

ReSource

 HIGHSCOPE[®]

F O R E D U C A T O R S

Spring 2017

Family Engagement

- 5 Parent Partnerships
- 11 From Involvement to Engagement
- 21 Lifting Up Dads





Education changes lives. We know that. One of the reasons we can say we know it is that way back in 1962, an elementary school principal by the name of Charles E. Beatty allied with David Weikart, the founder of a study that later became known as the Perry Preschool Project. Charles Beatty not only opened the doors of the Perry Preschool to the study, but he also actively ensured the level of parent and community cooperation needed for the project's success.

That investment from the parents and the community, though often taken for granted, was integral to the Perry Study. Without it, there is no study, and there is no high-quality preschool. With it, the potential to make a real difference in our communities is unlimited.

The Perry Preschool study is often cited as the primary source of data in support of high-quality preschool education. Something that couldn't be precisely measured in the study, but is behind

every data point and document, every photograph and publication, is the community support that it took to achieve the study's results. To truly effect change in our communities, it only makes sense that we begin with the community itself, by making ourselves an asset to the families in our programs and by viewing parents as equal partners in meeting the educational needs of their children.

When the original groundwork was laid for the Perry Preschool Project, the parents and children who participated in the study had to be convinced that what was being studied — the effects of an active learning curriculum on their child's development — was in their best interests, and the best interests of the child. At the time, the efficacy of active learning was just a theory, and the researchers themselves couldn't claim with certainty that active learning would offer the positive outcomes that we now accept as fact. Those researchers and teachers and support staff started by accepting the parents as critical to the success of the active learning curriculum.

Cultivating these relationships with families isn't an "extra step" or a luxury — it's essential, and it happens naturally

through your everyday interactions. It starts by making your program essential to the lives of the children and their families. When families see and sense the everyday impact that active learning and positive adult-child interactions have on their children, they want to emulate the success you have in the classroom, to ally with you to create what the National Research Council calls "complementary and mutually reinforcing environments" for their children at home. When the child's family culture is as valued in the classroom as the precepts of active learning are in the home, then we've made that vital, reciprocal school-home connection that reverberates through everything else we do with and for families.

High-quality early education is an "everyone wins" scenario, and it starts with the decision that that is our goal — for everyone to win. And when we do that, every child, and indeed the whole community, benefits. We've proven that.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Polk, PhD
President

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THE HIGHSOPE FOUNDATION is an independent, nonprofit organization founded by the late David Weikart in Ypsilanti, Michigan. HighScope's mission is big, but it is clear: to change the trajectory of the world, one child at a time.



Contents

Volume 36, No. 1/Spring 2017

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Departments

- Letter From the President** 2
From Cheryl Polk, PhD, HighScope President
- What's New @ HighScope?** 4
News on the Foundation's latest products and services

Features

- Parent Partnerships: Reciprocal Relationships With Families** 5
Building trust is key to successful relationships with families in your program — and it starts by letting parents know that you really value their input. *Christine Snyder*
- Making It Meaningful: From Involvement to Engagement With Families** 11
Can a trip to the grocery store double as a lesson in math? A look at strategies to help families extend the HighScope Curriculum outside classroom walls and into everyday life. *Holly Delgado*
- Under Our Skin: The Deadly Side Effects of Childhood Trauma** 17
Pioneering pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris lays out the connection between toxic stress in childhood and chronic health issues like asthma, cancer, heart disease, depression, and suicide. *Maria Taylor*
- Lifting Up Dads: Encouraging Fathers in Early Childhood Classrooms** 21
Preschoolers whose dads take part in their education fare better, academically and socially, than those whose don't. But even today, some fathers still feel a lingering discomfort in an early education setting. *Adam Robson*
- Institute News** 26
Spotlight on China and Indonesia Institutes.

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What's New

News on the Foundation's latest projects and products

@HighScope?

HighScope Expands Leadership With Chief Operating Officer Armen Hratchian

HighScope's leadership team has a new member: Chief Operating Officer Armen Hratchian, who will work across the organization to advance the foundation's goals of expanding access to high-quality early childhood education for children locally and globally.

"Armen's achievements in successfully leading high-impact initiatives and

teams have prepared him to strategically support the foundation and our work of advancing the early childhood field," said HighScope President Cheryl Polk. "I'm confident he will make

an immediate, positive impact on our organization's operations."

In the past, Hratchian has worked at Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, Standard and Poor's in New York, and — most recently — Excellent Schools Detroit, where he served as Vice President of K–12 Education and participated in initiatives like the Michigan Future Schools Governing Board, the Detroit College Access Network, and the National Advisory Board for EdFuel's Blueprint for Success Initiative.

"As a parent whose children are enrolled in HighScope programs, I have experienced firsthand the profound impact that active learning has on young children," said Hratchian. "It is an honor to join the HighScope team, and I look forward to the significant impact that we will have on the future of education."

Enroll Now for Online Courses Starting in Spring

Visit highscope.org/training for start dates and full details. Most courses are eligible for clock hours, and Michigan residents can earn SCECHs. See pages 30–31 for more details.

HighScope Named a Highest-Rated Applicant of i3 Grant

HighScope has been announced as one of 15 highest-rated applicants in the Investing in Innovation (i3) competition. Selected from 385 submissions, HighScope will receive up to \$3 million from the US Department of Education to promote self-regulation skills for more than 2,000 preschool and kindergarten students in Detroit.

"Developing self-regulation in young students has been shown to lead to future academic achievement," said HighScope President Cheryl Polk. "This grant will allow us to build on HighScope's Perry Preschool Study results and apply the newest research on self-regulation to develop the skills children need to set them up for success later in life."

The project will be conducted in partnership with the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD), with input from Oakland University and Michigan State University researchers. Grant funding will go toward enhancements to two of HighScope's signature curriculum components: plan-do-review (PDR) and conflict resolution (CR), both of which support self-regulation skills like problem-solving and controlling impulses. The project will also focus on helping teachers implement the enhanced PDR/CR in their classrooms, training DPSCD early childhood staff as enhanced PDR/CR trainers, and educating families about the importance of self-regulation.

HighScope Curriculum and Assessment Approved in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has recently approved HighScope as a provider of curriculum, online training, and child assessment for any provider seeking to serve families eligible to receive publicly funded child care (PFCC). HighScope's curriculum products

and assessment tools are aligned to early learning standards and

can be used with

any developmentally appropriate curriculum. HighScope is ready to support educators in Ohio in providing research-based and child-focused early childhood education. For more information about HighScope's curriculum and assessments approved for the Ohio Step Up to Quality Program, call 800.587.5639 or visit highscope.org/ohio.



Find Us at These Spring Conferences!

- **MNAEYC-MNSACA 2017 Annual State Conference**, February 3–4, 2017, St. Paul, MN
- **Michigan Head Start Conference**, March 1–3, 2017, Troy, MI
- **SECA 68th Annual Conference**, March 9–11, 2017, Biloxi, MS
- **National Head Start Conference**, April 7–10, 2017, Chicago, IL
- **HighScope International Conference**, April 18–21, 2017, Detroit, MI

Parent Partnerships

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

by Christine Snyder

Families establish a unique set of hopes, values, and goals for their children based on love, experience, and instinct. As educators and caregivers, we are invited to be a part of the small circle of people who have a tremendous impact on young children's growth and learning — and, ultimately, their long-term well-being and success.

Working with families is a central component of caring for young children. Yet families and caregivers play unique and appropriately different roles in children's lives. Caregivers are typically responsible for children's care and educational needs during specific times from day to day for the course of a year or two. Families, on the other hand, are responsible for all of children's needs over the course of a lifetime.

These two roles naturally come with different perspectives on goals for the children, as well as different day-to-day expectations. But when we can be open to the unique and valuable insight families provide, the opportunity to work as a team blends the two views to create a



Trust is the cornerstone of successful relationships with parents in your program.

positive, whole experience for children. Because young children are dependent on adults to care for them and assist in their learning, a genuine, positive relationship between parents and teachers is essential. More than anyone else, families provide us with valuable information about their child's routines, interests, and preferences. We are dependent on families to offer us insight about how their child interacts with others, engages in a group setting, and communicates.

