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# Supporting Individual Teachers in HighScope Implementation

BY KARALYN HUEY, HIGHSCOPE CLIENT RELATIONSHIP SPECIALIST

Many supervisors trained in the HighScope approach often find that their beliefs about good HighScope practices differ from those of their classroom teachers. This may be due to misinterpretation of HighScope guidelines, lack of experience (on the part of either the teachers or administrators), or differences in personal teaching styles. These differing beliefs and styles may lead to challeng-

es when supervisors attempt to coach staff on appropriate practices. In this article we offer strategies for making the process of coaching and evaluating staff on best practices a bit easier, and to help supervisors and teachers "get on the same page" with respect to HighScope implementation.

## 1. Attend Training With Your Staff

Many curriculum workshop experiences change teachers' perspectives on the way they view young children and their development. They make discoveries or have "Aha! moments" that forever change their thinking and the way they interact with children. This time of enlightenment is sometimes dampened by the thought "I wish my supervisor were here to hear this." Even though agencies select HighScope as their curriculum and allocate funds to provide staff training experiences, teachers are often sent mixed messages by their administrators about how committed the program is to implementing



Many times, curriculum workshop experiences change teachers' perspectives on the way they view young children and their development.



When supervisors of teaching staff attend training along with teachers, the shared training experience provides a springboard for discussions centered on strategies the agency will practice.

curriculum components and letting go of previous practices. Teachers also express frustration when they are evaluated by administrators who have different interpretations of HighScope practices. When scheduling HighScope training, attend the workshops with your

teaching staff so you can hear firsthand what the teachers are hearing, so you can draw from the same language and guidelines when supporting teachers in the classroom. The shared training experience will provide a springboard for discussions centered on strategies that the agency will practice, and in the case of differing interpretations, will allow for clarification.

## 2. Provide Ongoing Support

Curriculum workshops can be dynamic. They may be the catalyst through which teachers can make very real discoveries about themselves and their beliefs about teaching young children. When teachers have workshop experiences that are sporadic (one or two per year), it is easy for them to return to their classroom environment and revert back to the practices they used before the training experience. For some, the influences of prior supervisors, the apathy of coworkers, and/or the difficult process of implementing change in general may be stronger than the impact of a four- to six-hour workshop. In a system of periodic,



Curriculum workshops can be hands-on and dynamic, allowing teachers to make very real discoveries about themselves and their beliefs about teaching young children.

### PUBLISHER CREDITS

*HighScope Extensions* is a practical resource for early childhood teachers, trainers, administrators, and child care providers. It contains useful information on the HighScope Curriculum and on HighScope's training network.

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Produced by HighScope Press, a division of HighScope Educational Research Foundation

ISSN 2155-3548

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The HighScope Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization founded by David Weikart in Ypsilanti, MI in 1970.

## Keys to Teacher Support

- Attend training with your staff
- Provide ongoing support
- Be consistent with requirements
- Allow teaching teams to be trained together
- Recognize differing levels of experience
- Be open to others' points of view

consistent observations and discussions with administrators (such as observation and feedback that focuses on a particular curriculum area), teachers may find it easier to stay on track with implementing the curriculum. Consistent, timely support from administrators provides optimal benefits for everyone involved. Without ongoing support, the impact of the training experience is lost.

### 3. Be Consistent With Requirements

Sometimes teachers are confused by requirements and suggestions for improvement (action plans) coming from more than one supervisor, because the suggestions differ. For example, a teacher might say, “I was told by one supervisor that my room arrangement was okay, but the very next week I was told to change it because it was “not HighScope.” Reaching a consensus on best practices with all members of your administrative team will help teachers receive a consistent message and will make it easier for the teachers to adhere to guidelines.

Use the Preschool Quality Assessment (PQA) as a starting point for discussions. Be certain that supervisors are clear about what is a requirement (as indicated by the PQA) and what ideas are merely suggestions for one way to achieve a desired element of quality. For example, HighScope requires clear, defined and labeled areas in the classroom (requirement). Areas you may include are block area, house area, sand and water table, art area, book area and toy area.

### 4. Allow Teaching Teams to Be Trained Together

Budget constraints sometimes call for just the lead teacher in a classroom to attend HighScope training. Even though this may seem to be cost-effective, team members who hear the same message at the same time are better able to implement the ideas they learn. The shared experience of training will enable them to provide a more consistent learning atmosphere for children, and will help them to better support one another in implementing ideas that may be new to them.



When a teaching team attends training together, the shared training experience allows team members to better implement the ideas brought back to the classroom or center.

