

The Early Years Count!

September 2002

See you later, alligator

See you at the rug, Doug.
See you at the snowball, Towball.
See you at the jam, Sam.
See you at the hall, Paul.
See you at the door, Snore.
See you at the bridge, Midge.
See you at the rocket, Socket.

— A four-year-old and his teacher
(from Learning to Read and Write)

A casual observer will hear mere silliness in the above dialogue. To a trained early childhood educator, however, it's a clue to the child's awareness of the sound structure of language, an awareness with profound implications for future reading success.

Such verbal playfulness also illustrates how young children learn. Research tells us that learning is an active process—that children construct their understanding of the world through interactions with the people and objects in their surroundings. What children learn is embedded in their activities and their play.

The High/Scope Preschool Curriculum is grounded in this research. According to founder David P. Weikart, "When we accept that learning comes from within, we achieve a critical balance in educating children. The adult's role is to support and guide children through their active learning adventures and experiences."

Most importantly, High/Scope brings results. One study, for example, shows that children in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program consistently scored better on the reading subtest of the California Achievement Test than those in a control group. Further, follow-up studies show that the positive effects continued to grow over time, even into adulthood.

That's why High/Scope is part of **The Early Years Count!** initiative. When the curriculum is implemented correctly in preschool classrooms, children's academic futures brighten. No wonder we're so excited, then, to tell you about a recent assessment of St. Joseph County Head Start classrooms, most of which now have teachers trained in the High/Scope approach. Information about these encouraging results and more about the High/Scope program is included in this issue.

See you inside, Clyde.



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An initiative of
The Community Foundation
of St. Joseph County
made possible through a grant
from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.



High/Scope Delivers



Five basic principles form the framework of the High/Scope approach: active learning, positive adult-child interactions, a child-friendly learning environment, a consistent daily routine, and team-based daily child assessment.

HIGH/SCOPE is a national leader in the field of early childhood training and research. Founded in 1970, the nonprofit foundation is headquartered in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Five basic principles form the framework of the High/Scope approach.

★ **ACTIVE LEARNING:** Children learn best, say experts in the High/Scope approach, “through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas.” Active learning is fundamental to the High/Scope educational approach. It has five key ingredients:

Materials. A variety of interesting materials are readily accessible to children.

Manipulation. Children are free to move, handle, explore, and work with the materials.

Choice. Children have opportunities to set their own goals and select materials, activities, and play partners.

Language from the children. Children communicate, verbally and nonverbally, what they are doing and what they have done.

Support from adults. Adults encourage the children’s efforts and help them extend or build upon their work by talking with them about what they are doing, by joining in their play, and by helping them learn to solve the problems that arise.

★ **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** In the High/Scope classroom, every effort is made to create a safe, comfortable, and uncluttered environment where children can play freely, either alone or with friends. Throw rugs, soft chairs and cushions create cozy surfaces. Rooms are filled with light, colors and textures. Clearly laid out interest areas are organized around specific kinds of play and are identified with simple names that make sense to children—house area, block area, toy area, book area. Children learn to sort materials by appearance or purpose, arrange them by size, match them by number and so on.

Materials are open-ended, meaning that children can use them in many different ways instead of one “correct” way. Materials such as family photographs and cooking utensils reflect children’s everyday lives. Dolls and play figures look like people in the community. The outdoor space is also inviting, with natural plant life, open areas for moving freely and sturdy climbing equipment.

The High/Scope Preschool Curriculum is used in a wide range of early childhood settings in the U.S. and around the world—public and private preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, home- and center-based child care settings, and programs for children with special needs.

★ ADULT/CHILD INTERACTION: Many teachers believe that as long as children are handling materials, they are engaged in active learning. Manipulation of materials is essential, of course, but by itself does not constitute active learning. Adults plan the kinds of experiences children need in order to grow in all areas of development. Children are also most likely to become engaged in learning and achieve higher levels of social, cognitive, and language functioning when adults form partnerships with them. Adult partners are responsive and interactive rather than directive and controlling. A give-and-take relationship exists, with children and adults both participating as leaders or followers, teachers or learners, speakers or listeners.