Building relationships with parents is not without its challenges, though. Each family-caregiver partnership may be facing a different challenge. But anticipating and identifying these challenges can help us work toward a responsive

relationship with flexible strategies to focus on meeting the needs of the child in a way that works for each individual family.

From the outset, teachers and caregivers need to intentionally identify strategies that can be used to establish strong, positive family partnerships. A give-and-take, reciprocal relationship with families sets the tone for future interactions and influences the overall success of the child in the group care setting.

Learning by Listening

Relationships between parents and caregivers must be built on trust and the shared belief that we each are acting on the best interests of the children and value input from one another. The best way to establish trust with families is to begin by listening.

The opportunity to build reciprocal trust with parents starts when families first express an interest in your program and come to visit. Making them feel welcome and really listening to their perspectives and questions from the



Teachers include props in the learning environment that encourage children to role play things that happen in their own homes.

beginning will go a long way. Depending on the children’s ages and the goals their parents have for them, parents’ concerns could range from sleeping patterns, eating habits, and potty-training to specific developmental goals such as walking, talking, or writing. When you are open to listening to parents and are responsive to their unique needs and

A dialogue that begins with listening helps caregivers and administrators learn more about the families in their care.

concerns, it sets the tone that you value their input and viewpoint.

A dialogue that begins with listening also helps caregivers and administrators learn more about the families in their care. When programs are well-informed about the families they serve, they are more capable of making accommoda-

tions, and therefore can provide better service and care to children.

Before the child’s first day in the classroom, we can learn about his or her family through dialogue, family questionnaires, and home visits. Home visits allow for a personal, focused connection in which the teachers can interact with the family — including siblings — see the child’s favorite home toys, and engage in a one-on-one conversation with the child’s parents or primary caregivers about shared goals and expectations for the year. As the year progresses, we can gain valuable insight through many informal and formal channels, such as daily conversations, family events, teacher-family conferences, social media interactions, or simple observations during regular interactions.

Embracing Diversity in the Classroom

Of course, caregivers have their own unique cultural backgrounds and values, and that presents a common challenge in building strong relationships with families. For example, our own experience might lead us to make assumptions about family structures or indicate a

value of one type of family structure over another. Teachers who grew up in a two-parent home with a mother and father, for instance, may unintentionally assume or imply that a family has two parents, that they are married, or that there is one man and one woman. In fact, for many years, state-created enrollment forms requested the contact information for the mother and father — an immediate exclusion of homes with two mothers, two fathers, or grandparents providing care for the child. Although our own experiences and values may be different, we should take care not to let our personal biases impact our understanding of families and our ability to establish a positive relationship. Instead, it is important to ask questions, build trust, and learn about families with an open mind.

This is especially important at the outset — that we, as caregivers, are open-minded and willing to build an atmosphere of trust in which families feel comfortable sharing their culture with us, recognizing differences as valuable components that make each of us unique and special.

Once we have overcome the initial challenge of recognizing our biases, the next step is taking positive action to embrace those differences. “We have finally established the essential idea that home cultures and prejudices and discrimination in the larger society deeply affect children’s development, and that early childhood programs must address these realities,” says Louise Derman Sparks, co-author with Julie Olsen Edwards of *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. “The biggest challenge now facing us is to put these basic premises into daily practice in our ECE [early childhood education] organizations and programs.”

Understanding a family’s unique culture gives us many opportunities to do just that. Incorporating materials that represent children’s home lives builds a stronger sense of self and a sense of belonging in the classroom. Including props that children can use to role play their families’ hobbies or jobs allows

them to play in ways that are familiar and similar to their home lives. Likewise, including empty food boxes from children's homes or dishes that match what children use in their homes sup-

Photographs of families build familiarity, comfort, and a sense of belonging.

ports children in cooking in the ways that they see their families cook.

Photographs of families are another great way to build familiarity, comfort, and a sense of belonging. Before school begins, you might ask families to supply some pictures that represent important

aspects of their culture and members of their family. This may include photos of people who live in the household, places the family travels to frequently, close friends, and family members who live far away.

Photos of children can be placed at each child's cubby so they and their families can easily find their belongings and comfort items. A poster for each child with family photos can be posted around the room at child height so children are able to look at, see, and touch photos of family members throughout the day. Children will also benefit from teacher-made books of family photos in the book area, photos of family members to carry around, or — for infants and toddlers — photo mobiles hanging over

diaper-changing areas. These family photos, when placed in a variety of areas throughout the classroom, will make families feel welcome and included in the play space. In addition, opportunities for children to explore family photos will help children become more familiar with the families of their classmates.

Effective Communication With Families

Another common bias we may have, whether personal or cultural, is a preference for certain modes of communication. Establishing trust through dialogue is the foundation of strong relationships with the families we serve. It's imperative, then, that we meet families' needs and preferences when communicating with them about their culture, their values, and their child.

Sharing family photos in the classroom helps children become more familiar with the families of their classmates.



As caregivers, while we are unique individuals, we may have a standard set of strategies that we use with parents: verbal communication at dropoff, monthly written newsletters, text message reminders, etc. However, when interacting with individual families, we must take *their* personal preferences into consideration. If we overlook the way that families communicate, it's possible that one side or the other is not getting the information that is needed. Parents who speak English as a second language or are not able to read may not understand important messages you send about the program or their child — and they may be afraid to tell you.

Regular communication with parents will help to establish and maintain relationships with families. Common ways of communicating with families include bulletin board postings, text reminders, social media sites, blogs, flyers, email reminders, phone calls, and face-to-face interactions.

While we want to offer information in a variety of forms to meet the needs of all families, it is also important to recognize and accommodate for the individual communication preferences of each family. This may mean that general information for the class is sent via email, with a hard copy included for families who don't use email. For family members who are able to frequently drop off or pick up, bulletin board postings can serve as regular, accessible reminders. Conversely, if families are not in the center frequently because transportation is provided or due to their work hours or location, a different method of communication — such as phone calls, text messages, or emails — would be more appropriate.

It's not just the varying modes of communication that present a challenge. It's also finding the time to communicate and connect with families. Due to varying program and family dynamics, many families may find it convenient to touch base at dropoff or pickup times. Other families' work schedules require a friend or nanny to take care of dropoff

and pickup. In addition, many families travel for work or serve in the military and are stationed in locations away from their families. "I travel a lot for work," said Bobby Sepulveda, 40. "I appreciate that [my daughter's] teachers take the time to send me a quick email now and then, to communicate something that was important to her. I like to know what's going on at [her] school when I'm gone for weeks at a time, and the fact that her teachers take the time to update me reminds me that she's in good hands."

Even when families are able to be physically present in the environment frequently, it may still be a challenge to engage in meaningful conversation, as both you and the parents are busy tending to children. Again, awareness of these differences between one family and another and a willingness to communicate in ways that accommodate each individual family ensure the openness, respect, and trust that are the necessary foundation of strong family engagement in your program.

Welcoming Families

Just as it's necessary to learn as much as we can about the family life of children in our care, we need to be intentional in providing education to

Presenting yourself as a valuable, reliable resource will increase the likelihood that families will be open with you about changes in their child's needs.

families about our program and what they can expect from their child's experience in group care. The goal of welcoming families includes providing information about the daily routine, program philosophy, and educational goals, as well as the opportunity to meet and interact with the staff. When parents feel



Keeping parents up-to-date will help them feel more comfortable leaving their child in your care.

informed about their child's experience in a group setting, they will feel more comfortable about their relationship with you and leaving their child in your care.

To start with, it is necessary that the enrollment process and general operating procedures focus on the needs of the family. This includes a thorough orientation process that helps parents learn about the program and about the experiences their children will have during the day. Families should be informed of center policies, such as what will happen in the event of inclement weather or child illness. Staff should also be available to provide information on an individual basis and assist with the school application and enrollment process as necessary.

Families also benefit when caregivers can provide ideas for additional resources in the community. These resources could include developmental screenings, family support groups, financial resources, diagnostic special needs services, or other service referrals as needed. In addition to helping families meet the needs of their child, presenting yourself as a valuable, reliable resource will increase the likelihood

that families will be open with you about changes to their child's needs.