It can be helpful to keep in mind that the HighScope philosophy is centered in intentional adult-child interactions and active learning experiences.

### 5. Recognize Differing Levels of Experience

The HighScope Curriculum contains some ideas that may be contrary to the concepts that teachers were taught during their early childhood studies. HighScope practices may also contrast with the experiences some adults remember from their own childhood, and this may influence their teaching practices. Because teachers have varying levels of experience with implementing the HighScope Curriculum, they will need different levels of support. Whether new or seasoned, enthusiastic teachers who are motivated to learn and grow will benefit from a light supervisory touch. That is, give those teachers an opportunity to reflect on their teaching and to solve their own problems by asking them clarifying questions and commenting on what you hear or observe (e.g., you might say, “How did that strategy work for the children?” “Tell me more about that concern”).

Other teachers may find it more of a challenge to change their beliefs or habits — a situation calling for more hands-on support, which may include modeling curriculum strategies, working alongside teachers, and offering over-the-shoulder guidance during activities. All teachers will particularly benefit from strategies that help them develop awareness of their teaching habits and which of those habits and strategies are more or less beneficial to children. Videotaping teachers can be an effective way to help them achieve this awareness. Having teachers observe other classrooms is another way to build awareness of positive teaching strategies.

### 6. Be Open to Others' Points of View

One way you can tune into teachers' individual needs — and support and evaluate them in a more authentic way — is to look at the curriculum's implementation through their eyes. Take the teachers' perspectives when addressing and solving challenges beyond teachers' control, such as building layout (e.g., restrooms down the hall, no classroom sink, little storage space), varying schedules (e.g. set playground times, school-wide

One way that supervisors can tune in to teachers and support and evaluate them in a more authentic way is to look at curriculum implementation from their perspective.



special programs). Roadblocks such as these may require you and the teachers to think creatively in order to keep true to the HighScope Curriculum. It can be helpful to remember that HighScope is centered around being intentional and providing active learning experiences throughout the day. Acknowledge teachers' challenges and frustrations, then brainstorm solutions together that best meet HighScope principles.

Open communication with the members of your teaching staff and an understanding of their unique classroom needs is also vital to providing appropriate support. Further, taking time to observe in the classroom is key to understanding teachers' strengths and their professional development needs.

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In summary, as you work with your staff on a day-to-day basis and as you think about professional development, keep in mind that providing training for all your staff, offering consistent support, and striving to see things from your teachers' perspective will go a long way toward helping your staff be "on the same page" about implementing the HighScope approach. Keeping these elements in mind is one of the best ways to ensure the children and their families have the most consistent and meaningful experiences possible while in your care.



Karalyn Huey is a Certified HighScope Trainer who currently serves as a Client Relationship Specialist at HighScope. Prior to her 8-year role as a HighScope Field Consultant, she served as a teacher and Education Coordinator at a Head Start agency in Detroit, Michigan. She is also the choir director at her church. She considers it a blessing to have two children with whom she can practice her adult-child interaction strategies daily – keeping her skills sharp.

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## CLASSROOM HINTS

# Administrative Hints for Staff Support in Implementing HighScope

BY KARALYN HUEY AND CARRIE MOORE, STARFISH FAMILY SERVICES EDUCATION MANAGER

Education administrators have a number of concerns when it comes to supporting their staff as they implement the HighScope Curriculum — best practices, encouragement of teachers' strengths, best use of resources, and peer and supervisor mentoring, among others. This article is adapted from a question-and-answer session on this important topic with Carrie Moore, Education Manager at Starfish Family Services in Inkster, Michigan. In the first part of the article, the discussion brings out some of the common misconceptions teachers have about HighScope. In the second part of the article, Carrie will share her ideas for supporting her staff as they implement the curriculum.

**KH:** In your formal HighScope training, have you received information that you have interpreted differently than your teachers have? If so, what?

