

# THE *Active* LEARNER

## In Focus: Policy

**Updates on ESSA  
and Head Start  
Standards**

**Tips for Head  
Start Strategy**

**Putting Policy to  
Work for Dual  
Language Learners**

### *Also inside:*

**Early Math, Later  
School Success**

**Making the Most  
of Home Visits**



### From the President



Nearly fifty years ago, school psychologist David Weikart and principal Charles E. Beatty of the Perry Elementary School in Ypsilanti, Michigan sought to change the trajectory of children's lives by engaging them in more meaningful education earlier in life. They envisioned a learning environment that allowed children to explore their own interests and plan their own activities. Today, the field considers this "active learning" as core to developmentally appropriate practice and the cornerstone of child development.

So it's fitting that the first thing you'll notice about the new look of our magazine is the title change: *The Active Learner*. As we look into the future, we're recognizing and reclaiming what we started.

For us, this new title really represents what the HighScope approach is all about: the active, participatory, play-based learning style that forms the core of our philosophy. The sense that education, as the poet Yeats wrote so many decades ago, "is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire."

In a larger sense, the philosophy of active learning applies to us, the readers of this journal, as much as it applies to the children we teach. Active learning is more than an approach to early childhood education. It's a way of life. Whether we're in the classroom or at training, at a conference or at home preparing for what the next day will bring, we as educators have a responsibility to stay updated and engaged — to stay current on issues in the field so we can do our best by the children and the families we serve.

Now, more than ever, it's important for us to be active learners in our own professional lives. We've seen new research emerge: research on brain science, racial and gender disparity, the impact of early learning on academic success in years ahead. We've been tasked with carrying out new policy to make sure that every child gets the chance they deserve to have a strong start in life. And serving them the best we can takes active learning on the part of every one of us. That's our goal with this publication. In the months and years ahead, *The Active Learner* will serve as a venue for you to explore these types of issues: policy, problems and solutions, professional learning, programs we can look to for inspiration, ways we can be active learners in our everyday lives — and in doing so, take our profession forward.

As early childhood educators, it's our mission to inspire the lively imaginations of preschoolers; to help them view their world in a way that makes them jump for joy — literally or figuratively! — at the prospect of learning. While our field may have changed over the last generation, kids will always be kids. Let's work together to help them have fun while they're learning, learn while they're having fun — and make the most of both.

Cheryl Polk, PhD  
President

## THE *Active* LEARNER

VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2017

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OUT NOW

## African American Children in Early Childhood Education

Making the Case for Policy Investments in Families, Schools, and Communities

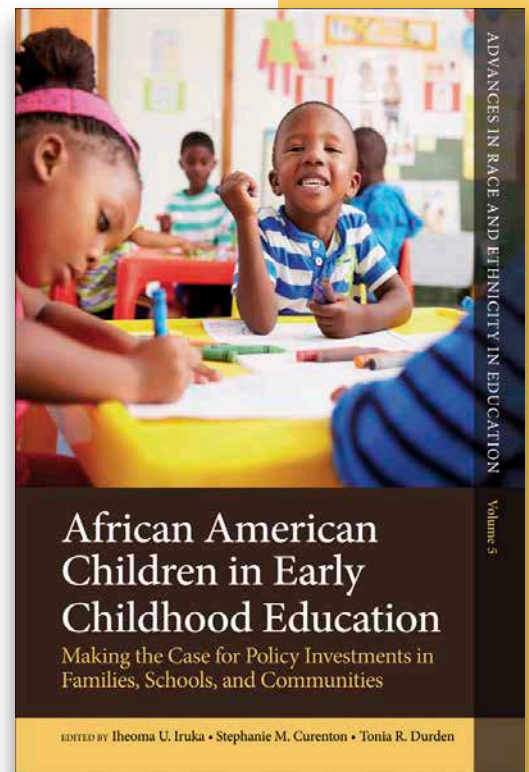
Edited by Iheoma U. Iruka, Stephanie M. Curenton, and Tonia R. Durden

Presents both the challenges and opportunities for addressing the critical needs of Black children - historically underserved in the U.S. education system.

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## BY THE Numbers

13%

Return on investment for every \$1 put toward Head Start

500

Average number of words known by economically disadvantaged children by age 3, compared to 1,100 by their more economically advantaged peers

62,000

Number of 3-year-olds in New York who would be served annually by 3-K for All, a universal full-day preschool program proposed by Mayor Bill de Blasio

1.49 million

Total enrollment in state-funded preschool programs in the US (2015–2016)

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# Community Voices

## NEW LOOK

As we published our last issue of *ReSource* this past spring, we sent an online survey to HighScope magazine readers and asked, *What would you like to see more of in our redesigned publication? What would make it more useful to you? More interesting? More relevant?* Within a month, we received more than 400 responses with some great feedback. And we read every comment. The takeaway?

Overwhelmingly, readers said they wanted to hear more voices from the field — insights and stories from the people who are working on the “front lines” of early education every day.

And we listened. In this new publication, *The Active Learner*, we’ve added four more pages and nine new sections, each with its own focus on a specific aspect of the HighScope approach or issue in the early childhood field. This page is

one of those new additions. It’s a page for *you*, the readers, to give us your feedback on the articles and the strategies we present in these pages, and on developments in our field and how we can all do our part, in our day-to-day lives, to *change the world, one child at a time*. In every issue, we’ll use this page to publish letters and emails from readers like you.

You’ll also find *The Active Learner* more interactive, with lots of supplemental resources online. With the debut of this issue, all of our articles will be posted individually on social media for sharing and discussion. And with your permission, we’ll be publishing comments from Facebook and Twitter here as well. So get out your phone (or go to your computer) and “like” our Facebook page at [facebook.com/HighScopeUS](https://facebook.com/HighScopeUS). If you’re on Twitter, follow us at [@HighScopeUS](https://twitter.com/HighScopeUS). We’re looking forward to some robust conversations!

**MARIA TAYLOR**  
Editor, *The Active Learner*



**Ruby Bridges [center], who entered a segregated New Orleans school in 1960 when she was just six years old, shares her powerful story.**  
**#HS2017Conf**

**@JCOOPERWT**

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Earlier this year, I was searching for an article on family engagement to include in a collection of resources I was compiling aligned to this topic. HighScope’s magazine [Spring 2017] featured several, and I was pleased to have received permission to share them electronically and in print. As a result, I’ve been able to deliver stronger state-approved training for directors and owners of Georgia’s licensed child care programs. Thank you for an in-depth publication with rich content relevant to challenges often unaddressed but faced by committed home- and

center-based providers. HighScope clearly understands industry efforts to lift the staff that cares for the families they serve. Keep up the great work, as it really does take a village!

**LAURA A. NEWMAN**  
Director, The Georgia Alliance for Quality Child Care, Atlanta, GA

**Write your name, w/ your non-dominant hand, in hieroglyphics. That’s how a young child feels writing his name. @ksherman1969 #HS2017Conf**

**@HIGHSCOPEUS**

## Join the conversation!

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# Policy Update: Head Start Standards and Your Classroom

## New Professional Development Regulations — and How HighScope Can Help

BY LANCE REED

Head Start serves more than one million children from birth through age five, providing comprehensive early learning services through home visitations, family care partnerships, and more than 60,000 classes nationwide. Though the method of delivering these services varies, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) serve as the roadmap for programs of all shapes and sizes to provide high-quality services that support school readiness and the healthy development of children and families.

Head Start standards reflect and inform developmentally appropriate practice across the early childhood education field. When changes to the performance standards are made, the impact is felt throughout the extensive Head Start community and beyond. Thus, in 2016, when for the first time since their inception the performance standards were comprehensively revised, programs across the country anticipated how these “new rules” would affect their classrooms.

The revision of the HSPPS, which will be rolled out in phases through 2021, is a response to the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, which required the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to revise and establish new performance standards that

are evidence based and developmentally appropriate, with a focus on school readiness. The resulting new performance standards provide for “effective teaching, staff professional development, and high-quality curriculum in Head Start; strong parent engagement and involvement in programs; comprehensive health services and child safety; effective management; and a full school day and year of services for all Head Start children” (National Head Start Association, p. 1). Overall, the changes to the HSPPS are intended to standardize certain data-driven and universally beneficial aspects of Head Start, while allowing for more individualization to meet specific local needs.