Creating Community in Your Classroom

When parents and children first enroll in the program, welcome them by providing a tour of the care space and other important areas such as the child's cubby, parent information boards, and lending libraries. Children and families will feel more comfortable when they can easily navigate the space and find the things they need.

In order to provide information and predictability, there should be a daily schedule posted for parents, as well as a pictorial routine for children that matches the posted routine and is positioned at the child's height. When parents have an idea of what occurs in their child's day, they are better able to make a smooth transition between home and group care, and are able to discuss events in the day that were important to the child. "When I can ask my son about specific times of the daily routine, he's much more willing to reveal details about his day," said Alison Krause, 26. "I like to know what he's been doing, of course, and it gives him another chance to review and make sense of his own day."

Part of any daily routine should be greeting both parents and children in a warm, friendly manner as they arrive. This will ensure a smoother transition and reassure parents about their child being in group care. Welcoming children and families by name lets them know that you value them both as individuals and as an important part of the classroom community. Offering families a place to bottle-feed or nurse their babies supports their family decisions and individual schedules. Likewise, allowing parents to stay for part of the dropoff transition (if their schedule allows) will assist with children's separation anxiety and also increase parents' familiarity with and sense of belonging in the program. "For my son's first year of preschool, I participated in greeting and large-group time every day, because I could," said Adam Robson, 42. "A lot of parents don't have the opportunity to do that, but for my son and I, it became a regular, important part of our own daily routine. And it really helped my son overcome his initial anxiety at being away from his parents."

In the event that parents are distressed at dropoff or pickup time, it is important to acknowledge their feelings and offer the support they desire. Parents may

benefit from having extended time to stay at the center during these times of day. Or they may simply need your support and your understanding that it can be difficult and emotional to leave a child in group care. How children react to saying goodbye or reuniting with their families may vary, so it is important to be sensitive to children's needs, too. Parents' comfort level at leaving their children often has a significant impact on how children respond to being in group care. The more we can ease parental distress, the more likely we are to help children be comfortable as well.

When families feel they are a part of a community, it strengthens their sense

When families feel they are part of a community, it strengthens their sense of belonging to all areas of the community.

of belonging and connection to all areas of the community. An effective program should include many ways for such connections to be built between families and children, which increases the sense of community as well as promotes a positive sense of self and others. We can build this sense of community through social events in the classroom and by connecting families with common interests. Frequently, families get to know one another during dropoff and pickup times, as well as classroom events. This often leads to play dates or ride sharing to transport children to and from group care.

Parents can also be invited to participate in policymaking committees. Their unique perspectives can contribute to an approach sensitive to meeting the needs of all families. Opportunities for parents to get involved in the center can include

When parents are comfortable at dropoff and pickup time, their children are more likely to be comfortable as well.





Day-to-day conversation with parents helps provide a fuller picture of the child.

volunteering in the classroom, attending evening events for socializing, sharing hobbies or talents as part of a learning experience for children, or attending parent meetings.

The Program-Home Connection

From the start, caregivers should help families feel welcome to participate in the assessment process. It's beneficial for caregivers to include families in initial goal-setting sessions, because that gives an understanding of what families hope their children will learn throughout the year. It also assists caregivers in knowing what kind of information families would like to hear about from day to day.

Each day in a HighScope classroom, caregivers take anecdotal notes while playing with children. This information can be used to share stories with families during pickup times and to complete daily notes on children's biological routines and experiences. Families can add to the store of anecdotes collected by caregivers to create a more complete picture of each child's development and to help with intentional planning and formal assessments. This reciprocal exchange can occur informally and day-to-day, in addition to the two or three scheduled conferences each year.

Integral to their child's healthy development in our care is the parents'

investment and willingness to make the vital program-home connection. We can do this by informing parents about the curriculum and offering ideas to extend their children's learning at home. This may happen in the form of workshops focusing on various topics in the curriculum, newsletters with tips and suggestions for parents, bulletin boards with content connected to classroom experiences, a resource-lending library for parents to take home information about the curriculum, or play backpacks with tips for interactions to guide parents in play experiences at home. When parents integrate these experiences in a

Families can add to the store of anecdotes collected by caregivers to help with intentional planning and formal assessments.

variety of ways in their home, these too become part of the home culture.

Caring for children in their early years is a unique opportunity to engage as a team, with caregivers and family members collaborating to meet both the educational and non-educational needs of the infants and toddlers. We can establish an effective approach to supporting children by initiating a relationship with parents built on trust, taking into consideration differing viewpoints, building connections between home and school, and incorporating the importance of family partnerships into all areas of classroom and program practices. When we intentionally plan for strong relationships with families, we ensure a brighter future for all children. ■



Partner With Parents

Share meaningful ways to continue education at home with the activities in this book. Look for a new infant-toddler activity book coming in February. Explore more at highscope.org.

English P1429 | Spanish P1430 \$30

Making it Meaningful

FROM INVOLVEMENT TO ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES

by Holly Delgado

It's 8:30 a.m., and children and families are beginning to arrive at the HighScope Demonstration Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Erica, one of the two classroom teachers, places herself by the classroom door to greet the children and their family members by name as they arrive.

Ethan bounds through the door. Glancing up at his father, he begins telling Erica excitedly about the garbage truck he saw on his walk to school: "Then the big arm came out and picked up the can and took it high into the air. It dumped all the garbage into the truck, like this!" He raises his own arm slowly into the air, imitating the hissing and popping sounds of the garbage truck. Erica, kneeling in front of him, copies Ethan's arm movement and sound effects. "It went like this?" she asks. "That sounds like it was really exciting. Your story reminds me of a book we have in our book area." Ethan immediately identifies the book Erica is talking about.

"It's *I Stink!*!" he exclaims, referring to the popular children's book by Kate



Meaningful family engagement outside the classroom has been shown to improve a child's school readiness.

and Jim McMullan. After Ethan hangs his coat on his hook and signs in, Ethan's father asks him, "Would you like to go find the book about the garbage truck?" Nodding, Ethan takes his father by the hand and hurries over to the book area. Together, they retrieve the book and began reading it on the rug, giggling when they turn the page to the garbage truck's lunch of "dirty diapers...puppy poo...and zipped up ziti with zucchini."

Recent research (Gelber & Isen; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda) shows that meaningful engagement of families in their children's early learning experiences has a positive impact on school

readiness and future academic success. But what exactly is meaningful engagement, and how do early childhood programs do this in meaningful ways?

Traditional models of parent involvement encourage increased participation in school-related events. However, mere attendance at parent workshops, meetings, and other school activities is not highly correlated with changes in family members' interactions with their child (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009). Thus, early childhood programs must focus their efforts beyond traditional models of parent involvement and consider ways in which their actions impact family engagement outside of the school day.

In other words, teachers can best influence parents to support and extend at home what children are learning at school by providing families with strategies that help them interact with the curriculum content on a day-to-day basis, facilitating a fluid home-school connection.

Invite Families In

Perhaps the single most important factor in family engagement and participation is how welcome families feel when they are in the school or classroom environment itself (Halgunseth et al., 2009). Before programs can expect family members to extend learning into the home environment, they must ensure the school environment is warm and inviting: “A welcoming environment implies that a program has focused efforts on maintaining an atmosphere that is inviting to families

and honors their presence” (Constantino, 2008, p. 25).

The first step in creating a welcoming environment is to invite families in. Greet children and other family members by name as they arrive each morning, and encourage them to stay for greeting time and message board. When Erica found a moment during greeting time to meet Ethan at his level — both physically and emotionally — and have an authentic conversation about a garbage truck, she was not only building a social-emotional connection between school and home, but also modeling developmentally appropriate

adult-child interactions for all of the parents and family members in the room. She also took the opportunity

Before programs can expect family members to extend learning into the home environment, they must ensure the school environment is warm and welcoming.

to create a direct link to a curriculum content area (Language, Literacy, and Communication). When early childhood

Parents who sit in on classes should be encouraged to join their child in play.



educators capitalize on “the conversations and activities initiated by children [that] provide a window into their interests, thoughts, and experiences outside of school” (Epstein, 2014, p. 78), they build relationships with both the child and the family.

