine's getting bigger and bigger and bigger and biggest.” (Category: Mathematics, Item U. Measurement, level 3)
- “Mine are bigger than the bowl now!” (Category: Mathematics, Item U. Measurement, level 4)

The key developmental indicators are closely tied to COR Advantage, the latest version of HighScope's online child assessment tool.

The Bubble Play Continued

- “Adam did one huge bubble.” (Category: Mathematics Item S. Number sense and counting, level 2)
- “I made 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. I made 7 bubbles!” (Category: Mathematics, Item S. Number Sense and Counting, level 3)

Key developmental indicators — 22. **Speaking:** Children express themselves using language; 31. **Number words and symbols:** Children recognize and use number words and symbols; 32. **Counting:** Children count things; 36. **Measuring:** Children measure to describe, compare, and order things.

Statements:

- “Mine disappear.” (Category: Language, Literacy and Communication, Item L. Speaking, level 2)
- “When Grammy gives me a bath, I get smelly bubbles.” (Category: Language, Literacy, and Communication, Item L. Speaking, level 3)
- “Her bubbles feel soft like my bubbles!” (Category: Language, Literacy, and Communication, Item L. Speaking, level 4)

Key developmental indicators — 23. **Vocabulary:** Children understand and use a variety of words and phrases; 46.

Classifying: Children classify materials, actions, people, and events.

Statement:

- “Can we do this at our small group tomorrow?” (Category: Approaches to Learning, Item A. Initiative and planning, level 2)

Key Developmental Indicators — 1. **Initiative:** Children demonstrate initiative as they explore their world; 55. **Decision making:** children participate in making classroom decisions.

Statement:

- “Look, I blew really hard and three [bubbles] are stuck together!” (Category: Mathematics, Item S. Number and counting, level

TRUST in Children's Play, continued

Beth Marshall is director of early childhood education at the HighScope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan. She has written and developed training materials for HighScope on a range of topics including adult learning, art with young children, adult-child interactions, scaffolding children's math learning, and the impact of brain research on early childhood practices. She is the author of the book *HighScope Step by Step: Lesson Plans for the First 30 Days*, coauthor of *Small-Group Times to Scaffold Early Learning*, and contributing author to *International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Care*. Ms. Marshall contributed to the development of the Preschool COR and PQA assessment instruments. She was the project director and trainer for HighScope Ireland and for the Khululeka HighScope Teacher Training Centre in South Africa, and co-primary investigator for the Numbers Plus Efficacy Study funded by the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Research.

Ms. Marshall has conducted training projects in many parts of the United States and in other countries.

Ms. Marshall holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Oakland University.



The Bubble Play Continued

2; Category: Science and Technology, Item CC. Experimenting, predicting, and drawing conclusions, level 3)

Key developmental indicator — 31. **Number words and symbols:** Children recognize and use number words and symbols; 49.

Drawing conclusions: Children draw conclusions based on their experiences and observations.

Statement:

- “If you blow really fast, you get tons of little bubbles.” (Category: Language, Literacy, and Communication, Item L. Speaking, level 5; Category: Science and Technology, Item CC. Experimenting, predicting, and drawing conclusions, level 3).

Key developmental indicators — 49. **Drawing conclusions:**

Children draw conclusions based on their experiences and observations. 50. **Communicating ideas:** Children communicate their ideas about the characteristics of things and how they work.

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CLASSROOM HINTS

Overcoming Roadblocks to Playing With Children

BY BETH MARSHALL

Joining in children's play as a successful play partner is an important way for adults to support and encourage young children's learning. For many adults, however, playing with children is not an easy or comfortable role. In this article we will look at some common "road-



blocks" that can hinder adults from participating meaningfully in children's play and some ideas for overcoming such blocks.

Roadblock: Concerns About Time

Some teachers worry about what to do if they are needed in other parts of the classroom: "How could I tie my time up with one group when I need to be available if something else arises?" Here are some ideas for addressing time concerns:

- As you get involved in playing, consider explaining to the children that you might have to leave if other children need some help. This warning will help ease the situation if you do have to leave. Or, in the middle of the play, you can just tell children something like this: "I need to go help Amani, but I'll check back with you when I'm done."
- Be sure to refer to other children for help when appropriate. "Christa, I think Shelby was using that glue yesterday. You could ask her how she got it to work." When used consistently, this strategy increases children's independence, freeing you to spend more time in the "play partner" role and less time assisting children.
- If the children are engaging in pretend play, be sure to take a supporting role (not a central character) so the play can easily continue if you do have to excuse yourself.