One of the most potentially significant changes for teachers is reflected in the standards related to professional development. The most recent phase of the rollout occurred on August 1, 2017 and, among other changes, specifically addresses the quantity and quality of professional development that Head Start educators receive. Overall, the new standards call for a more systematic approach to professional development, with a focus on improving outcomes for children and their families. But what do these changes mean for teachers who use the HighScope Curriculum in a Head Start classroom?


### SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

#### Section 1302.32(a)(2)

A program must support staff to effectively implement curricula and at a minimum monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity, and provide support, feedback, and supervision for continuous improvement of its implementation through the system of training and professional development.

The focus of this section of the HSPPS is to ensure that Head Start programs are not only using a developmentally appropriate curriculum, but that teachers receive the necessary professional development and support to implement that curriculum with fidelity.

Judy Burleson, Director of Education at the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) in Florida, uses the HighScope Curriculum in Head Start and state-funded centers. “For the past six years we have been building our cadre of HighScope certified trainers and using the HighScope training model for workshops and coaching,” she says. “We are moving forward now to implement the new HSPPS requirements for a coordinated approach to professional development and finalizing

A photograph of a teacher, a Black woman wearing a black beanie and a grey sweater, reading a book to three young children. The teacher is pointing at the book with her right index finger. The children are all looking at the book with interest. One child, a young girl, is wearing a blue astronaut costume. Another child, a young boy, is wearing a dark blue hoodie with 'KEE' on it. The third child, a baby, is wearing a light blue onesie with pink hearts. The book they are reading is titled 'I Love Colors' by Margaret Miller and features a smiling face wearing large yellow glasses. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom setting with colorful storage bins.

*The Head Start  
Preschool Performance  
Standards emphasize  
sustained and systematic  
professional development.  
That's good news for teachers  
and the communities  
they serve.*



*The ultimate goal of the new professional development standards is still to provide early learning opportunities that improve outcomes and benefit children, families, and communities.*

our plans for implementation for the individualization of professional development that will renew our work with each teacher's annual professional development plan." To support a teacher to meet their performance goal, trainers and coaches use workshops designed using methods Burleson and others learned as certified trainers, through HighScope online courses, and from the HighScope coaching model. "This all supports curriculum implementation that we assess using HighScope's PQA [Program Quality Assessment]. This assessment data, together with our child assessment data, give us measures for reflection and study," she says, adding, "Our challenges become our next goal for improvement."

Although the new performance standards are bound to present new challenges to Head Start teachers who are implementing the HighScope Curriculum, the emphasis on professional development is encouraging. The refined focus is intended to promote higher quality for early learning programs and teachers, and that focus will increase the number of positive outcomes in school readiness for children. With the release of the new standards, Head Start teachers have a clearer vision

of professional development — learning that is organized, consistent, and data-driven — and can therefore better strive to align the extensive research on best practices with what they do in the classroom.

"After completion of the PCC [Preschool Curriculum Course] training, we will use PQA information to choose a performance goal for improving," says Burleson. "By exploring and trying out new teacher strategies, we can build skills and improve teacher performance." Coaches at RCMA collaboratively support teachers in their work to maintain the strengths they have already demonstrated and grow to develop more strategies to work with their children in new ways. "The PCC training brings new knowledge and motivation about working with children, other teachers, and parents," adds Burleson.

In contrast with the normal pre-service and in-service training to which Head Start teachers are accustomed, the new professional development guidelines concerning curriculum implementation allow for more individualization. Programs are encouraged to support teachers with individualized training, based off their individual needs. Those needs may include coaching, training, and feedback, all

with the intention to instill and support a genuine desire to improve the quality of services that Head Start provides.

Yet, for many Head Start teachers and others subject to the new performance standards, compliance is a high-stakes concern. For teachers' part, the best way to comply with the new requirements is to be open-minded about individualized training — and keep the focus on the children. By doing so, teachers prioritize student outcomes, and compliance to standards redesigned specifically to accomplish that end naturally follows.

Chimere Simmons, Education Specialist at The Order of the Fisherman Ministry in Detroit, is often confronted with the challenge of presenting professional development at partner sites where teachers have never been trained in the use of any curriculum. "The greatest challenge is the mindset of the teachers," she says. "We have to take what they are accustomed to doing and show that there's a better way, that this is developmentally appropriate, that this is the best way for children to learn."

At the end of the day, the reason we have professional development is to improve

“The refined focus of professional development is intended to promote higher quality for early learning programs and teachers, and that focus will increase the number of positive outcomes in school readiness for children.”



*Changes to the Head Start Performance Standards affect not only Head Start programs, but the broader early education community.*

the school readiness outcomes of the children. Research shows that children who are actively engaged in high-quality preschool programs will have more success in school and in life.

“Our work with children is more intentional when we learn more and more about the curriculum, the way children learn, and how our role as teacher connects to them,” says Burleson. For her, it is the adult teacher and child interactions that drive relationships and learning. “HighScope training gives us new ways to encourage and acknowledge children when they need recognition and encouragement,” says Burleson. “Sometimes a teacher’s understanding of a child’s emotions or persistence will be how we help them. The HighScope day and our learning environment are important; but, most important is the child and the teacher. Knowledge of HighScope is where it all happens.”

The key component that is reflected in the new professional development standards for curriculum implementation is that educators need to be open-minded to coaching, open to constructive feedback, and to practicing new ways of doing things.

## SUPPORT FOR CHILD ASSESSMENT

### Section 1302.33(b)(1–3)

A program must conduct standardized and structured assessments, which must result in usable information for teachers, home visitors, and parents and be conducted with sufficient frequency to allow for individualization within the program year.

There’s nothing new about using authentic assessments in Head Start preschools. The emphasis of the new standards is on ensuring that the child or program assessment yields results that can be used to individualize classroom instruction throughout the school year.

Assessments in Head Start programs vary. Some have assessment sheets and forms where teachers are required to have a certain number of anecdotal notes by specified periods. Other programs use online assessment systems, like HighScope’s COR Advantage. Using the online COR Advantage system greatly enhances a teacher’s ability to track student progress. Teachers can use the online system to assess children’s scores in different

indicators in order to better scaffold child development and see how a child is progressing. And that is precisely the kind of individualized support that the new Head Start standards demand.

The corollary to authentic assessment is, of course, the requisite training to administer the assessment. This professional development component of the new standards emphasizes using reliability testing to ensure that what’s learned in training gets implemented properly. The key is to have professional development attached to any new assessments, to be sure they’re used with fidelity. Continuous improvement after certification is important, be that through online classes, professional development and training, and conferences, to ensure that teachers are kept up to date on any changes or new resources, and that they continue to grow.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING

### Section 1302.92(c)

A program must implement a research-based, coordinated coaching strategy for education staff.



*The key to successful child assessment is ensuring fidelity between what is learned in training and actual practice in the classroom.*


One of the biggest changes in the new Head Start Performance Standards is in the individualized coaching or professional development and follow-up that's now required, as of August 2017. The preamble to the new standards describes what a research-based coordinated coaching curriculum is. Again, the bottom line is providing positive outcomes for children.

In the past, Head Start teachers had pre-service and in-service training, and that served as the basis to achieve their program's goals. But this policy contributed to a misalignment between the goals of a program and the training provided to meet those goals. The focus on providing professional development opportunities at the beginning and in the middle of the school year could sometimes feel disconnected to what teachers were actually doing in their classrooms. With the introduction of the newest standards, the focus is instead on continually providing coaching and mentorship throughout the year.

"The new standards and the individual professional development plans that each

teacher initiates are part of a process for the school year and even longer term," says Burleson. "As we move from one performance goal to the next on a continuous improvement path, we find ourselves motivating ourselves to learn more about our children and our curriculum and use data and self-reflection to make progress. We find ourselves motivating each other." Child progress and teacher performance progress are measured at RCMA by using COR and PQA. For Burleson, sharing that progress with other staff is a step toward building a community of learners among her co-workers, and it is a sign that RCMA, and the new Head Start standards, are moving in the right direction.

"Coaching can be a positive, encouraging, and very personal training opportunity for teachers when used in accordance with the Performance Standards," says Simmons. "Coaching should not be used as a punitive tool but an opportunity for teachers to grow professionally in a way that will lead to a positive progression of children's outcomes."