If parents have the availability in their schedules, let them stay beyond greeting time and invite them to stay for planning time, large-group time, or whatever the next component of the daily routine might be. When parents choose to stay, remind them that their children are watching them; thus, encourage them to be actively engaged in all activities alongside their children. If parents are present for large-group time, have additional materials such as wind ribbons, instruments, or carpet squares for their use. If parents stay for work time, suggest that they join their child in play, following the child’s lead.

School is often seen as separate from the family; link home and school together by starting off the school year with expectations that children and families play and learn together in the classroom. Provide families with tips to help them support and scaffold their child’s learning and interact in ways supportive of the HighScope Curriculum. Offer evening events that family members can enjoy together, like potlucks, regular evenings on the playground, or parent support groups. Family workshops that delve into topics of the parents’ choosing may also encourage a higher level of family engagement. Share curriculum information through evening events focused on a HighScope Curriculum content area, such as an Art Night, a Math Night, or a Literacy Night. Be sure to provide families with information and materials to take home after such events, to further extend learning at home.

Find Frequent Opportunities for Communication

Maintaining open, two-way communication is vital to building relationships and increasing family engagement (Halgunseth et al., 2009). Informal communication, such as daily, face-to-



Events like evening potlucks and field trips encourage family engagement.

face interactions during pickup and dropoff times, can provide teachers an opportunity to briefly discuss with family members both what the child did at school and what is occurring at home. Many of these conversations occur naturally; however, when a teacher intentionally plans for a specific conversation to take place, he or she can tailor the exchange to meet the individual needs of the child and the family. Early childhood educators should use these conversations as a way to further define the HighScope Curriculum content and extend learning into the home, as shown in this conversation between Luis, his teacher, and Luis’s father:

Teacher: During work time for the past two days, Luis has been using our small farm animals in the toy area. Yesterday, he began tossing them, trying to get them to land on their feet. We counted how many landed right-side-up. Today, Michael joined him. Together, we drew targets.

Parent: He has a target at home that he shoots his bow and arrow at.

Teacher: I could tell he had seen a target before. He drew it himself. Then, we graphed how many times each animal landed on its feet.

Luis: The horses won! They landed on their feet 16 times!

Teacher (to Luis): I wonder how

you could play a game like this at home?

When teachers use concrete, play-based examples involving the children to define active learning and draw correlations between these examples and the specific content-based skills, such as graphing and counting, families have a “better understand[ing] of how children learn and how the curriculum supports

Cultural sensitivity is vital to maintaining authentic two-way communication with family members.

active learning, [thus] they are better able to be partners in the educational process” (Epstein, 2014, p. 79).

Ensure Cultural Sensitivity

Biases, whether conscious or unconscious, can “harm the partnerships between programs and families and discourage families from participating” (Halgunseth et al., 2009, p. 9). In order to fully understand the cultural beliefs and practices of the children and families enrolled in a program, early childhood educators should begin by reflecting on their own personal stories

(Epstein, 2014). Consider your own family tree, and think about the following questions:

- What type of diversity, whether visible or invisible to the casual observer, is present in the past few generations?
- What did home life look like for your ancestors? What does it look like for you today?
- What beliefs and attitudes does your family hold in regards to childrearing practices?
- How do you use humor or sarcasm?
- What pastimes or diversions from day-to-day life do you engage in as a family?
- How do you spend your money?

Reflecting on the whats, hows, and whys of our own lives provides us insight into our own personal background that

When families and educators work together in a partnership that values the role of the parent, parents view themselves as more capable of helping their children grow academically.

shapes and influences, albeit unintentionally, our interactions and perceptions of families. Taking time to share our



Photos of kids engaged in active learning, distributed via email, blogs, text, or social media, can encourage similar activity at home.

own stories with coworkers, not only at the beginning of the school year but on an ongoing basis, promotes a higher level of respect for the individual differences we will come into contact with as educators and supports cultural understanding (Epstein, 2014).

Cultural sensitivity is vital to maintaining authentic two-way communication with family members (Halgunseth et al., 2009). Be sure to consider language and cultural differences when determining the best method of communication for families. Even when a parent has a strong grasp on the language spoken by the teachers, some individuals may still experience discomfort when communicating with teachers in a face-to-face setting; instead, these families may prefer written communication. Conversely,

parents who have a more limited knowledge of the language spoken in school may rely heavily on nonverbal communication cues; thus, these families may prefer face-to-face contact rather than phone conversations or written communication (Halgunseth et al., 2009).

In this age of smartphones, tablets, internet, and social media, early childhood educators should also consider the comfort levels of families in interacting with technology as a means of communication. Text messages, email, blogs, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and child assessment parent portals (like the one linked to COR Advantage) are additional ways educators can keep communication open and maintain a home-school connection. Teachers can post or send pictures of children engaged in active learning, link what is occurring in the photo directly with curriculum content, and offer extensions that family members can do at home to encourage similar learning. For family members uncomfortable or unfamiliar with these types of technology, or those with limited access to it, curriculum-focused bulletin boards and newsletters with similar pictures and captions can also be used.

COR
Advantage

Family Network

A secure online portal for families to connect with their child's teacher. Explore more at coradvantage.org/family-engagement.

Promote Active Learning at Home and in the Community

When families and early childhood educators work together in a partnership that values the role of the parent, parents gain confidence in their abilities and view themselves as more capable of helping their children grow academically

Link school content with events or outings in the community.

(Driscoll & Nagel, 2008). Many programs have found home visits to be beneficial in both building these partnerships and helping early childhood educators bring more learning opportunities into the home, since “teachers play a critical role in ‘translating’ the curriculum for parents and other family members and suggesting ways to apply active learning principles to everyday family situations” (Epstein, 2014, p. 75).

Use home visits as an opportunity to get to know what resources your children and families have access to on a daily basis. Paperwork should be left for the end of the visit, and the focus should first be on relationship building and play. One way to keep the home visit focused on this goal is to ask parents beforehand if you can take photos of the child’s favorite toys throughout the visit. For parents new to home visits, this provides them with a knowledge base of what to expect throughout the visit and can help to ease any apprehension they may have about inviting an educator into their home.

During the home visit, as the child shows you his or her toys, take time to interact and play with the child in developmentally appropriate ways. Throughout this interaction, ensure that the parent or other family members are engaged in this play as well; if necessary, ask direct questions or hand materials over to family members to elicit interaction between them and their child.

Following the home visit, compile photos to create a classroom book titled “Our Favorite Toys” and use these “favorites” as a way to individualize learning throughout the school year, both in and out of the classroom. For example, if you discovered a child’s love for robots on the home visit, have robot books available in a lending library for the family to check out. Send home recyclable art materials for the family to create a robot together, or provide suggestions to incorporate additional learning into the toys already at home, such as writing a story about a robot adventure together.

In addition to connecting curriculum with the home, early childhood educators can also link school content to events or outings in the community. For example, if a family regularly grocery shops or heads to a local farmers market together on Saturdays, share literacy and mathematics ideas for the shopping expedition: writing a shopping list, going on an

alphabet hunt through the aisles, or sorting, counting, and weighing vegetables. Likewise, teachers can share science and physical development connections that families can discover at a local park, on a walk through the neighborhood, or during an evening on the porch — for example, talking about weather and climate while running and crunching through leaves that layer the ground, discussing animal habitats and tracking footprints through freshly fallen snow, or graphing the moon as it waxes and wanes throughout the month.

You can also share information about local events sponsored by the public library, parks and recreation department, health department, and so on. When providing parents with fliers or information about these events, add a short paragraph or bullet-point list that links the event to learning outcomes. For example, Lego Night at the local library can be connected to math and fine-motor skill key developmental indica-

Share connections to weather and climate for families to discover on trips to the park or outings in the woods.



tors (KDIs), while a local parade may encourage children to recognize diversity or community roles, KDIs in the area of social studies.



