

Section 1:

The

HighScope

Curriculum

& Overview



HighScope Curriculum Overview

HighScope was established in 1970 as a result of the work of Dr. David Weikart. The curriculum is research based (Perry Preschool Study), and used worldwide. HighScope is a set of teaching practices based on child development theory, research and proven instructional practices. The HighScope “Wheel of Learning” illustrates the curriculum principles that guide HighScope preschool practitioners in their daily work.

At the center of the curriculum wheel is “Active Learning”. Through active participatory learning children construct knowledge that helps them make sense of their world. There are five ingredients of active learning: Materials (abundant, diverse and age-appropriate), Manipulation (hands-on discovery), Choice (children choose materials and play partners), Child Language and Thought (describe what they are doing and understanding), and Adult Scaffolding (adults support current level of thinking and challenge them to advance).

As children move through the day they engage with the curriculum’s content known as the KDI’s (Key Development Indicators). HighScope teachers are actively involved with children throughout the day. They thoughtfully provide materials, plan activities and talk with children in ways that support and challenge the children’s thinking. In the HighScope curriculum “Shared Control” is central to how adults and children interact.

The HighScope day is composed of the following: Greeting Time, Message Board, Large Group, Small Group, Planning Time, Work Time, Recall (Plan-do-review), Clean-up Time, Outside Time. A predictable sequence of events helps children feel secure and gives them a sense of control. Within this routine are built choices for the children.

The HighScope Classroom should have the following labeled areas: Toy Area, House Area, Music Area, Art Area, Sand Area, Water Area, Block Area and Science Area. Labeling of the shelves and materials supports the child as an independent learner in their classroom environment.

Elements of the HighScope Daily Routine

Planning Time: Children indicate what they plan to do during Work Time

Work Time: Children work with any of the materials in any of the interest areas. They explore, discover and solve problems. Work Time is the longest segment in the daily routine lasting 60 minutes. Adults look for opportunities to enter into the children's activities to encourage children's thinking and extend their play.

Cleanup Time: Children are expected to return materials to their appropriate place

Recall Time: Brings the plan-do-review cycle to a close. Children are encouraged to talk about what they played with and with whom.

Small Group Time: Each teacher meets with a consistent group of 6-9 children who work on a planned activity that supports the Scope and Sequence or children's interests.

Large Group Time: Adults and children gather in a group to play games, reenact stories, sing songs, do finger plays, dance, play instruments or exercise.

Outside Time: Work Time that happens outside with materials that encourage large muscle development and provide opportunities to solve problems.

The HighScope Daily Routine

The HighScope Daily routine includes a **variety of active learning periods** that provide children with a **range of experiences and interactions**. Active learning periods occur in a **reasonable, predictable sequence** to meet children's needs. Experiences take place within a **supportive climate** in an **appropriate physical setting**. The daily routine **flows smoothly** from one interesting experience to the next.

Component		Time (minutes)		Description
		UPK 4 Yr	EPK 3Yr	
Arrival Breakfast, Book Time		20	20	Being fully greeted in a conscious, sincere way sets a positive tone for each child's day. Should be followed by a predictable routine, which is calming because children know exactly what they will do next.
Message Board		10	10	Messages "written" using pictures, symbols and words so children of all literacy levels can "read" them. A time to share announcements and let children know about upcoming events, new materials, visitors, etc.
Large Group Time		10	10	Adult initiated time for all to participate in singing, movement, re-enacting stories. Children take the lead and contribute ideas. Builds sense of community.
Work Time <i>Takes place twice a day, always in sequence</i>	Planning	5	5	Planning by children encourages them to connect their interests with purposeful actions.
	Work Time ("Do")	60	60	Work time encourages children to focus attentively on both play and problem solving.
	Clean-up	10	10	Putting away materials creates transition from work time (do) to review (recall.) Time for problem-solving, playfulness and realistic expectations.
	Review ("Recall")	10	5	Recall helps children reflect on, understand, and build on their actions.
Small Group Time <i>takes place twice a day</i> 1: ELA focus 2: Math focus	Small Group Time	20	20 <i>(5-10 at first part of year)</i>	This 15- to 20-minute time period is when children experiment with materials and solve problems in an activity adults have chosen for a particular purpose. Adult introduces a common activity and associated set of materials, encourages child to make choices and decisions about how to use materials and describe in their own words what they are doing.
Outside/Gross Motor		45	45	The time of day designed for vigorous, noisy, physical play.
Instructional Meal time		30	30	Children and adults enjoy healthy food in a supportive social setting. Adult-child interaction, consideration, and learning elements are met during the entire mealtime, including set-up and cleanup, and are incorporated into each daily meal.
Rest Time (EPK longer)		30	40	A time for sleeping, or quiet, solitary, on-your-own-cot play.
Departure		5	5	Helps child bring closure to day with a sense of completion.