Ultimately, professional development is less about the teachers and more about how to best serve children. Of course, teachers must assess the growth and development of the children in their classrooms, and that requires professional development to implement that assessment with fidelity. The more we are able to implement our curriculum with fidelity, the more we can make sure that the research-based part of our curriculum or coaching program is aligned with school readiness outcomes, the better off our children will be as a result. 

*Lance Reed is a certified HighScope trainer and Curriculum Supervisor for Starfish Family Services in metropolitan Detroit.*

### REFERENCE

National Head Start Association. (2016). Head Start Program Performance Standards: Final Rule. Retrieved from <https://www.nhsa.org/new-head-start-program-performance-standards>

# ESSA's Title II

## Professional Development for Early Educators

BY HARRIET DICHTER

Professional development has great potential to be an asset, and many early educators see the benefit of sharing professional development with those teaching in the K–12 public schools. Fortunately, with the newest version of the federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, there is a greater effort to show how early educators can benefit from professional development.

Title II is the part of the ESSA that focuses on making sure that teachers have the professional development they need to deliver strong learning opportunities for students. There is good news for early educators here. For the first time, ESSA is explicit in showing how states and school districts can include early educators in professional development offerings.

**ESSA is explicit in showing how states and school districts can include early educators in professional development offerings.**

With over \$2 billion in funding directed at Title II professional development, the opportunity is ripe for states and districts to ensure that all teachers and leaders—including early educators—understand the most current data on how children learn, how to measure that learning, and how to support staff in meeting the needs of all students. Local districts are now allowed to include both early childhood teachers and administrators in their professional development offerings using Title II funds. For teachers, this could mean increasing their knowledge base around how very young children learn or how to work with dual language learners. For principals and leaders, it could mean helping them improve their understanding of child development and early childhood curriculum and teaching practices.

Also allowable under the new funding guidelines are opportunities to align

instruction and assessment in early childhood programs to school readiness initiatives and transition to K–12 programs. Joint professional development is a promising and important development in supporting the birth-to-third-grade approach that ESSA calls out as a permissible area for professional development. The focus on both teachers and administrators, as well as public and non-public schools, allows more leverage for working together toward common goals aimed at providing a well-rounded education and to meet K–12 education standards. For example, center directors might participate in professional development with school principals, and infant, preschool, and kindergarten teachers might attend training together to address school readiness issues or the transition to kindergarten.


Integrating developmentally appropriate practices across the curriculum has long been a goal of both early educators and the K–12 community. In many ways, this new approach to Title II has the potential to erase the distinction between the two fields, creating an era of greater cooperation and joint accountability that is clearly in the best interests of young children and their families.

The shift from No Child Left Behind to ESSA has given local entities more discretion to expand early learning



*Title II of the Every Child Succeeds Act allows greater coordination between preschool and K-12 educators and permits school districts to include early educators in professional development offerings.*

opportunities. The impetus of the new regulations was to grant states and localities greater flexibility, but with this flexibility comes new challenges—challenges that the US Department of Education believes teachers and administrators will welcome.

Title II permits states, but does not require them, to include early educators in professional development opportunities. It's up to early educators, parents, and the public to advocate for states to invest Title II funds in innovative ways and to successfully include early educators. 

*Harriet Dichter provides consulting and project services at the local, state, and national levels. She founded and led the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning and was appointed to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and she established the Delaware Office of Early Learning. She is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.*



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# "Why Does Punishment Create Better Liars?"

BY BETSY EVANS



*If we know that punishment encourages dishonesty, let's consider strategies that support honesty.*

"Why does punishment create better liars?" I've asked this question in HighScope trainings across several states and three other countries, and in every session, the response has been the same. Children tell lies to avoid punishment (e.g., a timeout), labeling, yelling, and shaming from adults. Children tell lies when adult reactions, such as these, evoke *fear*.

If we know that punishment creates dishonesty, let's consider strategies that support honesty.

[During work time in a HighScope classroom, Madison cries at the art table. Holly, her teacher, comes over and calmly sits by her.] **Madison:** *Ariel teased me!* **Holly:** *You felt like you were getting teased. Somebody said something you didn't like. Lucy and Ariel, it sounds like somebody said something Madison didn't like. She looks really upset right now. What else could we say to her?* **Lucy:** *Well, there are no more [paint] cups, so....* **Holly [to Madison]:** *I wonder if you felt teased when you realized there were no more cups and they said you couldn't do it [painting].* **Madison:** *No, Ariel just teased me all by herself!* **Holly:** *I wonder what was said? It sounds like your feelings were hurt.* **Madison:** *Ha, ha, ha.* **Holly:** *Ohhh, somebody said "Ha, ha, ha." You felt like you got laughed at, and being laughed at hurts our feelings.* **Lucy:** *We didn't laugh at you. We just smiled at you, and then we laughed at you.*

Surprised by this complete honesty? Teasing is a common form of verbal aggression that usually evokes responses like "that's not nice" or "that was mean" from an adult, making the child feel guilty without helping them learn new skills. Guilt is a destructive emotion that tears at a child's self-esteem. Verbal aggression does require intervention, but only if it builds social skills.

To this end, we must consider first: Why does Lucy feel safe being completely honest? The answer is that fear and punishment are not used in this classroom. Secondly, what will support Lucy and Ariel to continue to be honest while also solving the problem at hand? Honesty will be supported because instead of using guilt and fear, adults think of these moments as a catalyst for learning about resolving feelings and supporting children to step up and solve social problems.

**Holly:** *I'm wondering how we can help Madison solve her problem?* **[to Madison]** *I'm wondering if you were trying to find something to paint with and then they started laughing.* **Madison:** *I really want a cup.* **Holly:** *You really wanted a cup and they were laughing...so instead of helping you, you felt like they were laughing at you.* **Ariel:** *I want to help her find a cup. I don't know where they're at...She can use mine.* [The two girls work together, cleaning the cup and refilling it with the blue paint Madison wants.]

Punishment fosters not only increased dishonesty but also children's persistent attempts to get better at lying (Talwar & Lee, 2011). Accepting that children make hurtful mistakes makes it more likely we will help them with the next step: resolving the problem. Telling the truth makes children feel good about themselves, and so does finding solutions that work for everyone. 🌱

*Betsy Evans is an educational consultant who specializes in conflict resolution, and a cofounder and current president of Giving Tree School in Gill, Massachusetts. A HighScope consultant for 28 years, Betsy is the author of You Can't Come to My Birthday Party! and other HighScope titles.*

## REFERENCE

Talwar, V., & Lee, K. (2011). A punitive environment fosters children's dishonesty: A natural experiment. *Child Development*, 82, 1751–1758. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01663.x

# How to Make the Most of Home Visits

BY MARCELLA FECTEAU WEINER

It's the start of the school year, and you're scheduling home visits. Perhaps you look forward to them; children are excited to show you where they live, and you're excited about seeing the children on their home turf. Perhaps, however, you feel uncomfortable — awkward about entering someone else's home, or worried families may not completely understand why you are coming.

Many center-based programs (including Early Head Start, Head Start, and state-funded programs such as Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program) require at least two home visits, including an entry visit at the beginning of the school year or when a child enters a program. We've asked three early childhood professionals — Erica Hill, Renee Libby, and Kristine Lindemulder — for their expertise on how teachers should navigate those initial home visits and use them to build relationships with families.

## BUILD RAPPORT

**Libby:** I spend some time thinking about my goals for home visits, plan accordingly, and communicate with families *before* the visit on what to expect. I try to avoid having families fill out paperwork or re-

view program policies during these visits; instead, I use the home visit as a way to foster positive relationships by learning about each child and their family culture and helping bridge the gap between home and school. I ask families open-ended questions and take notes so I'll remember later on. (I check with families first to ensure it's okay to take notes.)

**Hill:** During a home visit, I take notes about the family's structure and the holidays they celebrate so we can have conversations in the classroom about how children's families are similar or different (e.g., your grandmother lives at your house like Jasmine's does; Zayan is celebrating Ramadan this month and your family celebrates Christmas in December). I also ask family members open-ended questions about their occupations, hobbies, and interests, and I use this information to encourage family participation. For example, if parents are construction workers, I may ask if they would like to donate blueprints for the preschool's block area. If a grandmother knits, perhaps that family could donate yarn and knitting needles to the art area.