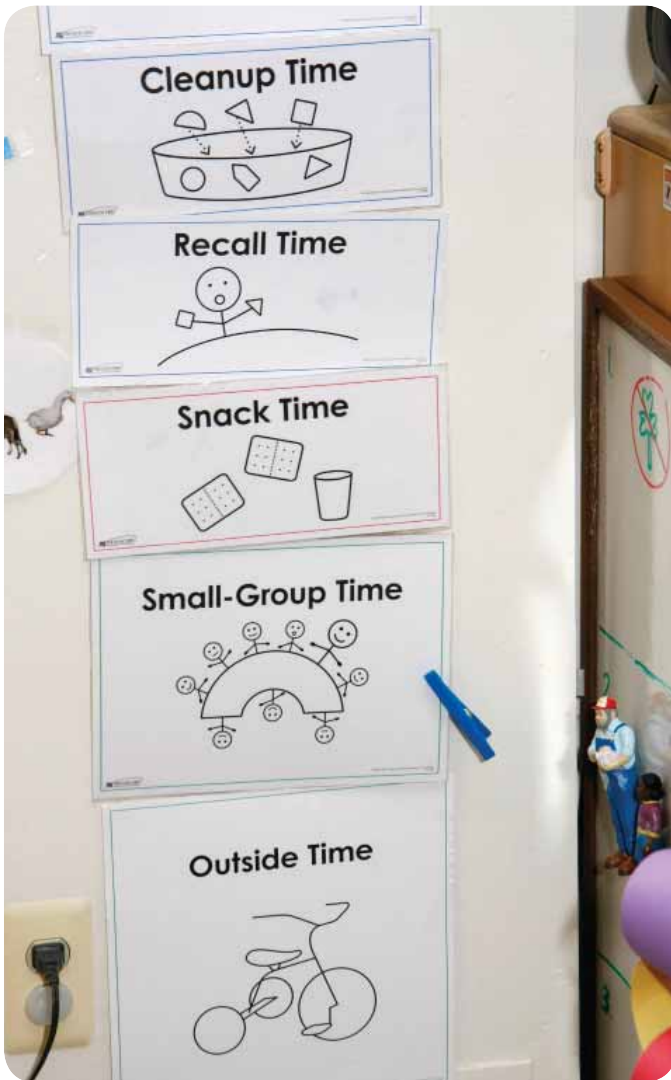
**CM:** Some of the discrepancies I have encountered with training interpretation center on shared control. In conversing with teachers about shared control, I have learned that teachers interpret this as basically allowing the child to do whatever he or she pleases throughout the day. I once observed a teacher allow a child to stand and jump off several stacked blocks because she learned that this is part of shared control. My training experience was that there are child-sized choices and adult-sized decisions. Though it's not a HighScope rule, my program has a rule that stacking and jumping off blocks is not completely a child-sized choice, for safety reasons. In this situation, the teacher should observe how the child is playing, understand his or her need for jumping, and through problem solving, determine with the child how to continue while being safe. It may be that the number of blocks stacked would be reduced and that the adult would stand next to the blocks so the child could continue the activity, or it might be that the child would choose to jump at outside time. It's important for adults to respond to children's needs and interests while keeping in mind the adult-sized decisions about safety.



A second curriculum interpretation has to do with children following the daily routine. All of our classrooms have daily routine cards posted in pictures and words for children. These cards need to be visible so children can gain a sense of predictability and control throughout the day. During some classroom observations, the teachers simply gave children the choice of coming to large-group time or participating in cleanup time. The thought on the teacher's end was that, again, this is a choice, and we can't force children to join. However, the daily routine is important, and children need to be supported in order to be successful. Teachers may need to ask themselves, "Why do children not want to participate in large-group time or in cleanup time? What else do we need to do to provide and support activities that are in line with children's interests so that children will want to participate?"

**KH:** How similar or different are your ideas of what HighScope is about compared to teachers' ideas? Please give an example of similarities and/or differences.

**CM:** As a whole, the similarities are the ideas of active learning, an open-ended environment, and having a curriculum that is conducive to all learning and developmental levels.



On my end, the difference is that, when it comes to conversing with children, less is more. I often observe teachers giving a lot of unnecessary direction. In talking with teachers, they feel that children need that constant feedback and direction in order to be successful. My thought is, if your classroom is labeled, your daily routine is visible, and your message-board strategies are related to your day, being a partner in children's play should come more naturally to you.

**KH:** Have you assessed classrooms using the Preschool Quality Assessment [PQA] instrument? If so, what were the areas of concern?

**CM:** Missed opportunities to refer children to one another to support independence and decision making. There are times throughout the day in which children can simply be referred to others; however, teachers — probably because of old habits — take care of issues or tasks themselves. The other item of concern is support for child communication. Oftentimes teachers are asking too many questions, which leads to less authentic conversations.

**KH:** Do your teachers agree with the areas of concern?

**CM:** Yes, they do agree.

**KH:** What suggestions would you make for other supervisors to better support their staff in implementing the curriculum?