Planning: A Summary

What It Is

- ◆ Establishing a problem or goal
- ◆ Imagining and anticipating actions
- ◆ Expressing personal intentions and interests
- ◆ Shaping intentions into purposes
- ◆ Deliberating
- ◆ Making ongoing modifications

Why It Is Important

- ◆ Encourages children to articulate their ideas, choices, and decisions
- ◆ Promotes children's self-confidence and sense of control
- ◆ Leads to involvement and concentration on play
- ◆ Supports the development of increasingly complex play

Where to Plan

- ◆ In a place where intimate conversations can occur
- ◆ In a stable pair or group
- ◆ Where people and materials are visible

What Children Do as They Plan

- ◆ Develop the capacity to express their intentions
- ◆ Indicate their intentions through gestures, actions, and words
- ◆ Make vague, routine, and detailed plans
- ◆ Make perfunctory and real plans
- ◆ Make a variety of plans over time
- ◆ Engage in the planning process at home

Planning Time Checklist: How Adults Support Children's Planning

Adults examine their beliefs about child planning and their personal interaction styles.

Adults plan with children in an intimate setting.

- Adults plan in a place where intimate conversations can occur.
- Adults plan in a stable pair or group.
- Adults plan where people and materials are visible.

Adults provide materials and experiences to maintain children's interest at planning time.

- Visibility games
- Group games
- Props and partnerships
- Representations
- Children take charge

Adults converse with individual children about their plans.

- Adults elicit children's plans by asking "what" questions.
- Adults converse about children's concerns that might be impeding planning.
- Adults elicit children's plans by "talking story."
- Adults listen attentively to children's responses.
- Adults converse in a conscious "turn-taking" manner with nonverbal and vague planners.
 - Interpret gestures and actions.
 - Ask an initial open-ended question.
 - Narrate what you see and comment on what the child says.
 - Offer alternatives when the child does not respond.
- Adults converse with routine and elaborate planners.
 - Converse about space and materials.
 - Talk about details.
 - Talk about sequence.
 - Remind children of related prior work.
- Adults encourage playmates to plan together.
- Adults value children's plans.
 - Encourage rather than praise children's ideas.
 - Write down children's plans.
- Adults note the connection between children's plans and actions.

Adults anticipate changes in children's planning over time.

Work Time: A Summary

What It Is

- ◆ Carrying out intentions
- ◆ Playing with purpose
- ◆ Participating in a social setting
- ◆ Solving problems

Why It Is Important

- ◆ Encourages children's playfulness
- ◆ Enables children to construct knowledge as they engage in the High/Scope key experiences
- ◆ Enables adults to observe, learn from, and support children's play

Where Children Work

- ◆ In the interest areas
- ◆ In cozy and open spaces

What Children Do at Work Time

- ◆ Initiate, work on, modify, complete, and change their plans
- ◆ Play in a variety of social contexts
- ◆ Engage in different types of play
- ◆ Carry on conversations

Work Time Checklist: How Adults Support Children at Work Time

Adults examine their own beliefs about how children learn at work time.

Adults provide work spaces for children.

- Children work in the interest areas.
- Children work in cozy and open spaces.

Adults find out what children are doing.

- Look for children's plan status.
- Look for children's individual and social interactions.
- Look for specific types of play.
- Look for curriculum content areas.

Adults choose children to observe, gain children's perspectives, and form on-the-spot interaction plans.

Adults offer children comfort and contact.

- Look for children in need of comfort and contact.
- Offer reassuring physical contact.
- Offer simple acknowledgment.