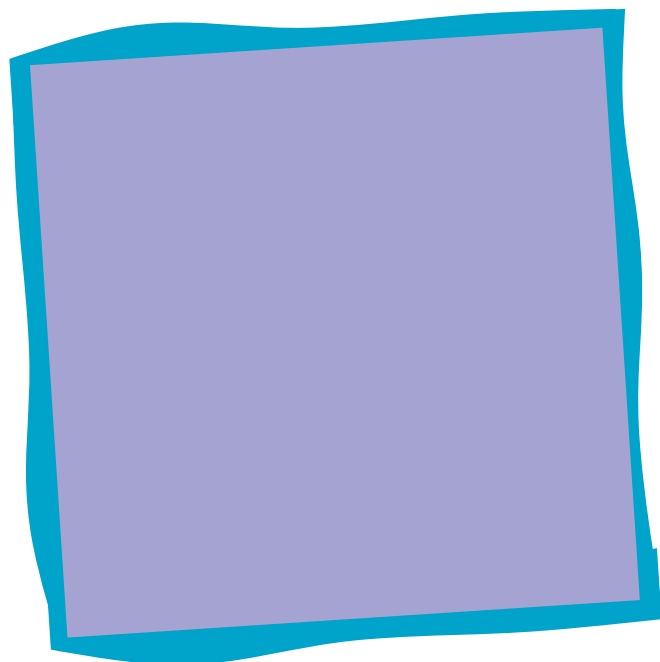
By sharing control of the day's activities, children learn how to take responsibility for themselves and one another; develop confidence in their ability to set the course of their own learning; and practice solving child-size problems in age appropriate ways, knowing there is backup support if needed. Sharing control does not mean letting children take over and run wild. Adults balance the freedom children need for exploration with the limits necessary to guarantee their safety and well-being and to support their individual mental and social development.

In St. Joseph County, 117 early childhood teachers and assistants from Head Start and 13 other child care centers have been trained through the Community Foundation's The Early Years Count! initiative. Two more scheduled trainings in 2002 and 2003 will reach an additional 80 teachers.

★ DAILY ROUTINE: Each day in a High/Scope setting follows a schedule of events called the daily routine. This routine provides consistency and predictability for both children and adults. One regular part of the routine—the daily "plan-do-review" process—gives children the opportunity to decide what they intend to do (plan), to follow through on their course of action (do), and then to reflect on their experiences with other children and adults (review). Large- and small-group experiences are also part of the daily routine, along with the fellowship of sharing a snack or meal and the fun of being outdoors.

★ CURRICULUM PLANNING & ASSESSMENT: Teachers and other caregivers regularly write notes about children's behaviors, experiences, and interests. Each child's development is then measured on the High/Scope Child Observation Record. Experiences that encourage children's growth and development are planned around these careful observations. Teachers also use these notes to help parents better understand their children's development and to make suggestions about how to extend classroom learning at home. To guarantee continued high quality, programs can also be evaluated with the High/Scope Program Quality Assessment.

Thanks to High/Scope for permission to adapt their materials. To learn more, visit <<http://www.highscope.org>>



Solid Improvements

“Central to ...the prevention of reading difficulties is the preschool teacher’s Knowledge base ...and the support provided to the teacher.”

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, National Research Council

Comparison of High/Scope Program Quality Assessments (PQA) conducted at Hansel Head Start in 2000 and 2002. Percentages reflect points scored on 48 observable practices in five different categories.

CATEGORY	Year	Quality				
		High Quality 5	Medium Quality 4 3		Low Quality 2 1	
Learning Environment	2000:	6%	20%	40%	23%	14%
	2002:	20%	32%	39%	7%	2%
Adult-Child Interaction	2000:	13%	6%	25%	22%	24%
	2002:	42%	32%	22%	3%	1%
Daily Routine	2000:	3%	8%	31%	25%	30%
	2002:	43%	32%	20%	5%	1%
Curriculum Planning & Assessment	2000:	49%	11%	10%	13%	7%
	2002:	84%	11%	5%	1%	0%
Parent Involvement & Family Service	2000:	48%	10%	29%	2%	1%
	2002:	85%	8%	6%	1%	0%



★ THE DRAMATIC RESULTS of a recent assessment of Head Start classrooms affirm that an investment in training is also an investment in quality.

Back in 2000, the High/Scope Program Quality Assessment (PQA) was conducted in 14 randomly selected Hansel Head Start classrooms in St. Joseph County. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, one of four Head Start Quality Research Centers in the US, found that “program ratings were quite low—lower than most other programs that we have assessed.” But that was then.

Since that time, through the Community Foundation’s **Early Years Count!** initiative, the lead teachers in 26 of 31 Head Start classrooms in St. Joseph County, along with many of their teacher assistants (and several other early childhood educators), have completed an intensive four-week training in the High/Scope curriculum.