**Lindemulder:** I view home visits as a great opportunity for us to get to know

our students and their families in a comfortable environment for them. I like to bring a book to share with a child at the beginning of the visit, which I find to be an easy icebreaker. When I read a book with a child, I'm not only modeling for parents how to interact with children, but also emphasizing the importance of reading.

## DO SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

**Libby:** To introduce families to developmentally appropriate activities, I bring some common items typically found around the home (socks, plastic containers with lids, yarn, or ribbon) as well as natural items (rocks, pine cones). I ask parents (and siblings, if they are present) to join me on the floor with the child, hand them an item, and encourage them to work with their child to think about how they could play with it. As they are playing, I talk about what children might be learning from the experience. For example, children can match socks by color or sort containers by size — experiences that foster mathematical thinking. I explain to families that they don't need expensive toys to make learning fun; in fact, household items are preferable, because they lend themselves to active learning. I leave a list of items to gather and use at home.

(continued on p. 33)



*Erica Hill is an Early Childhood Specialist, Demonstration Preschool teacher, and Certified Trainer at HighScope with more than 15 years of experience. She has worked as a Head Start teacher, operated her own licensed home-based child care business, and coached other licensed home- and center-based providers.*



*Renee Libby is a Child Care Licensing Consultant for the State of Michigan. She has a master's degree in early childhood education and more than 13 years of home visiting experience as a Great Start Readiness Teacher, Director, and Parent Educator; Early On and Early Intervention Coordinator; and Early Head Start Home Visiting Supervisor.*



*Kristine Lindemulder is a Head Teacher for Foundations Preschool of Washtenaw County. She has a master's degree in early childhood education curriculum and instruction and more than 15 years of home visiting experience as a Great Start Readiness Program Lead Teacher and Parent Educator with Foundations Preschool.*

# Putting DLL Policy to Work

## New Standards Bring New Opportunities for Dual Language Children

BY KAREN NEMETH



*A strength-based approach allows dual language learners to focus on comprehension, concept learning, and skill development, critical for later success in learning English and succeeding in school.*

Across the United States, language diversity in schools is on the rise. The number of young children who speak a language other than English at home is growing, as is the number of different languages spoken in US homes. According to the US Department of Education, one in five school-aged children speaks a language other than English at home, a number that has more than doubled over the past few decades. For children under age six, this ratio may be even higher: in Head Start programs, it's nearly one in three.

In early childhood education, we use the term *dual language learner* (DLL) to identify children from birth through age 8 who are growing up speaking and hearing two or more languages. This term has been receiving a lot of attention lately in national studies, policies, and reports. These studies and reports have made clear that young DLLs suffer when teachers and programs fail to make specific adaptations to meet their learning needs. Simply continuing English-only teaching practices is not ideal for supporting DLLs, because when children have to focus on trying to understand a new language, they may not learn as much as their peers in other content areas. However, we know that a child's brain can thrive in a bilingual or multilingual environment with the right supports, such as materials and activities that help children learn simultaneously in their home language and in English. Supporting this kind of strength-based approach allows children to focus on the comprehension, concept learning, and skill development that combine to form the critical foundation for learning English and succeeding in school.

To ensure these children are receiving the support they need, the US Department of Education (DOE) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have taken steps to strengthen early childhood education for linguistically diverse children. Last year, they released their Joint Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs, describing relevant research and offering



*During work time or greeting time, parents or bilingual staff can read books to children in their home language.*

recommendations for best practices (US HHS & DOE, 2017). Similar expectations were included in the late 2015 contents of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Particularly notable in the latter case is a push for school districts to partner with local early childhood programs and to include preschool students in their ESSA accountability measures for school success. While previous versions of the law *allowed* districts to use funding for preschool, the new version *specifically recommends* that districts provide services for preschoolers — including those who are DLLs. (Bornfreund, Calderon, Dichter, & Garcia, 2017)

**The new recommendations from HHS and DOE are aligned with the expectations of ESSA and will help programs succeed in meeting the educational needs of young children who are DLLs.**

In light of these updates, teachers and administrators want to know what these expectations mean for their classrooms and what strategies they can use to prepare linguistically diverse young children for success in school. Fortunately, the DOE guidance on supporting DLLs in early childhood programs can be used to address ESSA requirements for all children.

### **CREATE A LANGUAGE PLAN**

The joint policy statement from HHS and DOE recommends language plans for all early care and education programs. Head Start began advocating several years ago for the development of language plans to improve school readiness for DLLs. This recommendation was solidified in the new Head Start Program Performance Standards. Today, Head Start and Early Head Start

programs are required to create and implement a plan that explicitly shows what services will be provided to students and teachers to this end (Office of Head Start, 2016).

While the new ESSA law does not specifically require a plan for supporting dual language learners, the new recommendations from HHS and DOE are aligned with the expectations of ESSA and will help programs succeed in meeting the educational needs of young children who are DLLs. Here are some steps teachers can take:

- Create a list of the specific languages spoken by each child and family in your class.
- Create a list of the specific languages spoken by all staff/adults who work with your students.
- Inventory the materials available in your classroom and throughout the program that address languages other than English.
- Account for matches between the language needs of the children and the resources available.
- Fill any gaps with materials, staff, volunteers, and professional development for teachers.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of all bilingual staff, including how and when they will use their home languages and English.
- Update family engagement plans to address true educational partnerships with every family.

## Feature

### KNOW YOUR PROGRAM'S LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Preferably before the school year starts, teachers need to know the specific languages spoken by each child in their classroom so they can plan adaptations to curriculum activities, learn some useful words, and gather books, music, and materials in the needed languages. Home language surveys should be provided in all the languages in the community and should always be followed up with in-person or phone conversations to build relationships. When the school does not have staff available to interact with families in their home languages or to translate their home language survey, they might look for support from their state department of education, local colleges, or cultural organizations, or they might hire a qualified translator or interpreter.

### CREATE A RELATABLE ENVIRONMENT

For young children to learn successfully, it is critical to use materials and displays that they can relate to culturally and linguistically. This includes items from their homes, photos of their families and neighborhoods, and the music, activities, food, and traditions that are really part of their lives. In a true strength-based approach, these materials will actually be talked about and used in discussions and explorations.

While there are products on the market such as posters, carpets, or puzzles depicting children from around the world, these items (similar to teacher-made word lists and generic preplanned activities) don't offer any direct connection to the individual children in a given classroom. A book created by a teacher and children using photos of the neighborhood is more relatable than a purchased book with illustrations of "community helpers." Real food packages that families would have on their shelves at home are more relevant for kitchen play than plastic foods purchased from a catalog. This approach will also support bilingual staff and volunteers, who can use their non-English languages in more meaningful ways with the right materials.

### MATCH STAFF AND CHILD LANGUAGES

Bilingual teachers should be empowered to do part of their teaching every day in their non-English language. (How much of that time is needed and in what circumstances will be up to each program to plan.) Some programs create two-way dual language immersion formats to support both English and home language development. Others support DLLs by providing books in different home languages so children can hear stories in their own language in small groups, or by assigning the bilingual educator to discuss activities during small-group time or work time.

Every bilingual adult who works or volunteers in a classroom should participate in professional development that covers these key components:

- First- and second- language development in children
- Effective strategies for building early language and literacy, such as positive interactions, sustained conversations, supports for oral language, and explicit explanations of the meanings of words, with emphasis on using these strategies to guide home language use
- Strategies for using the home language to support learning: helping children to understand content, feel comfortable in the program, develop their home language, and make connections between the home language and English
- Program-specific policies and classroom curriculum that determine how much time and in which activities the bilingual adult should focus on using the home language versus English

For staff who speak only English, professional development should include some of the same elements, such as first and second language development and early language and literacy strategies. It should also include:



Left: Classroom items should be labeled in children's home languages as well as English. Right: Photos of their own families and neighborhoods help young children who are DLLs relate to classroom content.