Adults participate in children's play.

- Look for natural play openings.
- Join children's play on the child's level.
- Play in parallel with children.
- Play as a partner with children.
- Refer one player to another.
- Suggest new ideas within ongoing play situations.
 - Offer suggestions within the play theme.
 - Address the role person rather than the child.
 - Respect the child's reaction to your idea.

Adults converse with children.

- Look for natural opportunities for conversation.
- Join children at their level for conversation.
- Respond to children's conversational leads.
- Converse as a partner with children.
- Ask questions responsively.
 - Ask questions sparingly.
 - Relate questions directly to what the child is doing.
 - Ask questions about the child's thought process.

Recalling: A Summary

What It Is

- ◆ Remembering and reflecting on actions and experiences
- ◆ Associating plans, actions, and outcomes
- ◆ Talking with others about personally meaningful experiences

Why It Is Important

- ◆ Exercises children's capacities to form and talk about mental images
- ◆ Expands children's consciousness beyond the present

Where to Recall

- ◆ In intimate groups and places
- ◆ With those who shared the experiences children are recalling

What Children Do as They Recall

- ◆ Grow in their capacity to recount past events
- ◆ Select experiences to recall
- ◆ Construct their own understanding of what they have just done
- ◆ Recall experiences in a variety of ways

Recall Time Checklist: How Adults Support Children at Recall Time

Adults examine their beliefs about how children learn at recall time.

Adults recall with children in a calm, cozy setting.

- Recall in intimate groups and places.
- Recall with those who shared the experiences children are recalling.

Adults provide materials and experiences to maintain children's interest at recall time.

- Tours
- Group games
- Props and partnerships
- Representations

Adults converse with children about their work-time experiences.

- Adults take an unhurried approach to recall.
- Adults invite children to talk about what they have done:
 - Pick up on children's opening comments.
 - Comment on a child's play.
 - Ask an open-ended question.
- Adults watch children and listen attentively.
- Adults contribute observations and comments to keep recall narratives going.
- Adults use questions thoughtfully and sparingly.
- Adults support children's co-narratives and conflicting viewpoints.
- Adults acknowledge (rather than praise) children's work-time experiences.
- Adults note connections between children's recall narratives and plans.

Adults anticipate changes in the way children recall over time.

Large-Group Time: A Summary

What It Is

- ◆ All children and adults together
- ◆ Active learning in a communal setting
- ◆ Enjoyable shared experiences

Why It Is important

- ◆ Gives children a repertoire of common experiences
- ◆ Builds a sense of community
- ◆ Encourages group membership and leadership
- ◆ Provides children with group problem-solving experiences

Where to Meet

- ◆ In a spacious location
- ◆ Let the experience determine the formation of the group

What Children Do at Large-Group Time

- ◆ Actively participate
- ◆ Initiate ideas, offer suggestions, and generate solutions
- Make choices
- Opportunity to provide leaders

What do adults do:

Initiate the group activity
Ask children for suggestions

Large-Group Time Checklist: How Adults Support Children at Large-Group Time

Adults examine their beliefs about how children learn at large-group time.

Adults plan large-group experiences ahead of time.

- Plan around children's interests.
- Plan around key developmental indicators in **music and physical development, health, and well being.**
- Plan around cooperative play and projects.
- Plan around events currently meaningful to the children.

Adults prepare for large-group time before children arrive.

- Modify songs and games to fit children's development and specific events.
- Practice ahead of time.
- Have materials ready.

Adults set large-group time in motion: *the beginning.*

- Draw children to the group with an easy-to-join activity.
- Start right away with the children who have gathered.

Adults support children's ideas and initiatives: *the middle.*

- Briefly* introduce the next experience.
- Participate on children's physical level.
- Turn props and materials over to children.
- Watch and listen to children.
- Follow up on children's suggestions and modifications.
- Let children be the leaders.

Adults bring large-group time to a close: *the end.*

- Make the final large-group experience a transition to the next part of the daily routine.
- Put materials away as part of the transition activity.