A mentoring program continues to provide support as teachers learn how to incorporate new methods, interactions and learning

environments into their teaching day. In addition, 15 Head Start classrooms have received more than \$4,000 worth of quality materials and equipment. (By the end of the 3-year grant, all teachers will be trained and all classrooms equipped.)

So how are the Head Start classrooms doing now? When the PQA was readministered this spring by independent observers, the results showed that good things are happening.

In the critical adult-child interaction category alone, the number of low quality ratings (a score of 1 or 2) dropped from 46 percent down to just 4 percent, while the high quality ratings increased from 13 percent to 42 percent.

These improvements bode very well for the future educational success of Head Start children in our community. With the support and attentiveness of significant adults in their lives, with enriched learning environments and developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences, they will have a solid foundation upon which to construct their knowledge of the physical and social world.

Knowledge arises neither from objects nor the child, but from interactions between the child and those objects.”

—Jean Piaget

Moving from low quality ➡ to high quality

Learning Environment

From: Materials lead to prescribed outcomes (coloring books, worksheets). Instead of real items, there are toy replicas. Materials do not stimulate all the senses.

➡ *To:* Manipulative materials (blocks, books, sand, water, dolls, scarves) and real items (dog dish, firefighter boots, pots and pans, telephone) predominate. All senses are involved, with things to touch, smell, see and hear; there are good snacks to taste.

From: Materials reflect only the dominant culture and perpetuate stereotypes. They do not reflect home and community cultures or special needs of program children.

➡ *To:* Many materials—photos, cooking utensils, music tapes, work clothes—reflect home and community cultures and the special needs of the children. Materials depict a wide range of nonstereotypic role models.

From: Most displays are adult- or commercially-made (e.g., poster of fire safety), not child-initiated. Displays of children’s work are copied from adult work.

➡ *To:* A variety of child’s work (i.e., artwork, block structures, samples of emergent writing) is displayed. Adult-made displays relate to children’s interests and experiences (e.g., pictures or photos of classroom pets or children’s family members).

Daily Routine

From: There is no consistent routine and children depend on adults to tell them what to do next.

➡ *To:* Adults and children follow a consistent sequence of events, with set times for each part of the day. Children can anticipate what activities come next.

Adult-Child Interaction

From: Instead of focusing on children, adults primarily talk to one another or maintain the classroom. Adults use shouting, shaming, or harsh words or actions; adults do not attend to children who appear upset.

➡ *To:* Adults show positive attention to children—smiling, hugging, using a calm voice, making eye contact, getting down to child’s eye level. Adults attend to children who are upset.

From: Adults solve social conflicts for children (e.g., use time-outs, take away objects, or stop activities to end conflict without resolving it). Adults do not converse with children about how or why they can resolve conflicts.

➡ *To:* Adults and children work together to resolve conflicts. Adults use these steps to mediate conflicts: approach children calmly, acknowledge children’s feelings, gather information from the children (what happened, what made the child upset), restate the problem, ask children for solutions, wait for and support children’s decisions.

Planning

From: Staff do not have regularly scheduled planning sessions. The lead teacher plans and conducts all activities.

➡ *To:* Staff meet daily to discuss and make plans for the next day. Teaching team members participate equally in planning and conducting activities with children.

Parent Involvement

From: There are no activities or materials to help parents become involved in the program.

➡ *To:* There are many parent involvement options. For example, parents may volunteer in the classroom, bring in materials, attend parent meetings and workshops, serve on advisory councils, meet with teachers to discuss children’s progress, or support children’s learning at home. Child care and transportation are provided as needed.

Other programs, too

While the recent Program Quality Assessment focused just on Head Start classrooms, many other early childhood teachers have also received High/Scope training through the Community Foundation's **The Early Years Count!** initiative. The following childcare centers in St. Joseph County have had teachers trained in High/Scope:

Del's Day Care

Adult Education, Family Literacy, SBCSC

Calvary Temple Learning Center

Circle of Mercy Day Care

East Bank Day Care

El Campito Learning Center

*Family & Children's Center's child care sites
in South Bend and Mishawaka*

Hansel Child Development Center

IUSB Child Development Center

Learning Twig (Hansel Center)

Noah's Ark Day Care

Northwest United Methodist Day Care

★ If you would like information about High/Scope training in St. Joseph County, contact Jean Perrin at IU South Bend, 237-4113, email: jperrin@iusb.edu or contact Bruce Nowlin, Ivy Tech, 289-7001, ext. 5351, email: bnowlin@ivy.tec.in.us

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