**“For young children to learn successfully, it is critical to use materials and displays that they can relate to culturally and linguistically: items from their homes, photos of their families and neighborhoods, and the music, activities, food, and traditions that are really part of their lives.”**



*Inviting parents to volunteer as a story reader or in conversational play is a great way to engage families who might not be fluent in English.*

- Research-based strategies for helping young DLLs learn content and English with supports such as visuals, props, videos, demonstrations, and actions (i.e., showing as well as telling children the information they need to learn)
- Strategies for learning and using the home language in limited ways to support children's learning, which might include learning together with children via bilingual books, CDs, or apps with sound; inviting bilingual volunteers to serve as conversation partners; and learning a few key words in the home languages of the children

### **PARTNER WITH FAMILIES**

When teachers help family members learn how to support home language learning and literacy outside the classroom, their own strategies in the classroom are more successful. Families can support their child's learning by participating during the school day as conversational play partners or story readers, or by providing culturally and linguistically meaningful items for the classroom. They can also help English-speaking teachers learn words in children's home language.

To open two-way communication with parents, it is vital for teachers to establish individual relationships with each family. While some families take advantage of parent workshops or family fun nights, those who do not attend may actually be the families that need the most support. Consider adding additional options to meet, such as invitations to talk one-on-one at a local coffee shop, volunteer opportunities that capitalize on family skills, or meetings over breakfast at school. In some situations, translators and interpreters will be needed. Text messages are

often effective in giving families ideas about activities and conversations to extend learning from school — and can be sent in English and received in the families' home languages (or vice versa) via messaging systems like Remind or Talking Points, making it easier for both teachers and families to communicate in the languages they know best.

It's true: Effective strategies may require some changes in practice to meet the latest research standards and follow the latest regulations and guidelines. But the biggest takeaway from the updates is that children who are DLLs are important. They have a unique set of needs, and those needs are important. Dual language learners are important as individual students, and they are important to the overall success of every educational program. Instead of a push to learn English, there is an emphasis on strength-based approaches that celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity among children, families, and educators. And these strengths, when combined and channeled, will make the whole classroom and the whole program stronger as a result. 🌍

*Karen N. Nemeth is an author, consultant, and advocate for early education for DLLs. She has leadership roles at the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for Bilingual Education, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. She hosts a resource website at [languagecastle.com](http://languagecastle.com).*

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*HighScope Chile focuses on the whole child, incorporating active learning in all its classrooms, pre-K through high school.*



# Institute News

## Spotlight on Chile

BY MARIA TAYLOR

The Colegio Santa Cruz is nestled in a rural valley some 20 miles from Santiago, Chile, and from the outside it looks like a typical large school, serving well over 1,000 students of all ages and operating as a hub in the small local community. But its bricks and palm trees, flags and breezeways belie a mission that is far from typical in most K–12 schools, Chile or elsewhere. Colegio Santa Cruz has used the HighScope approach for 20 years, and its focus on the whole student has always been one of the institute’s guiding principles.

“Worldwide, we can see that education is focused on preparing students to work and to produce. But that’s not enough,” says Trinidad Ried, HighScope Chile president and one of the founders of Colegio Santa Cruz. “We see people suffering from depression because they don’t feel that their lives have a purpose or that their own stories can make a difference. We see teachers, parents, and most importantly, kids and teenagers who are tired and unmotivated... who don’t like school or who don’t do well with learning in its traditional structure. The crisis in education is that it’s not responding to the four reasons for knowledge: Know to know, know to do, know to be, know to live with other people.”

That’s something the Colegio Santa Cruz strives to address. And the key to

providing students access to these four areas of learning is active learning. As students progress through middle and high school, teachers take an increasingly hands-off approach, using the principles of active learning to guide students toward thinking independently and facilitating their own interactions among classmates. “The main focus for our teachers at all levels is to follow the principles of the HighScope Wheel of Learning, starting from the center with active learning and then applying all the conditions of the learning environment, assessment, interaction, and the daily routine, adapted to the needs and interests of each grade level,” Ried explains.

**Colegio Santa Cruz was founded in 1997 and has developed the HighScope approach to serve every age and every developmental level from infant to 18 years.**

In some ways, HighScope’s middle and high school classrooms reflect the layout of an active learning preschool, with areas and corners representing students’ interests. There’s a circle area, with a big carpet and materials ranging from newspaper articles and photos to technology equipment, topic walls, posters, flannel boards, projects, and books. Mirroring small-group time, there are special classrooms or labs for subjects such as art, music,

technology, chemistry, physics, and biology, with each classroom or lab including options that promote active learning.

Projects at Colegio Santa Cruz challenge students to apply all their knowledge and creativity to the task at hand. Every year, the whole school participates in a science contest: designing a paper airplane that can fly the farthest, making a catapult, or building a container that will keep an egg from breaking when dropped. In the art realm, students this year worked together to create a mosaic in honor of the school’s 20th anniversary. They held a design contest, formed work groups, and then carried out their plan and presented their mosaic to the community.

Ried said that students who attend a HighScope school through 12th grade are prepared for university in ways that go beyond what traditional programs can offer. “While we have seen that they have the same academic results as other students in the same socioeconomic level, they are much more prepared in skills like leadership, communication, creativity, and responsibility,” she notes. “We can proudly say that some have gone on to excel in areas as varied as entrepreneurship, arts, music, sports, and management. And in all of them, their happiness and citizen spirit shines through.”

*Maria Taylor is the editor of The Active Learner.*



*High school students compete in a science challenge to build the farthest-flying paper airplane.*



*Three-year-olds explore different materials in the yard to improve their perception and creativity.*



*In the house area, Martin makes "dinner" for his father.*



*Elementary-school girls give a presentation on a physics project.*



*Two pre-K boys play together in the construction area.*



*A preschooler manipulates textures and materials during small-group time.*

# Bodies in Motion: Scaffolding Physicality

BY MIKE HUBER



*Consider scaffolding through a “teacher lens” and through a “caregiver lens.”*

Some kids need to move, move, move — and in a classroom, that can be disruptive. For Mike Huber, a teacher at Seward Child Care Center in Minneapolis, it’s all about helping young children learn to channel that energy themselves.

Tim was impulsive, and I worried about him. He bumped into other children or knocked over their things. Often, he would be in a state of high arousal when the rest of the class was in a calmer state.

Tim needed help regulating his arousal levels. He needed opportunities to do **heavy work** and **repetitive motions**. Heavy work involves activities that include input and resistance to the arms or legs, such as lifting, pushing, hugging, or jumping. It gives sensory input to joints and muscles, helping children organize their thoughts. Repetitive motions include rocking, swaying, or rolling back and forth. These motions provide input to the vestibular system, which gives children their sense of balance and helps them maintain attention. I also knew Tim needed to develop his proprioceptive sense — an awareness of how his body moves and where it starts and ends — as I believed this was another reason he bumped or crashed into others. And I knew I needed to be very intentional in my interactions with him so he would be ready, both academically and socially, for kindergarten next fall.

As I thought about strategies I could use to support Tim, I reflected on my understanding of the term *scaffolding*. I often consider scaffolding through a “teacher lens,” thinking of ways to support a child where they are — at their current developmental level — and then stretch or extend their cognitive or physical abilities to the next level when they are ready. I also thought about other times of the day when I view scaffolding with a “caregiver lens,” as when, for example, I provide support to a child who is sad. In that case, I am trying to support the child’s immediate needs, both emotional and physical, rather than trying to scaffold the developmental level of a certain skill. When a child expresses feelings of sadness, I get down at their level and label their emotion. I offer some physical comfort (e.g., a hug, a hand on the back) or I simply sit close by. I might also offer ways to help them deal with the emotion. If a child is missing his mother, I might help him make a card. If a child is having a hard time calming down, I might have her blow bubbles to help deepen her breathing, which can help the child relax. What if I did this with Tim, supporting him emotionally as well as physically throughout the day, but when he was excited rather than sad?



*Chase games and sword fights with foam pool noodles help children develop an awareness of how their body moves.*

Using a caregiver lens, I tried to support Tim to meet his immediate physical and emotional needs. When Tim was bumping into people or knocking over things, I approached him at his level, which in this case often meant moving around the room. I labeled his emotion: “Wow, you are excited” (or “energetic”). If he was playing a game — usually something that had to do with wizards or Pokémon — I would take on a role and play alongside him. Then, if we were about to run into the middle of the block area, I could say, “We need to run, but there are a lot of buildings here. Where else could we run?” This allowed him the physical movement he needed, but also helped him focus his attention on the needs of others.