Family engagement cannot be boiled down to any one meeting, event, or activity in which children and families participate together. Rather, it is a series of partnerships: child and teacher, family and teacher, child and family. It is the day-to-day interactions our families have with their children during the few

Family engagement is a series of partnerships: child and teacher, family and teacher, child and family.

hours they are at school — and, perhaps more importantly, the interactions that occur during the hours when the child is not in our care. Building and maintaining relationships based on the strengths of the child, the uniqueness of the family, and the idea that home plays an equally important role as



Link home and school by starting off the school year encouraging children and families to play and learn together in the classroom.

school will help engage parents and children in learning outside of our school walls. ■

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Informal communication can give teachers a chance to discuss with family members what the child did at school and at home.



Under Our Skin

THE DEADLY SIDE EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

by Maria Taylor



Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, founder of the Center for Youth Wellness, is a leader in the movement to transform the treatment surrounding childhood trauma and toxic stress.

Pioneering pediatrician and 2014 TED Talk speaker Dr. Nadine Burke Harris has made it her mission to raise awareness about an issue affecting children in underserved and poor communities throughout the country. Speaking in November at a HighScope-sponsored luncheon in Detroit, Harris detailed the effects “across a lifetime” of early childhood trauma, or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which range from physical and emotional abuse to a parent’s mental illness or incarceration.

Harris delivered her address at the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce to an audience of many of the area’s leading educational, social service, and philanthropic organizations, including Enroll Detroit, Excellent Schools Detroit, Impact Detroit, Learning Care Group, Oakland County School District, Oakland University, The Skillman Foundation, UniDetroit, United Way, and Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). Just two months prior to her Detroit visit, Harris received the prestigious Heinz Award

for the Human Condition; she was one of five “exceptional Americans” awarded the prize “for their creativity and determination in finding solutions to critical issues.” ACEs are indeed a critical issue for Harris, and she is on a mission to raise awareness about the long-term consequences of repeated early exposure to toxic levels of stress and to rally government resources and support for treatment and prevention of ACEs’ potential effects, including chronic health conditions, mental illness, violence, and early death.

The founder of the Center for Youth Wellness in San Francisco, Harris grew up in the Bay Area and attended medical school at UC Berkeley and UC Davis.

She earned her Master’s in Public Health from Harvard University, and then returned in 2002 to complete her residency in pediatrics at Stanford University. When she finished, she wanted to go somewhere where her work would really make a difference. She joined California Pacific Medical Center, a private hospital in northern California, and in 2007 helped open a clinic in Bayview-Hunters Point, one of the poorest, most underserved neighborhoods in San Francisco.

Until Harris set up the new clinic, there had been only one pediatrician to serve more than 10,000 children in all of Bayview. “So we hung a shingle, and we were able to provide top-quality care regardless of ability to pay. It was so cool,” Harris said. She and the staff were proud of their work. Still, she wondered if she was doing enough. In the population she served, the leading cause of fatality and years of life lost was violence. “We were doing a great job on health standards and outcomes,” she said, “but I asked myself, ‘Am I making a difference in their life expectancy?’”

Working at Bayview as a pediatrician, Harris started to notice a disturbing trend. A high number of children were being referred to her for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). But for most of them, she couldn't

People exposed to traumatic experiences in early childhood have a much higher chance of developing chronic health issues later in life — things like heart disease, cancer, or suicide.

make that diagnosis. What she did know was that almost all of them had experienced severe trauma in their home lives. Somehow, she thought, there must be a link between the two.

“One of the things that they teach you in public health school is that if you're a doctor and you see 100 kids that all drink from the same well, and 98 of them develop diarrhea, you can go ahead and write that prescription for dose after dose after dose of antibiotics, or you can walk over and say, ‘What the heck is in this well?’” she said. So she started reading everything she could get her hands on about how exposure to adversity affects children's developing brains and bodies.

Harris found her answer in the form of a decade-old research study, called the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. What it showed was a striking correlation: People who were exposed to traumatic experiences in early childhood had a much higher chance of developing chronic health issues later in life — things like heart disease and cancer — and a greater incidence of suicide.

The survey came out in 1998, and was conducted by Dr. Vince Felitti at Kaiser Permanente and Dr. Bob Anda at the Center for Disease Control. Out of 17,500 people surveyed, 67 percent had at least one ACE. Twelve percent — one in eight — had four or more. And the researchers found a troubling link: the higher your ACE score, the worse your long-term health outcomes. For a person with an ACE score of four or more, their

relative risk of chronic heart disease was 2½ times that of someone with an ACE score of zero. For hepatitis, it was also 2½ times. The risk of depression went up 4½ times, and the risk of suicide, 12 times. And a person with an ACE score of seven or more had triple the lifetime risk of lung cancer and 3½ times the risk of coronary heart disease, the number-one killer in the United States.



Routine screening for ACEs — adverse childhood experiences — is part of Dr. Nadine Burke Harris' plan to combat the long-term health risks of early childhood trauma.

When the study came out, Harris explained, many people had looked at the data and said, “Come on. You have a rough childhood, you’re more likely to drink and smoke and do all these things that are going to ruin your health. This isn’t science. This is just bad behavior.” But Harris wasn’t so quick to dismiss the findings, because the science underlying the neurological effects of childhood trauma all added up.

The science behind the study has to do with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, the brain’s and body’s stress response system that governs our fight-or-flight response. “Imagine you’re walking in the forest and you see a bear,” Harris explained. “Immediately, your hypothalamus sends a signal to your pituitary, which sends a signal to your adrenal gland that says, ‘Release stress hormones! Adrenaline! Cortisol!’ So your heart starts to pound. Your pupils dilate, your airways open up, and you are ready to either fight that bear or run from the bear.” All that, of course, is great if you’re in a forest and there’s a bear. The problem, she continued, is when the bear comes home every night, and the system is activated over and over and over again. Then, instead of become life-saving, it becomes life-threatening. For children whose brains and bodies are just developing, it’s especially dangerous. High doses of adrenaline affect not only brain structure and function, but also a child’s developing immune system, their hormonal systems, their cardiovascular system, and even the way DNA is read and transcribed. At a young age, that might manifest as asthma or ADHD. Later in life, it could spell drug and alcohol abuse or cardiac disease.

Harris knew that the kids she worked with on a day-to-day basis lived with high levels of trauma in their family lives: abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or parents addicted to alcohol or drugs. This kind of trauma, the study revealed, isn’t something you just “get over” as you grow up. It impacts kids’ developing bodies and minds, leaving scars that only get worse over a lifetime.

To Harris, that discovery was a game-changer. In the past, she’d viewed these problems the way she and other pediatricians had been trained to view them: either as a social issue — referred to social services — or a mental health issue — referred to mental health services. “For me, this information threw my old training out the window,” she said. “When we understand the mechanism of a disease, when we know not only which pathways are disrupted but *how*, then as doctors, it is our job to use this science for prevention and treatment.”

Harris was quick to point out that this isn’t just an issue for kids in one San Francisco neighborhood. It’s happening all across the country — and it’s not being addressed, to the point where Dr. Robert Block, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, called it “the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today.” That came as a surprise to Harris, who was ready to shout it from the rooftops. “I figured the minute that everybody else heard about this, it would be routine screening, multi-disciplinary treatment teams, and it would be a race to the most effective clinical treatment protocols,” she said. “Yeah — that did not happen. And that was a huge learning for me.” As it turns out, what she had thought of as simply clinical best practice turned out to be an entire movement, one that’s still underway.

In 2011, Harris left her job to become founder and CEO of the Center for Youth Wellness, a Bayview clinic that

works to prevent and eventually heal the impacts of toxic stress in children’s lives. Instead of treating only symptoms, Harris and her staff seek to address the stressful experiences that can make children sick. “Our mission is threefold: prevent, screen, and heal,” she said. As a screening tool, staff administer a survey that asks parents to identify how many adverse experiences their child has gone through. The more boxes that get checked, the higher the child’s score. For kids who test positive, there’s free treatment, including home visits, mental health care, nutrition, holistic

This kind of trauma isn’t something you just “get over” as you grow up. It impacts kids’ developing minds and bodies, leaving scars that only get worse over a lifetime.

intervention, and — when necessary — medication. There’s also a focus on educating parents about the impacts of toxic stress, the same way you would for lead poisoning or covering electrical outlets.