- Rely on your teaching partner. If there is an interruption, is it something he or she can attend to? It is important to discuss this strategy with your partner and come to some agreement ahead of time. Many established teams get to the point where they just have to establish eye contact with each other to know who is going to move and who is going to stay!
- When you are a partner in play with children, don't forget to listen to what is happening in the rest of the room and to regularly scan the space to monitor what else is going on.



Roadblock: Concerns About Others Seeing You Play

You may really want to be more engaged with children, but one thought is holding you back: "What if parents or other visitors think I'm 'just playing'? How will they know that the children are really learning?" The following ideas will help you highlight the valuable learning taking place during play.

- Engaging parents in identifying this learning will help them recognize and value it as it happens in their homes. Try hanging a poster of all the key developmental indicators (KDIs)

in your classroom and posting lists of the specific curriculum content areas in particular classroom spaces. For example, post **Language, Literacy, and Communication** KDIs in the book area and **Mathematics, Science and Technology**, and **Creative Arts** KDIs in the block area.

- On a parent board, post photos of children involved in play. Include a caption (or anecdote) briefly describing the play and then list the KDIs (or COR Advantage items) demonstrated in the photo. Or, you can make the display interactive. Post the photos and captions (anecdotes) in one column, and list the KDIs in another. Add the heading “Find the Learning,” and ask the parents to identify which KDIs match each photo.

- In your parent newsletter, include a regular section titled something like “Learning at Home.” Each month, focus on a different curriculum content category, and invite parents to submit situations, quotes, or stories about their child that illustrate these KDIs.

Roadblock: “It’s just not for me!”

Some adults just don’t see play as the “adult” thing to do. This kind of concern may be expressed in various ways: “Play is supposed to belong to the children, and I’m afraid I’ll interrupt it and spoil their creativity.” “I’m just not comfortable playing with children — I wouldn’t know what to do.”

Strategies for Participating in Children’s Play

Look for natural play openings. Generally, it is more natural and less disruptive to join children during exploratory play, pretend play, or games, rather than during constructive play (making or building things).

Join children’s play on the child’s level. This may mean squatting, kneeling, sitting, and occasionally even lying on the floor. This way, children are not “looking up” to you, and you are not “looking down” on children.

Play in parallel with children. This strategy can be effective during exploratory play, as the adult plays near the child, using the same materials in the same or a similar manner.

Play as a partner with children. This works well with children involved in pretend play or games, with adults functioning as equals and followers.

Refer one player to another. This enables children to recognize each other’s strengths, regard each other as valuable resources, use their abilities for the benefit of others, and play cooperatively.

Suggest new ideas within ongoing play situations. Adults may also wish to challenge young children’s thinking and reasoning to expand the breadth of their play and, consequently, their understanding. When offering new ideas, remember to offer suggestions within the play theme, to address the “role person” rather than the child, and to respect the children’s reaction to your idea.

Source: *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, pp. 289–292.

This final roadblock, although large, is surmountable! Before looking at specific strategies, it may be important for you to **reexamine the principles of active learning**. Remember, **adult support** is one of the five ingredients (the others are **materials, manipulation, time, and language from the children**) and is therefore an essential piece. To explore why adult support is so crucial, try the following:

- Remember to use the strategy of “following the children’s lead.” Give yourself permission to start playing, primarily by imitating the child’s actions. If you are conscious of letting the child retain control of the play, you don’t have to worry about taking it over or interrupting her creativity or the flow of her play.
- If you don’t know where to start or what to do, start by observing the children. Sit down on the floor with them. How do they use the materials? Try using the materials yourself in the same way.
- Even though it might be uncomfortable, try to rediscover your own playfulness, on your own time. When no one is looking, jump in a water puddle! Take 15 minutes to fill a sink with sudsy water and treat yourself to some adult water play. Remember, this may feel very uncomfortable, just as doing anything out of the ordinary feels different. After you’ve “played,” consider what you did in terms of the KDIs.

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These strategies can help you see how joining children in their kind of play enriches their time and increases their learning, thus making it worth the extra effort on your part. Try using these ideas the next time a roadblock to joining children’s play pops up in your classroom.



HighScope Teachers Talk About the Importance of Play

Editor's Note: Three current or former HighScope Demonstration Preschool teachers — Christine Snyder, Molly Jourden, and Shannon Lockhart — speak from experience about why play is important to children's development.