Meanwhile, I needed to make some changes to the classroom daily routine to support Tim in an ongoing way, so I wasn’t just reacting when he was energetic. When Tim arrived, I would have him move a bin of extra coats. I would have him move it again before work time. Tim loved helping and showing how strong he was. He didn’t realize that the bin could have stayed in one place. The only reason I had him move it was to give him opportunities for heavy work. For the same reason, I put his cot where the toy stove was. Every day before naptime, he would have to push the stove out of the way. After nap, he would move it back.

For greeting time, I would often have the children hop over to the message board. I also included jumping activities at large-group time. If we were doing a movement song where children contributed ideas on how to move, I usually started with jumping or pushing against a wall. I also included various start/stop activities: musical chairs, freeze dances, and songs that ended with the word stop (“We’re running, running, running...and then

we stop”). Each time we did one of these activities, you could see Tim stop a bit after everyone else, but he always had a big smile on his face. In the fall, I made sure Tim was one of the first three to contribute an idea for a movement, because I knew he would lose focus if he had to wait. By the time spring rolled around, I didn’t have to worry about when he was chosen. Tim had learned to regulate his arousal levels and was able to wait as long as any of the other children in the class.

I also made sure to spend some time with Tim when our class went outside. During chase games, I made sure to catch Tim. He would squirm and push to get away. It was fun, but I knew that this was another way for him to get proprioceptive input while also doing heavy hugging-type work. We also had sword fights with pool noodles. This often involved jumping, rolling on the ground, and spinning, giving Tim plenty of sensory input.

I already have the children help pass out dishes at snacktime, so Tim had opportunities to move around before sitting to eat. This year, I introduced straws as well. Using a straw can give proprioceptive input to the jaw, which helps calm children.

All of these things helped Tim focus on others while still meeting his own need to move. It also helped me view his physicality as behavior to scaffold, rather than as disruptive behavior. I no longer worry about Tim. He has grown confident in himself, and I have grown confident in him as well. 🌟

*Mike Huber is a teacher at Seward Child Care Center in Minneapolis and former board member for the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children. He has a master’s degree in education from Hamline University.*

# Early Math Learning = Later School Success

## A Conversation with Deborah Stipek, PhD

BY JOANNE TANGORRA



*Early math instruction should have clear learning goals, but it also needs to be meaningful to young children.*

In this *Active Learner* interview, we talk with early education expert Deborah Stipek, PhD, about the importance of early math learning in young children's long-term academic achievement. Dr. Stipek chairs the Heising-Simons Development and Research on Early Math Education Network.

**Q:** *Early mathematics has increasingly come into the spotlight as the result of new research that connects early math learning to later academic achievement. What are some of the key findings in this area?*

**A:** The one that has received the most attention is the finding (in several large-scale studies) that math skills at kindergarten entry — that is, the knowledge children develop *before* entering elementary school — predict later reading skills and later academic achievement overall. Consistent difficulty in math during elementary school is associated with higher dropout rates and lower college entrance — more so than consistent difficulties in reading. Although we're not yet sure about the underlying connections, these findings make clear the importance of early math learning to children's future academic success.

**Q:** *Is there a particular area of mathematics instruction that is most significant in predicting later learning?*

**A:** Young children need to develop a strong sense of number, which includes being able to count using one-to-one correspondence, being able to determine which of two numbers is larger, understanding that adding to a collection results in a larger number, and so on. They should also develop spatial skills: not just being able to identify shapes, but also being able to articulate the defining characteristics of shapes, and to understand spatial concepts such as *above*, *below*, *under*.

**Q:** *In what ways are the Common Core State Standards shaping expectations for preschool math instruction and learning?*



*Sorting, counting, and matching games can be used as forms of “playful” math instruction for young children.*

**A:** Many states are aligning their preschool standards to the Common Core kindergarten standards. Ideally, children have the foundational skills they need when they enter kindergarten to achieve standards. And by aligning the standards and instruction, teachers help children experience a continuum of opportunities to develop their skills. Math standards are important. They give teachers guideposts and a clear sense of the goals. It’s hard for teachers to create a plan if they don’t know where they want to end up.

**Q:** You discuss the need for “playful instruction” in relation to early math learning. Can you explain what you mean by that?

**A:** Teachers of young children do *not* have to choose between play and academic instruction. When teachers are intentional — planning activities with learning goals in mind — math adheres to the goals of standards-based academic teaching without appearing overtly as such. In one classroom I visited, the teacher had drawn a 6 x 10 grid on a shower curtain and spread it out on the floor. She invited children to take off their shoes and sort them into piles according to attributes that they themselves had established — for example, sneakers, shoes with Velcro, sandals — and then arrange the shoes into categories on the grid. From there, the teacher asked children what they noticed about the shoes, which led to a discussion about which categories had the

most or least shoes, which kind of shoe most children wore to school that day, how many more sneakers there were than sandals, and so on. This is what I call “playful instruction.” Although the children may not have realized this was a math lesson, they were indeed learning math.

**“Math is everywhere in children’s lives. Helping them see that will make math meaningful to them.”**

**Q:** What are some other examples of how teachers can engage young children in math learning “playfully”?

**A:** Math instruction for young children should be intentional and have clear learning goals in mind. But it also needs to be meaningful to young children. Some math teaching can be done in the form of games (for example, playing chutes and ladders, or playing war with cards, in which children count the symbols to determine who has more). I have seen children hunt for shapes in their classroom, debating whether a window with slightly curved corners is really a rectangle; or explain to their teacher why they claim that the clock is a circle. Young children also love to count objects: the number of letters in their name, the number of cars in a toy train, the number of children present during circle time, the number of buttons on their shirt, the number of rungs on the ladder to the slide. You can teach math effectively without a



*Having children explain how they are making sense of a math problem helps foster a deeper understanding of the concept.*

single flashcard or worksheet. Math is everywhere in children's lives. Helping them see that will make math meaningful to them.

**Q:** You cite research that shows that playful math has a bonus: social-emotional learning. Would you explain how that works?

**A:** That's right. Teacher-planned math activities can also support the development of children's social skills. This is evident, for example, in the shoe categorization activity, during which children had to negotiate and establish agreed-upon categories, follow classroom protocol by raising their hands to answer questions, and participate as part of a group. So children are learning both math and social skills.

**Q:** Why is "math talk" so important to the development of children's mathematical understanding?

**A:** First, there is good evidence that the amount of math language children hear before school predicts their math skills after they enter school. Getting children to explain their solutions gives teachers some insight into how they are making sense of the math problem and thus what an appropriate follow-up might be. It also fosters deeper understanding of the concept by requiring the ability to articulate the thinking behind solving a math problem.

**Q:** What is the role of a structured curriculum in early math education?

**A:** A structured curriculum can serve as a guide to teachers for what should be covered and in what order. It also provides some suggestions for specific activities that will help teachers promote math development in their students. But even the best curriculum

is no substitute for teacher understanding and skill. So much of good teaching is listening to children's own sense-making and then building on what children understand. Most important are the interactions around math that occur between the teacher and the children.

**Q:** Research indicates that early childhood classrooms tend to spend more time on literacy instruction than math instruction. Is there a need to increase time for math instruction in the early childhood classroom? An optimal amount of time each day that teachers should spend on math instruction?

**A:** We usually recommend at least 20 minutes a day on teacher-planned math activities that have a clear learning goal. But math can be woven into the entire day: counting off as children line up, counting out two crackers for each child at snack time, or looking for shapes while walking down the corridor.

**Q:** How much more needs to be done in order to convince educators, policy makers, and the general public that "early math matters"?

**A:** I see a much greater recognition of the importance of math happening just in the last couple of years. Once teachers begin to engage in meaningful, playful math learning activities with children, they are usually won over by seeing how much their children enjoy them and how much they learn. The bigger challenges are teachers' own math anxiety and lack of training and support they receive for teaching math. And for that to be overcome, we need to see greater investment in supporting preschool teachers with the training they need to be most effective in preparing young children for mathematics in preschool and beyond. 🧠

*Joanne Tangorra is the editorial director at HighScope.*

*Deborah Stipek is the former dean of Stanford University's graduate school of education, where she now serves as Judy Koch Professor of Education. She holds a PhD in developmental psychology from Yale. Dr. Stipek's research focuses on children's achievement motivation, early childhood education, elementary education, and school reform. She is a member of the HighScope Board of Directors.*



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# Graphing Favorite Fruits

## Content Areas: Mathematics + Social Studies

Try this HighScope activity during your home visits this fall. It involves all family members (or anyone else who's home during your visit), so it's a great way to get families and their child engaged in early learning. You can share the information in the Family Messages section of the activity so families can see how to relate children's play to learning outcomes.