The US actually has a relatively strong track record with addressing public health issues, Harris said, from tobacco to HIV/AIDS. Childhood trauma is just as harmful. “Folks who are



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exposed in very high doses have triple the lifetime risk of heart disease and lung cancer and a 20-year difference in life expectancy...[and] dramatically

Instead of treating only symptoms, Harris and her staff seek to address the stressful experiences that can make kids sick.

increased risk for 7 out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the United States,” she pointed out. “In high doses, it affects brain development, the

immune system, hormonal systems, and even our DNA. I am talking about threats that are so severe or pervasive that they literally get under our skin and change our physiology. And yet, doctors today are not trained in routine screening or treatment.”

So why hasn't more been done? Harris had some theories. “At first, I thought that we marginalized the issue because it *doesn't* apply to us: ‘That’s an issue for those kids in those neighborhoods,’” she said. “Which is weird, because the data doesn’t bear that out.” Research shows that adversity in childhood is prevalent among all races and social classes. The original study was done in a population that was 70 percent Caucasian, 70 percent college-educated

— unlike the Bayview neighborhood, which is made up of primarily low-income African-American families.

The more Harris talked to people, the more she became convinced that people marginalize the issue because it *does* apply to us — and it’s just too uncomfortable to deal with. “If I were to ask how many people in this room grew up with a family member who suffered from mental illness, I bet a few hands would go up,” she said. “And then if I were to ask how many folks had a parent who maybe drank too much, or who really believed that if you spare the rod, you spoil the child, I bet a few more hands would go up. Maybe it’s easier to see in other zip codes because we don’t want to look at it. We’d rather be sick.”

Choosing to be sick, though, is becoming a less viable option every day, Harris said. The science is clear: Traumatic childhood experiences dramatically affect health across a lifetime. Today, we are beginning to learn how to stop the progression from early adversity to disease and early death. Speaking in Detroit, Harris laid out a three-part model for addressing ACEs: raising national awareness, screening for early detection, and training doctors to understand symptoms.

Thirty years from now, she predicts, the child whose high ACE score and behavioral symptoms go unrecognized, whose asthma management is not connected, and who goes on to develop high blood pressure and early heart disease or cancer will be just as out-of-the-ordinary as a six-month mortality from HIV/AIDS.

“This is treatable. This is beatable,” Harris said. “The single most important thing that we need today is the courage to look this problem in the face and say, ‘This is real, and this is all of us.’ I believe that we are the movement.”

More information about Harris and the Center for Youth Wellness, including a user guide for health professionals, is available at centerforyouthwellness.org. ■

HighScope executives Armen Hratchian, Brenda Leger, Cheryl Polk, and Steve Schwartz meet with Harris (center) after her presentation at the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Lifting Up Dads

ENCOURAGING FATHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

by Adam Robson

My first day as a preschool dad started out pretty much as expected.

I was more anxious than my three-year-old son — or else he was doing much better than his dad at hiding his first-day jitters. Jake [not his real name] was dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, his blond curls coiffed perfectly for the pictures his mom took to commemorate the occasion. I did my best to present myself as I supposed a respectable preschool dad should, but my uncertainty about what that looked like just increased my nervousness. What would the moms think? Would my son be the only kid there with his dad?

It's not as if we weren't well prepared for this moment. His teachers had invited us to tour the classroom a few weeks before the start of the school year. They'd visited us at home too, which thrilled my son — so much that he was bouncing on the furniture — but admittedly did nothing to relieve my start-of-school anxiety. His teachers were great. They encouraged me to spend time in the classroom with my



Having fathers involved in preschool education benefits boys, girls, dads, and moms alike.

son and attend the upcoming field trip to the apple orchard. Jake was excited about school. What was there to worry about?

I think, most of all, I was afraid I'd be the only dad dropping off his child, feeling awkward and out-of-place. I wasn't worried about my son — he'd be just fine. I was worried about myself.

We arrived at the preschool, and after exchanging smiles with the teachers, my son and I settled into a book he chose from the array on the circle rug. It was only then, with my son on my lap and a book shared between us, trans-

ported to a familiar comfort zone, that I had a chance to survey the room and take in my surroundings.

I expected the shelves of neatly organized materials, the little chairs and little tables, the play ovens and dress-up clothes. I expected the warmth and the chatter and the nervous getting-to-know-you stuff.

What I didn't expect to see was other dads. Even though the teachers had done their best to assure me that HighScope's Demonstration Preschool included all kinds of family configurations, I was more than a little surprised that males were so well represented. In fact, it was a fairly even mix of moms, dads, siblings, and grandparents. There was even one teenager, a boy.

HighScope's Demonstration Preschool does a lot to encourage parental participation and engage diverse families, and the teachers make a special effort to reach out to dads. The HighScope Preschool Curriculum emphasizes the benefits of parental involvement to children's "overall development and success" in school. So it was just a mat-

ter of days before I felt at home in my son's preschool classroom, and the daily routine became, well, routine.

For a lot of dads, that doesn't happen so easily. Many more never see the inside of their child's classroom. One in three children — over 24 million in total — lives in a home without their father present (US Census Bureau, 2016). The growing number of non-resident fathers is not the only barrier to father engagement in early childhood programs. Some dads may have a history of distrust with social service agencies and schools, or may be defensive about problems with substance abuse or a criminal history, preventing them from playing an active role in their child's

Having male role models in the classroom is another way of letting boys know, "Hey, this is not just a place for girls, but for boys too."

upbringing (Kendall & Pilnik, 2010). Others feel that they have "failed" as providers for their family, and have nothing else to offer their children (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2014). Still others don't see parenting as their responsibility (Scourfield, 2014). The fact is, while some children have the chance to benefit from a dad who's



Studies show that children whose dads take an active role in their education tend to outperform those who don't have positive male role models.

actively involved in the early childhood environment, many more do not.

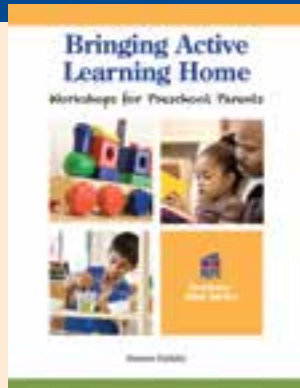
"Many fathers go to work and don't have the luxury of spending time in the classroom," said Kenneth Sherman, a preschool teacher and HighScope trainer. "Another reason there aren't a lot of males in the classroom is because of the stigma attached to taking on that traditional female role. Dads are not considered the natural, typical caregivers. So when we think about males in the classroom — fathers and father figures — I think a lot of times they're viewed as a substitute for the natural caregiver, mom."

Though the stigma attached to dads who play an active role in their young children's education has diminished, many dads, says Sherman — especially those who may not have had the advantage of an active role played by their

own father — feel a lingering discomfort in an early childhood environment. That's understandable, he continues, but it's important that the inheritance of this generation of boys and girls includes an understanding that the early education environment is a place for everyone. Having other male role models in the classroom is "another way of letting boys know, 'Hey, this is not just a place for girls, but for boys too,'" says Sherman. "When people see someone who looks like them, that can be very comforting. When they don't, that can cause a lot of discomfort. Children are people too, and need that reassurance," he adds.

That was certainly true for me. When my son entered preschool, I was relieved that I wasn't the only dad in the room. And once I got over my own discomfort, I realized that, by being present and interacting with the group, I was having a positive impact on the entire class. It wasn't long before other children were sitting on my lap and reading books with my son and me. For children whose fathers weren't or couldn't be there, my consistent participation and interaction helped to normalize the presence of men in their classroom.

Increasingly, the early childhood field is recognizing the importance of fathers in their children's classroom. Among the Professional Development goals prioritized by Head Start's Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a focus on developing "unique ways to engage fathers." Moreover, early childhood professionals in general are promoting a greater awareness of the important, even essential, role fathers play in their child's development and early education, and how that formative influence plays out in the child's continued development. The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, a resource funded by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), showcases some impressive research that's been done over the last decade in support of their mission to "encourage and strengthen fathers and families" (fatherhood.gov). Preschoolers whose



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fathers are actively involved in their education tend to have better attitudes about school and better academic performance; they also make friends more

“That was certainly true for me. When my son entered preschool, I was relieved that I wasn’t the only dad in the room.”

easily and exhibit fewer antisocial or delinquent behaviors (McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005).