The Value of "Just Playing"

BY MOLLY JOURDEN, HIGHSCOPE
DEMONSTRATION
PRESCHOOL TEACHER

Early in my teaching career, I worked in a state funded preschool program designed to narrow the educational skill-level gap for at-risk children. When some of the elementary teachers found out that the preschool classrooms would be using a play-based curriculum (the HighScope Curriculum) they expressed concern and pushed for the preschool to use a more academic model. These teachers believed that the children would not possess the school readiness skills needed to successfully enter school the following year and that the year the children would spend “just playing” would give the children an unrealistic view of what school entailed. However, I trusted that my center and I had chosen the most developmentally appropriate approach to preschool by using HighScope. While some of the elementary teachers never fully understood the benefits of a play-based active learning approach, I was able to see the positive effect it had on my children. When I visited the elementary classrooms, I could see the children I formerly had in preschool quickly adjusting to the new routine, working collaboratively with classmates, understanding the directions given by the teacher, reading and writing about topics of interest, and solving mathematical problems. The kindergarten teachers were pleasantly surprised at the many skills the new kindergartners were coming in with and how those skills provided a foundation for the children to have a successful school year.

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Encouraging Trust in Play at Home

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER, HIGHSCOPE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SPECIALIST AND DEMONSTRATION PRESCHOOL TEACHER



As adults, it can be easy to take for granted the skills we already have and use every day. We often forget the long processes we went through to develop the skills to be able to read our e-mail, count out money, or write down a grocery list. Obtaining skills such as reading occurs in gradual stages over time and does so most successfully

in playful ways. We see this, for example, in understanding the simple ways children start to read through symbol recognition, by discussing what is happening in pictures, and by engaging in many enjoyable reading experiences with trusted adults. At home, children will enjoy trips to the library, reading before bed, identifying familiar letters or symbols on a drive through town, or helping find items at the grocery store by looking at pictures, symbols, and letters. If we as teachers can support families by offering examples of playful opportunities to support learning at home, parents and other family members will trust in how children learn through play as well.

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Key Cognitive Skills Develop During Play

BY SHANNON LOCKHART, HIGHSCOPE SENIOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST

When young children are actively engaged in play, they are learning key cognitive skills that are part of

what is called executive function. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, executive function “refers to a group of skills that helps us to focus on multiple streams of information at the same time, monitor errors, make decisions in light of available information, revise plans as necessary, and resist the urge to let frustration lead to hasty actions” (2011). There are three dimensions that scientists have focused on when

defining executive function – working memory (ability to hold and manipulate information in limited time periods); inhibitory control (ability to filter out impulses and distractions and to regulate emotions); and cognitive or mental flexibility (ability to change plans on the spot). These dimensions are exemplified in the example of the princess play in the designated feature article of this issue of Extensions.

In this elaborate pretend-play scenario involving princesses and dragons, children are using all three executive function dimensions as they engage in cooperative play. There is much creativity and knowledge about princesses and dragons being shared as each child (and the adult) takes on a role. As the roles of the princess play are carried out, each child has to hold in mind each person’s role, and what these players are doing, along with their own role (an example of working memory).

As the pretend play continues, each child needs to stay within the play theme instead of acting out of character — and, at the same time, agree to each person’s changing ideas (an example of inhibitory control). In many cooperative role plays, children step in and out of character to give instructions — an example of the beginning of private speech, which is crucial to children’s inhibitory control. Private speech is happening when children talk to themselves about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. Engaging in make-believe play is one of the most powerful ways in which children develop private speech because children use self-talk to make characters come alive through their own voices and through interaction with other children’s characters. This type of self-regulating language has been shown in many studies to be predictive of executive function (Spiegel, 2008).

As the scenario changes with one of the children’s ideas, she continuously changes her character — from a princess, to a dragon, to a fire-breathing dragon, to a pet (an example of mental flexibility). All of these dimensions are critical to children’s development of executive function, which allows them to be productive adults later in life.

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TRAINER-TO-TRAINER

Partners in Play

BY BETH MARSHALL

Partners in Play

In this 90-minute workshop, participants will (1) identify and use strategies for participating in children's play as a partner and (2) develop an individual implementation plan to improve their interactions with children.

What you'll need: Lunch bags, one per participant, filled with play materials (e.g., bubbles, pipe cleaners, foil and straws, or Legos); one index card per participant; and "Strategies for Participation in Children's Play" handout (see sidebar in Classroom Hints). For more information on each of the adult strategies listed below and on the handout, see *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, by Ann S. Epstein and Mary Hohmann, pp. 289–293.