### MATERIALS

Paper + Markers + Pictures of Fruit

### BEGINNING



- Lay out the pictures of fruit.
- Talk about which is your favorite fruit.
- Ask the child which is his or her favorite. Then you might ask, "Why is it your favorite?" Draw out the child's reasons with open-ended questions and comments (e.g., the child might like the fruit's color, texture, or taste, or just that it goes well with ice cream).

### MIDDLE

- Make a graph using your favorite fruit and the child's as a beginning (see the sample graph, right).
- Ask what family members are present to choose their favorite fruit and put it on the graph.
- Ask the child, "Which fruit seems to be the favorite? Which fruits are left out?"

### END

- Put the graph on the refrigerator so other family members can weigh in as they come home.

Our Favorite Fruit	
Ms. Kay	
DeShawn	

### FAMILY MESSAGES

Young children are developing what mathematicians call number sense. They are beginning to understand that numerals represent numbers of objects and are recognizing what has more or less, is bigger or smaller, and so on. Young children are also beginning to estimate and calculate differences in quantity.

Children also know that others have different tastes and interests.

### HOME EXTENSIONS

What other things can the family think of that they can use a graph for? Favorite cookies? Favorite sports? Food they don't like?

Ask the child to bring the fruit graph back to school.

# Embracing the Power of Play

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER



*The problem-solving process was one of the most rewarding to watch children internalize, because it's something that will benefit them throughout their lives.*

In September 2016, nine cohorts of pre-K teachers from across Alabama began HighScope's Preschool Curriculum Course (PCC).

A comprehensive, four-week training, the PCC covers topics such as conflict resolution, plan-do-review, and adult-child interactions. Most importantly, it emphasizes active learning — the play-based, hands-on learning style at the heart of the HighScope approach.

Within just seven months, the training and efforts of those cohorts had already given rise to positive outcomes for children, teachers, and programs as a whole — as the staff at Zion Chapel Elementary School in Jack, Alabama can attest.

## LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

*Water splashes on the floor and flies into the air. Little fingers, wrinkly from being submerged, fill cups with water and squeeze in drops of food coloring with a dropper. One girl holds up a cup of colored water. "My color is darker than yours," she says. She and her classmates try to figure out why. They begin counting drops and determine that the more drops they add, the darker the color becomes.*

To the casual observer, the children at the sand and water table in this Zion Chapel classroom might look like they're "playing," explains D'Andra Tingey, the school's principal. But what's happening here goes deeper than that. While the children are working, they're describing attributes, noticing differences, and posing questions to investigate. They're experimenting and drawing conclusions. As Tingey makes clear, the switch to a play-based philosophy in their pre-K classrooms was truly a whole-child approach. "When children have voice and choice," she says, "then authentic, meaningful learning begins to take place."

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

As with any type of change, a new program ushers in a mix of excitement, curiosity, and hesitation. It brings questions too — and it's sometimes difficult to predict the amount of time it will take to observe positive outcomes. For pre-K teachers Chelsi Jones and Anna Padgett, the easiest HighScope component to introduce was plan-do-review. In just a short time, the two noticed their children making detailed plans and enthusiastically describing their day at recall time.

In contrast, the teachers described the six steps of conflict resolution as the hardest to implement, because it required teachers to change their mindset about solving problems for children.

## SIX STEPS IN CONFLICT MEDIATION

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
2. Acknowledge children's feelings.
3. Gather information.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.

*From You Can't Come to My Birthday Party!*  
2nd Ed., by Betsy Evans, HighScope Press, 2016



*In a HighScope classroom, children learn through play to notice differences, pose questions, and figure out ways to solve problems.*

HighScope teachers receive training in a six-step problem-solving to conflict situations, which they model and use with children. A few weeks after Jones and Padgett introduced this approach in their classrooms, they noticed a difference in how children were communicating. After several months of supporting and scaffolding children's efforts to problem-solve, they began to observe children engaging in the process independently. In one situation, three children wanted to paint at the easel, but there wasn't room. Instead of pushing, shoving, or tattling, they began talking about solutions. One said, "There's room at the table." No one wanted that solution, so the second child suggested, "What if we use the timer and set it for five minutes, and then someone else can take a turn?" Throughout the process, the children used the respectful words their teachers had modeled: "Is that ok with you?" "Do you agree?"

Despite the initial challenge, Jones and Padgett say this process was one of the most rewarding to watch children internalize, because it's something that will benefit them throughout their lives: regulating their emotions, articulating their perspectives, listening to others, breaking down complex situations, thinking creatively, and collaborating to follow through with a solution that works for everyone.

## TEAM TEACHING

One key component of creating meaningful, ongoing learning experiences for children is providing continuity in learning, from grade level to grade level and classroom to home. Even though the HighScope program implemented at Zion Chapel is for preschoolers, Tingey had her kindergarten teachers join in a discussion of the PCC to reflect on what worked. The pre-K teachers observed such success with plan-do-review that the team decided to adapt it for kindergarten as well. As a result of

this collaboration, children moving through the grades at Zion Chapel will have the benefit of consistent expectations among teachers: child-focused learning with a developmental approach.

Children, of course, play at home too. Part of implementing a play-based curriculum is building connections with families to help them see the value of meaningful play and understand how to extend their children's learning. Jones and Padgett have found a variety of ways to help parents interact with the curriculum: classroom visits, tips for at-home activities, and even a private social media account. Once, the teachers posted a video of children acting out "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Later, a parent posted that over the weekend her child had asked to act out the events in a book they were reading and had assigned family members roles in the story. To teachers and families, this was an indication that concepts learned at school — such as comprehending, retelling the sequence of events, and assigning roles in play — were really making an impression.

For children, teachers, and administrators, the impact of implementing a play-based curriculum is significant, long-lasting, and quickly apparent. As the Zion Chapel team attests, it allows teachers to engage children and help them acquire skills that will serve them throughout their education and beyond. "My teachers on these grade levels are now instructing and assessing not only the academic domains, but also other domains, such as social-emotional, physical, and cognitive," says Tingey. "We are enabling children to become problem solvers, regulators of their own emotions, critical thinkers, and creators." 📺

*Christine Snyder is an Early Childhood Specialist at HighScope.*

# Interactive Writing

BY HOLLY DELGADO AND ERICA HILL

*Authentic opportunities to interact with the writing process help children make connections between the spoken word and print — and can be found throughout the HighScope daily routine, as shown by these scenarios from HighScope’s Demonstration Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan.*

## 1. LARGE-GROUP TIME

As one child fills in missing letters on a shared writing piece, the rest stay actively engaged by writing the letters on a large sheet of paper.

## 2. MESSAGE BOARD

Message board “mistakes” let children and teachers discuss what letter needs to be changed and what it needs to be changed to. Here, one child “fixes” the message board to read *parachute* instead of *varachute*.

## 3. PLANNING TIME

To complete a planning story, the teacher writes what children are saying for their plan, and children fill in their name, the names of classmates they want to work with, and the areas they plan to work in.

## 4. RECALL TIME

Children are given the opportunity to write the names of classmates they worked with and the areas they worked in, using either words or symbols. Cards with children’s names and letter-linked symbols can be used to support and scaffold their writing.

## 5. SMALL-GROUP TIME

As the teacher and children discuss whom to make greeting cards for, the teacher takes dictation, writing down children’s ideas for words to be used in the cards. Here, a child looks at the list before designing her card. 📌

Holly Delgado and Erica Hill are Early Childhood Specialists at HighScope.





4



5

# Methods to Model and Scaffold Writing

## DICTATION

An adult writes down a child's words or stories, exactly as spoken, and then reads them back without correcting grammar or word order.

## INTERACTIVE OR SHARED WRITING

Sharing a pen and paper with the child, the teacher models writing concepts (e.g., purposes for writing, directionality of print, letter-sound associations) while the child contributes their own words or letters to the piece. All levels of developmental spelling and letter formation should be accepted.