**CM:** What was successful for me was, first, the concept of meeting staff halfway in terms of their own professional development and understanding of the curriculum. Just as we individualize and scaffold children's learning, supervisors and trainers need to do the same with teachers as they learn to implement HighScope. Ask teachers in an open-ended way what they feel they do well. Reflect upon what you observe teachers doing well; then, think about why they do that particular skill so well. Did they have more training on this skill than on other topics? Were they given more time to practice? Were they given high-quality feedback? Did these teachers have someone to model practices for them in a way that they could easily understand? There is a reason why the teacher can demonstrate some skills better than others. Once you find out why, you can use this same strategy to help the teacher master skills in other areas.

Also, think about your own early HighScope teaching experiences. What aspects of HighScope implementation did you struggle with as a classroom teacher but now are successful at? For me, it was the concept of encouragement versus praise. I had always thought it was really important that children know they did something "good" or "right." My personal belief was that it was my job to support children's efforts through praise and awards. My supervisor at that time gave me lots of research and data on the negative implications of praise and the effectiveness of encouragement.



I understood this; however, my strong beliefs, combined with what had been taught to me, overruled this theory at that time in my professional development. I didn't begin to truly understand the negative implications of praise until my supervisor challenged me to count how many times my Head Start students were coming to me looking for validation for their work. When I stopped to count, I found that it was about 100 times per week! This was because I had trained children to become dependent on me and my opinion. The challenge my supervisor gave me helped me see the effectiveness of encouragement versus praise "in action" rather than just being told this is the way it needs to be. My supervisor was supportive in letting me go through this process.

**KH:** Any final thoughts?

**CM:** Yes — don't be afraid to respectfully challenge your teachers. Find those strengths in their practice, and gently push them to improve in other areas, partnering with them in the process. Offer those challenges with a smile on your face, and don't forget to share your own personal experiences!



Carrie Moore has been in the Early childhood business for the past 19 years. She started out as an assistant teacher at a Head Start program that serviced children and families experiencing homelessness. She was a Head Start teacher for 10 years and met many amazing children and families who taught her valuable life lessons. Currently, as the Education and Disability Specialist at Starfish Family Services Head Start, she has the pleasure of working with many talented and dedicated administrators, teachers, therapists, and parents.

## Discovering HighScope: A Teacher's Journal

Learning more about the HighScope Curriculum can be fun and exciting when learning along with someone else! In her own words, HighScope teacher Becky James describes the process of learning to implement the HighScope Curriculum in her daily teaching practice and reflects on topics such as praise versus encouragement, conflict resolution, effective planning and recall times, and scaffolding children's learning. Read what Becky has to say about how things have gone in the classroom on a given day, what she feels she can improve upon, and how she plans and problem-solves with her coteacher. This delightful book shows Becky's dedication to teaching and learning as she continually discovers more about how to implement HighScope — just as you can.



*Discovering HighScope —  
A Teacher's Journal*  
P1419 \$19.95

R. James.  
Soft cover, photos,  
207 pages.  
ISBN 978-1-57379-677-4



## NEWS BRIEFS

### 2013 Research Conference Call for Proposals

The Center for Early Education Evaluation at HighScope (CEEE) is making a call for proposals for its second annual conference for early childhood research and evaluation, to be held October 11, 2013.

Cosponsored by the Michigan Department of Education, this conference will again bring together local, regional, and national evaluators and researchers as well as policymakers and stakeholders who use evaluations for decision-making and advocacy.

The theme for the second annual conference is Working Together Toward a Common Goal: Using Research to Inform Practice and Practice to Inform Research. CEEE will be inviting experts to the conference who can speak to the issue of using data to inform teaching and instruction, as well as to advocate early childhood policies more effectively.

CEEE is currently seeking proposals for presentations by researchers, evaluators, and program administrators who can

address pertinent issues surrounding data-driven decision-making; evaluation/implementation challenges; lessons learned; program outcomes; and child and family outcomes. The specific focus interests are state prekindergarten/GSRP); Head Start/Early Head Start; family, friend, and neighbor care; home visitation; infant/child mental health; father engagement; and school transition.

To fill out a proposal form, please [click here](#).

Proposals are due by August 30, 2013. Notice of acceptance will be e-mailed to the primary presenter by September 16, 2013. For more information, contact Dr. Tomoko Wakabayashi at [twakabayashi@highscope.org](mailto:twakabayashi@highscope.org) or 734.485.2000, ext. 264.

### Save the Date for the HighScope Conference!

Save the date for HighScope's 2014 annual international conference. The conference will take place from May 7 – 9; preconference sessions will be held on May 5 and 6.

Over the coming months, keep an eye on the HighScope website, [highscope.org](http://highscope.org), for details.

[Click here for entire newsletter](#)