The results of these studies are not all that startling. One would expect that parents — both moms and dads — who

Having dads in the classroom will benefit not only their own children but the entire class.

show greater interest in their child’s education could anticipate more positive outcomes.

That’s why Terrence, whose daughter attends the Demonstration Preschool, decided to make the sacrifices necessary in order to take an active role in his daughter’s education. Terrence says he’s learning as much as his child about how to navigate the early childhood environment. One of the things he’s learned is that his presence in the classroom can have a positive impact on not just his daughter, but the other children as well. At first, Terrence approached dropoff and pickup time with trepidation. “But those kids, they gravitate to me now,” he says. “A lot of it is familiarity, because they see me every day, so they get comfortable talking to me, or to other parents, and they don’t see me as a stranger anymore, but somebody’s dad instead.”

The simple act of showing up and being a part of the classroom, even if only for a few minutes, changes preconceptions about what preschool — and education — is. For families who haven’t had positive experiences with the educational system, that’s an important step in building trusting relationships — the foundation of family engagement.

Rob, another preschool dad, admits that the stigma he felt about being a preschool dad was self-imposed. “I always thought that other parents would look down on me because I’ve taken more of a stay-at-home-dad role,” he says. “But everyone has seen me as the dad who wants to be involved. And that’s been



huge for me to kind of come out of my shell and comfort zone — just being the dad who shows up and becomes more involved with the other kids in the class.”

Overcoming the associations that persist in our culture about men who are openly caring toward children is one of the challenges of bringing more dads and granddads into the classroom. Thankfully, teachers and caregivers are positioned to do just that. And you’ll find that even planning one event or following one strategy with a focus on engaging dads can have a ripple effect that keeps them coming back for more.

Make Men More Visible

Start by making men more visible in your classroom. If that sounds like begging the question, you can use photographs as well. “Pictures are always great,” says Sherman. “Pictures of men

involved in classroom activities are a positive thing for all children to see when they’re playing. They can look up and see Jimmy and his dad playing too, and that can start a conversation.” In addition to posting pictures in the classroom of moms and dads actively learning with their children, include a family album for the children and other parents to look through during dropoff time. Better yet, put a dad who is interested in volunteering in charge of the project of collecting photographs and creating the album. The more visible men are in your program, the stronger the signal to the other men that being involved is not only okay but encouraged.

Actively Encourage Dads

Dads don’t often go out of their way to ask for assistance, and it helps sometimes to listen to what they’re *not* saying. Sometimes that little extra push is all it

takes, so making that extra effort to actively encourage dads is important.

“There was a dad of one of the girls in our classroom who was uncomfortable sitting on the floor and reading to her,” recounts Sherman. “This father

Making that extra effort to actively encourage dads is important.

had the ability and the time to read, but it occurred to me that he needed someone to make a conscious effort to tell him that it was OK.” Sherman handed the father one of his daughter’s favorite books. “That conscious effort broke the ice,” says Sherman, “because after that little bit of encouragement, he did want to be more involved and he did want to read to his daughter, even if it was only a couple of pages. And for his daughter, who saw other parents reading to their kids, that bonding experience with her own dad was important.”

Plan Events With Dads in Mind

When I took my son to Art Night at the Demonstration Preschool, there were a variety of activities for children to enjoy with their parents, and it was clear that the teachers had designed stations with the interest of the children and families in mind. For my son and the other children, it was a chance to share time with their parents and grandparents while making art. But for the adults in the group, it was more than a fun event. It was a chance for the parents — and especially the dads, who might not participate in the daily routine during the school day — to see how other moms and dads interacted with the children. When parents start seeing how other adults are involved, says Sherman, it will often inspire parents to participate more in the classroom themselves. “A lot of times parents don’t know that it’s okay for them to join, or aren’t necessarily comfortable joining even when it’s encouraged,” he says.

Teachers need to remind fathers that their presence in the classroom and at events is welcomed and appreciated.





Finding roles for men that promote their own strengths as a vital part of the early childhood classroom is an important step in achieving family partnerships that include all parents.

The woodworking station on Art Night, I observed, was especially popular with fathers and sons and daughters. I myself am more of a finger painter, and I was free to enjoy that activity with my own two-year-old daughter and some of the other children while my son got help hammering from another dad. That kind of investment from families in building a true classroom community is critical to a child's early education — and it made all the difference at Art Night for those children whose fathers weren't there.

That's not to say that moms and grandmas can't do the hammering and heavy lifting — they traditionally have in early childhood classrooms. But finding roles for men that promote their own strengths as a vital part of the early childhood classroom is an important step in achieving family partnerships that include all parents. "One of the things I've found most gratifying about being involved in my son's preschool classroom is that he's not the only one who benefits from dads like me being there," said Rob. "The other kids like me being there too. When we went to the apple orchard for a field trip, I lifted kids to reach apples high in the trees,

and it was really special to see how their faces lit up when they got that apple at the very top," he said.

Even something as simple as that — lifting kids up — lifts dads up too. Whether it's on a field trip, in the classroom, or just at an after-school event, involving fathers at the preschool level has been shown to benefit kids and dads and moms alike, in the classroom and beyond. For early childhood educators,

Taking on a nurturing role is not a sign of weakness but a symbol of a strong father who's fully invested in his child and their future.

the task at hand is to work on normalizing those roles: helping dads like me and Terrence and Rob to realize that taking on a nurturing role is not a sign of weakness, as society may lead us to believe, but a symbol of a strong father who's fully invested in his child and their future. ■

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HighScope China Holds First Annual Conference

HighScope Staff

More than 300 early childhood educators attended the first annual HighScope China Conference and Inauguration Ceremony of the HighScope China National Institute, held in Beijing from October 27–28, 2016.

Sean Zhang was named board president of the new Institute. Speaking at the conference, he reported on HighScope’s China launch, the sum of three years of preparation.

Zhang called the conference a “great start” to the new program. “Many of the most influential policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in China attended and endorsed the event,” he said.

Among those in attendance were Professor Minyuan Gu, who serves as Honorary Chairman of the Chinese

“We are honored to work with the HighScope Foundation to promote HighScope in China, and are confident we will reach the goals that we have been pursuing jointly for a long time.”

Society of Education; Professor Zhenguo Yuan, Vice President of the China Society of Education and Dean of the School of Education of China East Normal University; and Houqin Yin, former superintendent of the Shanghai Municipal Education Department. Liyuan Ho of Beijing Normal University, a well-known researcher on the HighScope Curriculum, was named president of the HighScope China National Institute. HighScope board members Sue Bredekamp and

Deborah Stipek were also appointed to the board, as was HighScope President Cheryl Polk.

“It’s taken some time to lay the foundation for this partnership, but it’s all about co-creation,” said Polk. “We’re very enthusiastic about building a consistent, ongoing relationship. As you can see,” she added, motioning to the crowd in attendance, “educators and professionals from the Institute and all over China are pretty enthusiastic about it too.”

Zhang couldn’t agree more, adding that the awareness of the HighScope Curriculum in the Chinese research community has positioned the Institute for increased influence on early educational practices throughout the country. “We are honored to work with the HighScope Foundation to promote HighScope in China,” he said, “and confident that we will reach the goals that we have been pursuing jointly for a long time.” ■





HighScope Indonesia Celebrates 20 Years

Iis Zatnika & Wahyuni Ratna Lingga

Twenty years ago, eight preschoolers gathered in a rented house in Jakarta. They wouldn't have known it, but their little group was the beginning of what would go on to become HighScope Indonesia.

From its humble beginnings in 1996, HighScope Indonesia has expanded to 11 locations in 7 cities across the country, serving thousands of students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. That success was memorialized on October 7, 2016, with more than 700 teachers and staff gathering to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of HighScope Indonesia.

