

Plan-Do-Review in Kindergarten

HOW ONE UTAH SCHOOL SYSTEM MAKES IT WORK

by Catherine Albro, with Sheri Ebert



Catherine Albro [right] is Director of Elementary Education at the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. Sheri Ebert [left] is PreK-3rd Literacy Coordinator for the Utah State Office of Education.

Kate assembled a bouquet of flowers to take to a friend. She attached a note and left the “flower shop” to make the delivery. On the way to her friend’s desk, she noticed a bouquet that someone had delivered to her. She looked and looked for a note, but there wasn’t one. Kate shared during recall time, “When you deliver flowers, you are supposed to write a note...Mrs. Saltmarsh says that you always write a note, then you can say ‘thank you.’”

Kate is a kindergartner at Oak Hollow Elementary in Canyons School District, located in the southeast part of the Salt Lake Valley. More than 90 kindergarten teachers in 29 elementary schools in the Canyons School District have received HighScope professional development to incorporate the plan-do-review process into their program. In this article, we will look at how and why they decided to adopt HighScope and the benefits this has had for children.

Searching for a New Model

The decision to use HighScope as their kindergarten model was well-thought out, according to Sheri Ebert, a former Evidence-Based Learning Specialist for the district. Sheri, who I met at HighScope last summer, said that “since the district’s founding, both the elected board of education and the administration have maintained a fierce dedication to building a district of national distinction. To that end, Canyons District focuses its attention on four major tenets: student achievement, innovation, community engagement, and customer service. All students and teachers are part of one proactive educational system. Evidence-based instruc-

tion and interventions are aligned with rigorous content standards.”

Four years ago, the district’s Evidence-Based Learning Department implemented an early childhood initiative in response to screening data revealing that approximately 34 percent of kindergartners were not at benchmark proficiencies in phonemic awareness. A goal of 100 percent proficiency was set, and teachers were supported with high-quality professional development. Students reaching benchmark by the end of the year increased to 86 percent. Sheri says that achieving this was not easy, and that the work is not yet complete, but that by working together the teachers are now more willing to collaborate, give and receive feedback, look critically at data, and value a growth mindset in learning and applying evidence-based practices.

The next steps for the early childhood initiative were based on district-wide classroom observations made by the early childhood team. These observations enabled the team to identify a district-wide focus on the following: a

What Is “Evidence-Based”?

Evidence-based practices are those that demonstrate a strong, positive relationship between the practice and improved outcomes through multiple, high-quality studies.

High-quality studies

- Have observable, measurable outcomes demonstrating cause and effect
- Have been replicated by others
- Are peer-reviewed by experts in the field.

Source: Canyons School District website (<http://ebl.canyonsdistrict.org>)

common daily schedule, a developmentally appropriate learning environment with organized materials and supports for active learning, supports for social-emotional development, and increased oral language opportunities for students. Based on these identified needs, the early childhood team researched the evidence base and framework of several early childhood programs. Terri Mitchell, who is the special education programs supervisor of all Canyons preschools and a HighScope field consultant,

had implemented HighScope in every Canyons preschool when the district was created. Therefore, the team was able to observe HighScope’s successful evidence-based strategies firsthand in preschool classrooms.

Adopting HighScope

In 2012, HighScope was chosen as the kindergarten model because the early childhood team believed that HighScope could be effectively infused into the district framework supporting the rigorous core standards through its emphasis on active learning, a common daily schedule, oral language acquisition

and application, and supports for social and emotional development. Upon making their decision, all elementary administrators received training from Amber Roderick Landward, Canyons Director of Elementary Curriculum, and Terri Mitchell, focusing on the basic framework and on plan-do-review in particular. They also created a HighScope

In 2012, HighScope was chosen as the kindergarten model because the early childhood team believed that HighScope could be effectively infused into the district framework supporting [its] rigorous core standards...

checklist for elementary grades, to use for administrative walk-throughs. Sheri believes that administrator understanding and buy-in is crucial in fostering systemic change. Last year, all kindergarten teachers participated in HighScope training as they implemented what they learned in their classrooms. In addition, each elementary school has its own achievement coach. These coaches attend trainings with their kindergarten teachers, facilitate conversations about the training material as well as implementation, and support teachers back in their classrooms. Sheri reports that an essential part of the professional development process for teachers is the coaches’ asking for and responding to teacher feedback. The feedback informs the early childhood team in framing and adjusting trainings to better meet teachers’ needs and in fostering commitment.

HighScope was chosen as the kindergarten model for the Canyons School District because of its emphasis on active learning, a common daily schedule, oral language acquisition and application, and supports for social and emotional development.





Each classroom developed learning areas where children could pursue their interests. Teachers support children in following their plans and ideas.