## SCAFFOLDED WRITING

The teacher draws one line of corresponding size for each word the child generates, and the child writes the message based on their own ability level. Scribbling, letter stringing, and using few letters, and developmental spelling should all be accepted.

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# Your Voice Counts

BY LAUREN HOGAN

From Audre Lorde to Anne Frank, Margaret Mead to Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. King to Dr. Seuss, we have no shortage of sayings extolling the importance of advocacy and the difference one person can make to change things from how they are to what they can become. Perhaps you roll your eyes at inspirational quotes; perhaps you hang them on your wall. Either way, the truth behind the sayings remains the same: *Your voice matters.*

Yes, *yours.* You may be an early childhood educator, director, principal, assistant, faculty member, systems leader, or administrator. Perhaps you're also a parent, partner, spouse, and friend. But guess what? You are also an expert. You are a storyteller. And you are — you *must* be — an advocate.

At the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), we focus on creating opportunities for you to elevate your voice. Through the Power to the Profession initiative and the America for Early Ed campaign, NAEYC is asking you to engage with your colleagues, share your ideas, talk about your experiences, and connect with your policymakers. We are working together to define the early childhood profession: a unifying framework for career pathways, qualifications, standards, and compensation, and a financing system that supports equitable access to affordable, high-quality education for all children birth through age 8. And we can't do it without you.

As educators, we know that the first years of a child's life lay the foundation for all future learning. Through research like HighScope's Perry Preschool Study, we know that high-quality early childhood programs deliver a return on investment




*Many voices, speaking together, have the power to change the future for our children, our families, and our world.*

that outpaces average stock market gains. We know that so much depends on the educators who ensure that children, supported by families, have the experiences they need for a strong foundation.

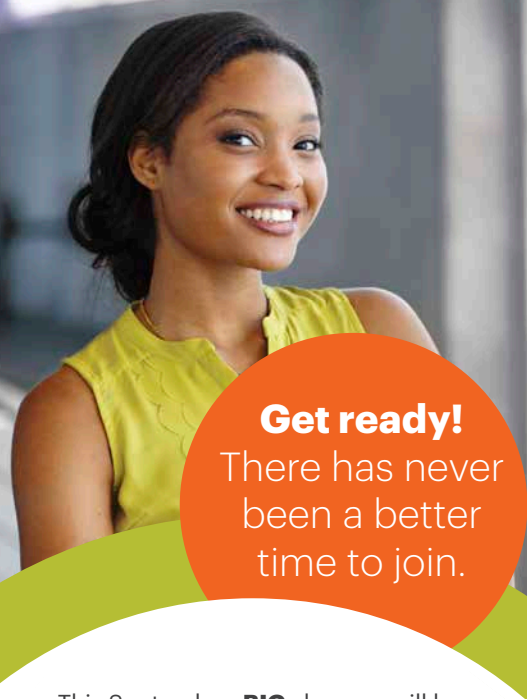
Parents, grandparents, and voters know this too. And even across the demographic, geographic, and political lines that too often divide us, polling continually demonstrates high levels of public support for investing in early childhood education. NAEYC's own polling shows that voters see early childhood educators as heroes, on a par with firefighters and nurses. Yet the theoretical valuing of our work has not been translated into increased investments in early childhood education and increased compensation for early childhood educators.

Changing this reality is neither simple nor easy. But it is necessary — for our children, our families, our educators, our economy.

Each of you must make the choice to mobilize, taking advantage of the resources and support that organizations like NAEYC, HighScope, and others are offering. Each of you must help us make our collective voice powerful enough to ensure that our nation's policies catch up with the science behind the importance of early learning and the benefits of investing in educators who are qualified, supported, and compensated for the complex and demanding jobs we perform.

And if you get busy or nervous or overwhelmed; if you decide it's someone else's responsibility; if you keep meaning to call your representatives but never do — we understand. We're here to help. And just remember, there's always an inspirational quote around if you need it. 

*Lauren Hogan is the Senior Director for Public Policy and Advocacy at NAEYC.*



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### *How to Make the Most of Home Visits (continued from p. 13)*

**Lindemulder:** I bring a simple puzzle for an activity. It's made from a picture of my coteacher and me, which I attach to cardboard, cut into five pieces, and laminate. I ask parents and children to do the puzzle together while I describe the learning happening during this activity. The puzzle also helps children become accustomed to our faces, making the transition to pre-school easier.

#### **TAKE PICTURES**


**Hill:** With the family's permission, I take pictures of the child's house, front door, favorite toys, and bed. I use the photos to make a book titled *Whose Door Is This?* or *Our Favorite Toys*. I also print out pictures of the children's homes, tape them onto blocks, and add those blocks to the block area.

**Libby:** I take photos of the family working with the items I've brought to the home visit and post them (with the family's permission) in the classroom on a welcome sign mounted at the children's level. On the first day of school, I point out the pictures to the children as they come in. It is a great conversation starter and also helps families feel more at home in the classroom.

#### **USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED**

**Hill:** My coteacher and I reflect on what we've learned during our home visits and how we can incorporate that into our learning environment. If we've noted that several children had Legos in their homes, we'll add Legos to the toy area at the beginning of the school year so children have materials they can relate to.

If children's families speak another language at home, we'll have items labeled in both English and the home language to help children (and their families) feel more comfortable in their new setting.

**Libby:** In the classroom, I collect some items I've shared with families during home visits and then encourage children to use them. For example, if I brought pine cones to the home visit, I'll add those to the art area and take pictures of the children wrapping yarn around a pine cone or using it as a paintbrush. I'll send these pictures home, along with monthly activity ideas, so families can continue the learning that goes on in the classroom. 

*Marcella Fecteau Weiner is an editor at HighScope.*


# Family Engagement for Head Start

BY JANICE HILL



Think about  
what your program  
needs and who  
your families are,  
and be creative  
with volunteer  
opportunities!

Head Start's new standards focus on giving programs flexibility to better meet the needs of the families they serve. For example, the revised standards still stress parent engagement but no longer require programs to establish parent committees if they haven't been effective. Here are five tips to help your program strengthen its partnership with families.

- 1 CREATE A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE.** Pay attention to traffic patterns at pickup and dropoff times, and put your sign-in/sign-out sheets in a place that encourages easy communication between teachers and family members. Place a parent bulletin board in a visible location, and provide program and relevant community information on that board in the language(s) spoken by your families.
- 2 OFFER A VARIETY OF WAYS TO PARTICIPATE.** Provide parents with lots of options to get involved. They can volunteer for field trips, donate materials, share a talent, help build the playground, and prepare special snacks. Think about what your program needs, who your families are, and be creative with volunteer opportunities!
- 3 KNOW HOW TO CONNECT WITH FAMILIES.** Use the communication tools that work best for your families, whether that is email, texts, phone calls, newsletters, or social media. If your program uses COR Advantage, take advantage of the Family Network Connection so parents can monitor their child's progress via work samples, photos, videos, and anecdotes.
- 4 PLAN HOME VISITS WELL IN ADVANCE.** The Head Start Program Performance Standards state that teachers must conduct at least two home visits per family each year. Reduce anxiety about these visits by communicating with parents — well *before* the home visits — on what they can expect. See "How to Make the Most of Home Visits" on page 13 for more ideas.
- 5 DESIGN PARENT WORKSHOPS WITH YOUR FAMILIES IN MIND.** What do you see as most important to the families you serve? Keep that in mind when planning workshops to ensure maximum attendance. Depending on your families' needs and interests, workshop topics may include an introduction to the HighScope Curriculum, power struggles (and how to avoid them), reading with children, and preschoolers as scientists. Be sure to consider the schedules of your families, and alternate the days and times of the workshops to accommodate them. If feasible, offer child care and provide food to encourage attendance. 

Janice Hill is an Early Childhood Field Consultant with HighScope and director of the Bussey Center for Early Childhood Education in Southfield, Michigan. It houses both a Head Start and Great Start program and is a part of the Southfield Public School district.

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A close-up photograph of a young child with dark hair and eyes, looking directly at the camera. The child's right hand is held up, palm facing forward, with blue paint smeared across the fingers and palm. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom setting with colorful toys and books.

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