The celebration was the grand finale of HighScope Indonesia's 6th Annual Conference, the theme of which (Redesigning the World — the Journey) demonstrated the ambitious scope of an institute committed to "leading the human development paradigm." Participants at the Annual Conference sang along with the famous pop rock band Kotak, chuckled with Indonesian comedian Cak Lontong, and watched in silence and sincere gratitude a special video tribute, *HighScope Indonesia: A 20-year Journey*. Throughout the two-day conference, attendees were inspired, refreshed, and reinforced with concepts and new strategies from Rick Smith, founder of Conscious Teaching and author of *Conscious Classroom Management*, as well as a host of consultants and education experts from leading Indonesian universities and around the world.

"We want teachers to continue to learn and develop themselves," said Antarina S.F. Amir, founder and CEO of HighScope Indonesia, of the Annual Conference. "One of the most important

focuses of HighScope Indonesia at this time, in addition to developing a curriculum and systems, is making sure teachers teach effectively in the classroom every day," she said. "The educators who attend the conference come year after year because they believe that all

"HighScope Indonesia is the first example I've been able to see in action of a school that has taken the early childhood principles into the K-12 program."

of their efforts are made wholly for the sake of what is best for the children of Indonesia."

Antarina credits the consistency underlying HighScope's research findings for the institute's early success. Initially, the biggest obstacle was overcoming the resistance of parents who doubted the relevance and effectiveness of the HighScope philosophy in Indonesia. Though the research was clear in the US, some questioned its application outside of the West. Two decades later, Antarina is proud to reflect on the number of graduates she has watched go on to achieve success in their careers and their lives.

But perhaps what Antarina is most proud of is how the institute further developed a system and expanded it to include not only early elementary but students in elementary and upper grades as well.

Lee Ann Jung, an editorial board member for Young Exceptional Children (YEC) and *Journal of Early Intervention*, agrees. "HighScope Indonesia is the first example I've been able to see in action of a school that has taken the early childhood principles into the K-12 program," she said. "My colleagues and I have been saying for years how wonderful it would be if K-12 would make use of the early childhood principles that we advocate: child-centered learning and following children's lead."

Implementing the HighScope Curriculum in K-12 classrooms started when Antarina and her colleagues participated in HighScope's elementary training in 2000. "We hired consultants and built the system, and then we invited educational experts from all over the world to come over and analyze and validate our curriculum," said Antarina. "Then, we trained teachers, applied the curriculum in the classroom, and analyzed its effectiveness."

Antarina is optimistic that HighScope Indonesia will continually improve and attract qualified, progressive educators from all over Indonesia, and is quick to point out that the institute and its influence on K-12 education in Indonesia will continue to grow. "Together with members of my staff, I persist in regularly attending international conferences, and upon returning home, we continue our study," she said. "Remember, we are life-long learners — the development process is a continuum." ■



K-9 teachers and Antarina S.F. Amir danced together at the 20th Anniversary celebration.



As part of HighScope Indonesia's 20th Anniversary celebration, staff were recognized with awards for 5, 10, 15, and 20 years of service.



Explore Professional Learning



Learn more and register at highscope.org/training.

Questions? Please contact us by phone or email: training@highscope.org 800.587.5639

Learning doesn't end when we start teaching others. At HighScope, we believe that professional development is an ongoing part of an educator's journey. Inspiring capable and informed caregivers, teachers, and trainers has been our mission for decades.

There are many paths toward professional growth with HighScope — whether you work with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or even adults. HighScope offers dozens of courses on a wide array of topics, from one-day to multi-week trainings, in national venues and local communities. You can even earn credits toward HighScope certification at home through our interactive online courses.

Let's Start Something Together!

At HighScope, we believe that professional development is an ongoing part of an educator's journey. Inspiring capable and informed caregivers, teachers, and trainers has been our objective for decades.

Just as children are unique individuals — the product of different experiences and different needs — so are our training opportunities. We can customize a one-day or multiple-day workshop that aligns with your goals to help you succeed. We also offer a variety of online courses and conference presentations. Give us a call at **800.587.5639** or email training@highscope.org to find out more.

ENROLL IN ONLINE COURSES

Visit highscope.org/training for start dates and full details. Most courses are eligible for clock hours, and Michigan residents can earn SCECHs.

Assessment Online Courses

- Infant-Toddler Program Quality Assessment (PQA)
- Infant-Toddler PQA Reliability Test
- Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA)
- Preschool PQA Reliability Test
- COR Advantage

Preschool Curriculum Online Courses

- How to Support Active Learning During Work Time
- All About the Numbers Plus Preschool Mathematics Curriculum
- Large-Group Time
- Creating Meaningful Lesson Plans
- Planning and Recall: Why and How
- Small-Group Times for Active Learners
- Exploring Physical Development: Gross- and Fine-Motor Skills

Trainer Online Courses

- Trainer Course: Making Your Workshops Active and Engaging
- Trainer Course: Presenting and Facilitating Workshops

CUSTOMIZE A ONE-DAY OR MULTIPLE-DAY WORKSHOP

Contact us to create your customized professional learning opportunity! Below are just a few of the many topics we offer to choose from:

Infant-Toddler

- Working in Teams With Parents and Caregivers
- Active Learning
- Daily Schedules and Caregiving Routines
- Learning Environment

Preschool

- Learning Environment
- Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution
- Adult-Child Interaction
- Daily Routine
- Small-Group Time
- Large-Group Time

ATTEND CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, AND EXHIBITS

Look for HighScope all across the country at your favorite upcoming conferences. We invite you to join us!

- **MnAEYC-MnSACA 2017 Annual State Conference** in St. Paul, MN, Feb. 3–4, 2017
- **Michigan Head Start Conference** in Troy, MI, March 1–3, 2017
- **SECA 68th Annual Conference** in Biloxi, MS, March 9–11, 2017
- **National Head Start Conference** in Chicago, IL, April 7–10, 2017
- **HighScope International Conference** in Detroit, MI, April 18–21, 2017

SAVE THE DATE FOR SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Workshops are held at HighScope headquarters in Ypsilanti, MI. View course details at highscope.org/training. Additional courses coming soon!

Infant-Toddler

- **Infant-Toddler Curriculum Course (ITCC)**
Week 1 July 10–14, 2017
Week 2 July 17–21, 2017
Week 3 Summer 2018
Week 4 Summer 2018
- **Infant-Toddler Overview**
Aug. 7–11, 2017

Preschool

- **Preschool Overview**
June 26–30, 2017
- **Preschool Curriculum Course (PCC)**
Week 1 July 10–14, 2017
Week 2 July 17–21, 2017
Week 3 Summer 2018
Week 4 Summer 2018
- **Preschool Overview**
Aug. 7–11, 2017
- **Preschool Training of Trainers (ToT)**
Week 1 Aug. 7–11, 2017
Week 2 Aug. 14–18, 2017
Week 3 Summer 2018

Take a Positive Step:

Register now at highscope.org/training to become a part of our professional learning community.

Questions? training@highscope.org or 800.587.5639



Registration Opens February 1, 2017

Investing in Early Childhood Through Innovation and Quality

April 19–21, 2017 Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center

This year our conference will highlight the importance of providing high-quality early childhood education to give young children the very best chance at long-term success. Be inspired by the latest research in early childhood education and discover best practices for creating an engaging learning environment where young children can grow. With more than 120 workshops to choose from, you don't want to miss this important opportunity to connect with other educators, administrators, and researchers.

REGISTRATION FEE

Early bird: \$475

After February 15, 2017: \$550

Get a head start on the conference.

A full day of Preconference workshops is scheduled for **Tuesday, April 18, 2017**.

Additional registration fee applies.



Opening Keynote Speaker

Paul Tough, *New York Times* best-selling author of *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* and, most recently, *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why*. Tough is a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine*, where he has written extensively about education, parenting, poverty, and politics.

Luncheon Keynote Speaker

Ruby Bridges, esteemed Civil Rights icon and author of *Through My Eyes*, a memoir of her childhood experience as the first African-American student to desegregate a formerly all-white school in New Orleans. In 1999, she established the Ruby Bridges Foundation to promote the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of diversity. Through education and inspiration, the foundation seeks to end racism and prejudice.