Ms. Macgregor scaffolds individual students' learning and uses authentic experiences to assess the students. In addition, when conflicts over materials, space, friends, or other issues inevitably come up, children practice the six steps to conflict resolution and learn how to work and play together.

Plan-Do-Review

For planning, teachers are finding student planning journals (see below) to be highly effective in scaffolding the organization of students' ideas and helping students transfer their ideas onto paper. Further, students engage in richer conversations when sharing their plans, leading to more purposeful play, interaction with materials, and more in-depth and detailed review conversations. Students' planning journals can also serve as a quick assessment for teachers to identify where students are in their writing development. (On the following page is an example of one student's planning journal. Notice the progression in the student's writing and thinking.)

As she visits kindergarten classrooms, Sheri observes that the teachers use the HighScope plan-do-review checklist to support children as they plan, carry out their ideas, and review. In addition to content area assessment, plan-do-review is an especially effective time to observe, document, and support children's approaches to learning. The teachers then use the information they've collected about individual children's learning to inform their plan for the next day and beyond.

Approaches to Learning KDIs are applicable to kindergarten children,

HighScope in Action

To see HighScope in action in the district, we'll take another look into a classroom. In Amy Macgregor's kindergarten classroom at Copperview Elementary, the class is studying a Big Idea: How are animals and plants unique? Intentional selection of materials and arrangement of the play setting supports children's choices in learning about plants and animals during some parts of the day, including plan-do-review.

Learning Areas

In the Math Area, Ms. Macgregor has added egg cartons and paper plates for sorting, counting, and classifying, a variety of seeds and plants (some collected by the students), and a "floral shop" with a cash register, for students to sell flowers and plants.

Part of the Book Area has been turned into a cave (complete with stuffed animals and informational books) for exploring through dramatic play.

The Art Area contains the usual and unique open-ended materials that support children as they create their own models

of flowers, write greetings on cards, and make signs for the flower shop.

When conflicts over materials, space, friends, or other issues inevitably come up, children practice the six steps to conflict resolution and learn how to work and play together.

"Science lab" materials have been added to the House Area, where students explore real seeds, flowers, fruits, and other plants with real tools, such as magnifying glasses and tweezers. On display is a chart that labels all the parts of a plant. Students access the chart and other resources for research, discussions, and writing.

In one plan-do-review session, in which students are actively using new vocabulary orally and in their writing,

Six Steps in Conflict Resolution

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.



Teachers in the Canyons School District found planning journals to be highly effective in scaffolding the organization of students' ideas and helping students put their ideas on paper. Sharing their plans leads students to more purposeful play, interaction with materials, and more in-depth and detailed review conversations.

Approaches to Learning

Approaches to Learning is one of the eight content areas that provides the framework for the HighScope pre-school key developmental indicators (KDIs).

Approaches to Learning includes these KDIs:

1. Initiative
2. Planning
3. Engagement
4. Problem solving
5. Use of resources
6. Reflection

especially when using the descriptors in the “later” column of the KDI scaffolding charts. Two of the goals of the early childhood team were to create a common daily schedule and increase oral language opportunities for children. The team was able to achieve its goals by scheduling plan-do-review during a 55-minute oral language block of time Monday through Thursday for full-day programs and a 30 minute block for half-day programs. Plan-do-review was not scheduled for Fridays as students are released early for teacher planning time.

Benefits of Using HighScope

After just one year of learning and implementation, Sheri and others in the district have noticed these positive outcomes:

- Teachers and students are using the six steps to conflict resolution. Through explicit teaching and modeling, all kindergarten students are learning how to identify problems and collaboratively agree upon solutions.

- Kindergarten classrooms have been refined into developmentally appropriate, supportive environments, both socially and academically, in which students can thrive.
- Teachers are attending to the rigorous Common Core standards, the district framework, and intentionality as they plan when and how to infuse content materials into the oral language block of plan-do-review.
- During the 2012–13 school year, Canyons School District conducted an oral language study focusing on plan-do-review strategies used in the

oral language block. It was observed that students were making better-than-typical progress in oral vocabulary, especially in at-risk schools and with dual-language learners, and strong growth in positive social behavior across a vast majority of classrooms.

- First-grade teachers have noticed an increase in student independence and self-regulation.

So, as you can see, Canyons School District has taken a major step toward successfully integrating the HighScope active learning approach in kindergarten with all the other requirements that a public school must meet. Doing so has made transition from Pre-K to kindergarten more aligned and easier on children and their families. Sheri states that HighScope implementation is a work in progress as they invest their time and effort in making it a success! ■

Students are making better-than-typical progress in oral vocabulary, especially in at-risk schools and among dual-language learners, and strong growth in positive social behavior across the vast majority of classrooms. First-grade teachers have also noticed an increase in student independence and self-regulation.

