

THE HIGHSCOPE PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

What, How, and Why



WE ENGAGE. WE PLAY. WE ENCOURAGE.

Our research-based, active learning curriculum has been carefully designed to promote independent, creative thinking; decision making; and problem solving in children from birth through kindergarten. The HighScope Curriculum focuses on providing engaging classrooms and routines that support children's play with a variety of learning opportunities, and encouraging adult-child interactions.

By applying intentional teaching methods that engage young children based on their level of interest and development, HighScope takes the learning process beyond traditional academic subjects while preparing them for later schooling and future success in life. This child-focused approach to early education achieves powerful, positive results.

WHAT WE TEACH

In the HighScope Preschool Curriculum, learning is focused on the following eight content areas, which are based on the dimensions of school readiness identified by the National Education Goals Panel. HighScope's curriculum content areas are

- Approaches to learning
- Social and emotional development
- Physical development and health
- Language, literacy, and communication
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science and technology
- Social studies

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL INDICATORS

Learning in these eight areas is guided by 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs) that meet all state standards. Each KDI is linked to one of the dimensions of school readiness, and each is a statement that identifies an important learning goal for young children.

Each KDI is a statement that identifies an observable child behavior, reflecting knowledge and skills in areas such as language and literacy, math, creative arts, and physical development. HighScope teachers keep these indicators in mind when they set up the learning environment and plan activities.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Young children approach learning in different ways, each bringing a unique set of attitudes, habits, and preferences to their interactions and explorations. Approaches to learning is the foundation that affects how children learn in every other content area.

By understanding how to support this area of early development, adults can foster children's creativity, curiosity, confidence, independence, and initiative as they carry out their intentions, solve problems, and engage in a variety of learning experiences.



All the components of the curriculum — the daily routine, the arrangement of the learning environment, and its adult-child interaction strategies — work together to encourage the abilities of approaches to learning.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The HighScope approach gives adults the tools they need to help children develop strong and positive relationships with adults and peers. Teachers learn how to create a positive climate in the classroom as a foundation for social learning. The social skills children develop in HighScope programs contribute to their readiness for school and their ability to meet a variety of challenges throughout their lives.

Creating a warm and nurturing environment in preschool not only helps children form trusting relationships with others but also promotes learning in all areas. Surrounded by a positive and supportive classroom climate, children are likely to become engaged and motivated learners.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

Preschoolers are physically active, and although children grow and develop on their own, they need the support of adults who teach intentionally to develop physical abilities and healthy habits to the fullest extent possible. Learning personal care skills and acquiring habits that foster lifelong health are an important part of this curriculum and children's physical actions can also be used as a gateway to learning in other curriculum areas.

LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Learning to read and write is a developmental process that begins at birth and builds on children's basic need to communicate. In HighScope classrooms, children develop literacy skills by engaging in meaningful language and literacy experiences through a combination of child-initiated learning and intentional teacher guidance.

MATHEMATICS

As young children explore their environment, they begin to notice relationships that are the foundations for mathematics. In HighScope classrooms, children acquire math skills and concepts through adult-guided experiences that respect children's concrete thinking and need to learn through exploration. Learning activities are based on children's natural interests and offer children the time and freedom to construct math ideas.

CREATIVE ARTS

Art should be an integral part of every early childhood program. Arts experiences in preschool not only contribute to children's artistic and creative development but also to a wide range of skills in other areas, including perceptual, cognitive, language, and social skills.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Young children are experimenters and testers from birth. If we observe young children as they explore their world, we will see them using science processes such as observing, classifying, experimenting, predicting, drawing conclusions, and communicating their ideas to others. We call these processes the preschool scientific method because they are the early forms of abilities adult scientists use.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Children learn about their social world from the moment of birth, and observing and interpreting group behavior in preschool is an important part of this. After their family, the classroom is the first society that young children belong to. Participating in the classroom community allows them to practice the decision-making process and discuss ways to handle shared problems to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes children need to live as contributing citizens in a complex society.



HOW WE TEACH

The HighScope Preschool Curriculum includes intentional teaching methods that enable educators to create effective and engaging early childhood programs. Three topics are particularly important for teachers who want to strengthen their programs — adult-child interaction, classroom layout and materials, and the daily routine.

ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION

Adult-child interaction is the process of working alongside children and communicating with them both verbally and nonverbally to encourage learning. A key strategy for adult-child interaction is sharing control with children. Additional strategies include supporting children's play, using encouragement instead of praise, and taking a problem-solving approach to conflict.

THE CLASSROOM

HighScope settings are divided into interest areas stocked with a stimulating range of materials designed for specific types of play. Examples include house area, art area, block area, small toy area, computer area, reading and writing area. Materials are arranged in consistent places and the shelves are tagged with child-friendly labels so that children can get out and put away materials themselves.

THE DAILY ROUTINE

In HighScope programs there is a consistent framework for the day that provides a balanced variety of experiences and learning opportunities. Children engage in both individual and social play, participate in small- and large-group activities, assist with cleanup, socialize during meals, develop self-care skills, and exercise their small and large muscles. The most important segment of the daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make choices about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect upon their activities with adults and other children.

HOW WE EVALUATE

Research tells us that the best programs consistently measure how well teachers teach and how much children learn. They use the results to continue what is working and improve what is not; for example, to decide whether to provide more teacher training or to identify gaps in children's experiences. HighScope has developed both child and program assessment tools to support this evaluation process.

COR ADVANTAGE

COR Advantage is HighScope's birth-to-kindergarten child assessment tool, which evaluates children's learning in nine content areas. Each day, teachers and caregivers document brief written descriptions, or anecdotes, that objectively describe children's behavior. They use these notes to evaluate each child's development and then plan activities to help individual children and the classroom as a whole progress.

PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT (PQA)

In order to assess children's performance and progress, we need to evaluate the educational experience provided by the program they attend. PQA is a comprehensive, validated rating tool that measures how well a program promotes learning in all areas of development to define program quality at the classroom, teacher, and organizational level.

WHY HIGHSCOPE

The HighScope Curriculum was designed in result of extensive research that supports our belief that children learn best when they actively participate in the learning process through direct experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas as they discover the world around them.

More than 50 years of research has proven that the HighScope Curriculum advances the development of children and helps them to build lifelong skills that positively impacts their future success. National research conducted with children from different backgrounds has shown that those who attend HighScope programs score higher on measures of development than similar children enrolled in other preschool and child care programs.

HighScope is perhaps best known for the HighScope Perry Preschool Study that established the lasting human and financial value of early childhood education by comparing children who attended our program with those who did not. As adults, preschool participants had greater high school graduation rates, higher monthly earnings, less use of welfare, and fewer arrests than those not enrolled in the program. Not only did the study prove the benefit of early education on the individual who attended preschool, the results show that preschool education also benefits the community. Preschool education leads to savings for taxpayers: for every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education, society saves \$13 in the cost of special education, public assistance, unemployment benefits, and crime.

The HighScope approach is consistent with the best practices recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Program Performance Standards, and other guidelines for developmentally based programs. The HighScope Preschool Curriculum meets all state standards that have been published. You can view the map on our website for more information.