Small-Group Time: A Summary

What It Is

- ◆ An adult-initiated learning experience based on children's interests and development
- ◆ The same group of children with the same adult
- ◆ Active learning in a supportive setting

Why It Is Important

- ◆ Builds on children's strengths
- ◆ Introduces children to materials and experiences they might otherwise miss
- ◆ Provides children with regular peer contacts and interactions
- ◆ Lets adults observe and interact daily with the same group of children
- ◆ Enables adults to practice support strategies in a stable setting

Where to Meet

- ◆ In a consistent place
- ◆ In a special location near the relevant materials

What Children Do at Small-Group Time

- ◆ Explore, play, work with materials, and talk about what they are doing
- ◆ Solve problems they encounter

Small-Group Time Checklist: How Adults Support Children at Small-Group Time

Adults examine their beliefs about how children learn at small-group time.

Adults form well-balanced small groups.

Adults plan small-group experiences ahead of time.

- Plan around the interests of individual children.
- Plan around new and unexplored materials.
- Plan around curriculum content areas.
- Plan around local traditions.

Adults prepare for small groups before children arrive.

- Gather materials for each child.
- Have materials ready.

Adults set small groups in motion: *the beginning.*

- Give children materials as they arrive.
- Make a *brief* introductory statement.

Adults support each child's ideas and use of materials: *the middle.*

- Move to children's physical level.
- Watch what children do with materials.
- Listen to what children say.
- Move from child to child so all children receive attention.
- Imitate children's actions.
- Converse with children, following their leads.
- Encourage children to do things for themselves.
- Refer children to each other for ideas and assistance.
- Ask questions sparingly.

Adults bring small-group time to a close: *the end.*

- Realize that children finish at different times.
- Give children a warning near the session's end.
- Support children's concluding observations.
- Tell children that materials will be available at work time.
- Ask children to put away materials.

in many communities who [typically leave the field after a few years](#), these educators stay on the job, continuing to hone their craft. The classes are small — Oklahoma mandates that there be no more than 20 children, with two teachers, a ratio that early-education experts recommend — and well stocked with everything from Legos and microscopes to puzzles and dress-up clothes. The researchers also found that Tulsa’s preschool teachers devoted more time to academics and were likelier to talk *with*, not *at*, their students, than their counterparts in 11 other states.

When the Georgetown researchers began their study, Tulsa spent about \$10,000, in 2017 dollars, for a full-day pre-K slot for a child (and roughly half that amount for a half-day slot). That’s comparable to preschool spending in other states that make strong investments in quality pre-K, but that amount per year is considerably less than what the average school district [spends on a grade-school student](#).

The level of quality is crucial to the effectiveness of preschool. Two years ago, a study of Tennessee’s prekindergarten program made headlines when researchers found that by the third grade, the state’s preschoolers were no better off cognitively than their classmates. Russ Whitehurst, then the director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution and a prominent pre-K critic, [called an earlier version of the study](#), which had similar results, “devastating for advocates of the expansion of state pre-K programs.” But a closer look reveals an explanation. In Tennessee, the quality of pre-K was lacking. “Tennessee doesn’t have a coherent vision,” Dale Farran, a Vanderbilt professor and a co-author of the Tennessee study, [acknowledged at the time](#). Classroom observers reported that left to their own devices, each teacher was inventing pre-K on his or her own.

The Georgetown researchers’ findings mirror the results of a similarly rigorous 2016 evaluation of the Head Start program in Tulsa, which was largely patterned after the Tulsa preschool program, as well as a study of New Jersey’s preschool program that targets children in the state’s poorest districts. Perhaps not surprisingly, children from low-income families were the biggest gainers in Tulsa, but middle-class youngsters benefited as well (a finding that should come as no surprise to well-off families who seek out the best preschool programs money can buy).

This is all to say, pre-K works. And it works over the long term. If only legislators would commit to it. In recent years, Oklahoma has slashed funding for public education, making deeper cuts than any other state. Tulsa, like many districts, has been hemorrhaging teachers, with the best and brightest migrating to other states. That doubtlessly affects the children’s education.

That’s bad news for the coming generation and a shortsighted move by the state. Preschool represents only a year or two in a child’s education, but it can have powerful long-term effects. We should think of it not as a cure-all for our education ills but as a powerful vaccine — one that makes a solid K-12 education akin to a booster shot.

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