Opening Activity

- 1. The spirit of playfulness.** Ask participants to think for a moment about how they liked to play when they were young children. Then ask them to choose a bag from those on their table and spend some time (about 10–15 minutes) playing with the materials, recapturing the spirit of playfulness. When the time is up, discuss this experience. What was it like to play? When they were children, were adults present in their play? What were they doing?

Now ask the participants to imagine that the ideal adult had joined them in their play.

What would they have wanted the adult to do? Invite the participants to share their thoughts with the group.

Central Ideas and Practice

- 2. Strategies for participating in children's play.** What are the strategies that adults can use to participate as a partner in children's play? Discuss each of these strategies (also on the handout):

- *Look for natural play openings.*
- *Join children's play on the child's level.*
- *Play in parallel with children.*
- *Play as a partner with children.*
- *Refer one player to another.*

Application Activity

- 3. "It happens all the time."** Ask participants to think of a play situation that "happens all the time" in their own classrooms. This should not be a conflict situation, just one that they would like some assistance in dealing with; for example, supporting a quiet child or working with two children at the sand table or block area when the adult doesn't feel comfortable joining in that kind of play. Ask participants to write their situations on an index card.
- 4. Brainstorming Ideas.** Have participants, in small groups, brainstorm possible ideas for what they might do in each situation to be a meaningful partner with children in their play.
- 5. Role Playing.** Ask each small group to present or role play one of the ideas from one of their cards to the whole group.

Implementation Plans

- 6. Individual reflections.** Ask participants to pause for a moment and think about the strategies discussed in this workshop. Which strategies are they most comfortable using? Which would they like to try or have more practice with?
- 7. Making a Plan.** Ask participants to complete a plan with ideas they would like to try based on these strategies.



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NEWS BRIEFS

HighScope now on Pinterest and LinkedIn!

During the last few months, Facebook and Twitter have helped increase our customer reach by 25% (based on followers)! To continue with the engagement, we have taken a step forward incorporating HighScope to Pinterest and LinkedIn.

LinkedIn is the largest professional network in the world. Like many social media tools, companies can use LinkedIn to not only promote themselves, but establish connections and build relationships. If you have a LinkedIn account, feel free to follow us to get the latest company updates.

For those new to Pinterest, it is a social media network that allows you to post and share pictures, linking them to their original source on the web. You post pictures on “boards” on which people can search for items in their areas of interest, and your followers can see what you're posting. At the moment, we have 18 HighScope boards and 340 pins. Feel free to jump on Pinterest and look around for yourself and follow our boards. See more at

www.pinterest.com/highscope



If you have any questions please email us at marketingdepartment@highscope.org.



Save the Date for the HighScope Conference!

Save the date for HighScope's 2014 annual international conference. The conference will take place from May 7-9; preconference sessions will be held on May 5 and 6.

Over the coming months, keep an eye on the HighScope website, highscope.org, for details.

Infant-Toddler Online PQA Offers Three Options

The online version of the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) now offers three options: Infant-Toddler PQA, Preschool PQA, and Family Child Care PQA. All three assessments are designed to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs. While the tools work well in programs using the HighScope approach, they're also appropriate in any developmentally oriented early childhood setting. Classroom licenses are available through an annual subscrip-

tion and provide options to conduct multiple assessments during the program year. For more information, or to order, please visit highscope.org.

Day on Capitol Hill at NAEYC

This November, HighScope staff members Shannon Lockhart, Marianne McDonnell, and Carrie Hernandez joined over 300 colleagues to advocate for quality early childhood education at "A Day on the [Capitol] Hill." The event was part of the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), held in Washington, DC. Adele Robinson, NAEYC's deputy executive director for policy and public affairs, briefed the group on the bipartisan Strong Start for America's Children legislation before all headed to meetings with US senators or their staff. Participants shared stories, artwork, and pictures about children and families that are with or without subsidy but needing better access to a higher quality of early education. Participants also shared stories about the effects of higher education costs on students who plan to enter the field of early childhood education, and the additional impacts on American children and families.

New Products from HighScope Excellerations

HighScope partners with Discount School Supply, combining talents to design, develop, and exclusively distribute quality products to benefit teachers and children. Our newest resources include a sand and water play station, trace-and-write letters and numbers, soft crocheted balls, wooden steering wheels, a heavy-duty activity apron, and the HighScope Numbers Plus math supplement kit. Find out more about these affordable products on our [website](http://highscope.org).

Happy Holidays from HighScope

HighScope's offices in Ypsilanti will be closed for the winter holidays from December 24 through January 1, reopening on January 2. Happy holidays to all!

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