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Becoming a Strong Teaching Team: A Conversation With Two HighScope Teachers

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER, HIGHSCOPE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SPECIALIST AND DEMONSTRATION PRESCHOOL TEACHER, AND MOLLY JOURDEN, HIGHSCOPE DEMONSTRATION PRESCHOOL TEACHER

I remember the first time I was going to meet my new coteacher, Molly. We were invited to a “tea party” on the HighScope Demonstration Preschool playground, where we would meet the returning children and families — and each other. I was a little worried, asking myself, “What is she going to be like? Will she like me?” Will our teaching styles be compatible? And my biggest question of all was “How will she react to starting a new school year with a new coteacher who is five months pregnant?” I was excited to be pregnant but nervous that this would make adjusting to a new teaching team very difficult. I would later be relieved to find that Molly is friendly, funny, laid back, and supportive. But I didn’t know all of this right away. This article is our story about our first year of teaching together and becoming a strong, cohesive, and supportive teaching team. This narrative is interspersed with conversations taken from our discussions with each other about the dynamics of our evolving working relationship.

— Christine Snyder



Molly and Christine team up to support children in their outdoor play at the HighScope Demonstration Preschool.

Getting to Know Your Partner

Personality Types

First and foremost, it is important to gain an understanding of the personality of the person you are going to be working with. Finding out if someone is talkative or quiet, outgoing or shy, analytic or intuitive, spontaneous or deliberative, and so on, can set the stage for valuing your similarities and differences while helping to eliminate misunderstandings and assumptions.

CS: A teacher I worked with many years ago was a morning person, and I was not. We got along really well because I told her right up front that I needed a little bit of time to wake up. In general, I tend to be more talkative than Molly, and I worried that she would get annoyed with me about that, but in actuality, she's just a really good listener, and she'll speak up when she has something to say.

MJ: When I am first meeting and getting to know a person, I am very reserved and cautious. I prefer to have time to listen to and observe a person before I can begin to feel comfortable in his or her presence. With Christine being more outgoing and talkative than I am, she helped to fill any awkward silences while giving me the time to feel more comfortable in our relationship.

Thinking and talking about organization styles can be a major component in learning how to work together as a team. Teachers need to collaborate about how to organize (arrange) the classroom for the children, and also how to organize their shared adult work space. People vary from being very organized, to disorganized, or somewhere in the middle. In addition, methods of organization can be very different. (Think of the person who quips, "It may look messy but I know exactly where to find everything.") It can be helpful to discuss organization styles prior to making classroom changes and falling into classroom roles. Talking through where to put things, how to label storage spaces, and what materials to keep out and accessible can help both people gain an understanding of personal preferences as well as support the necessary task of making compromises.

MJ: In the past I have worked with individuals who have left trash on the desk and leftover snack items around the classroom. So it is such a relief to now be working with Christine, who has the same cleanliness standards for a classroom that I do.

CS: Molly and I have similar organization styles. We like things to be pretty tidy, but we also periodically leave things out. I tend to be the messier one and unintentionally leave things out. I usually clean up my work space once a week or so but Molly is good-natured about it and doesn't mind spending her extra time organizing our shared materials.

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Jennifer Burd
Joanne Tangorra
Marcella Fecteau Weiner
Editors

Nancy Brickman
Director of Publications

Sherry Barker
Membership Manager

Carrie Hernandez
Director of Marketing and Communication

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“Following the birth of my son, I had migraines and struggled with classroom lighting. Molly was very supportive with all my needs.”

– Christine Snyder



By taking time to talk about the day after children have gone home, members of the teaching team learn more about each other's teaching styles and preferences.

Jumping into a new situation without gaining some perspective on personality similarities and differences can lead to misunderstandings and hurt feelings. In addition, it is necessary to spend time sharing about one another's past experiences as well as preferences and pet peeves.

Preferences/Dislikes

Each person comes to a new situation with a set of preferences and things that annoy them. These can be related to something as serious as a medical condition or allergy to something as simple as room temperature or lighting. Discussing these issues up front, or as they come up, can help reduce tension and individual discomfort if needs aren't met. If they aren't confronted, these issues can fester and interfere with building a supportive team. Moreover, if children sense the tension, it can lead to disruptions in the smooth functioning of the classroom.

CS: I felt like a pretty needy coteacher this year (laughs)! I have an allergy to pineapple, and when I was pregnant, I was constantly hot. Following the birth of my son, I had migraines and struggled with classroom lighting. Molly was very supportive with all of my needs. She never made a snack that contained pineapple, she kept a sweater around for when she was cold and I was hot, and she tolerated having half of the lights off when I had migraines. However, Molly was only able to be supportive because I spoke up and explained what I needed and why. If I hadn't told her, I would've been really uncomfortable

“Many people keep what they perceive to be small issues to themselves.... Christine and I have worked hard to keep this from happening and to talk about our small issues when they arise.”
— Molly Jourden

and potentially — and unfairly — resentful if the lights had been too bright, if the room had been too warm, or if I hadn’t been able to eat the snack.

MJ: I love the point that Christine just made. Many people keep what they perceive to be small issues to themselves, because they don’t want to bother others with minor issues. Yet, over time, the small issues become more numerous, and resentment grows — creating a toxic relationship. Christine and I have worked hard to keep this from happening and to talk about our small issues when they arise.

Finding ways to accommodate each person’s individual preferences can make each person feel comfortable, respected, and valued. When each teacher’s needs are met, the teaching team is better able to focus attention and energy on the children and on other classroom tasks.

Teaching Styles

Each member of the teaching team brings his or her own style and set of skills to the table. Finding out about each other’s skills can be fun and can bring a sense of pleasure to the classroom. Being honest about strengths and weaknesses can help teaching team members find balance, learn from one another, and develop a well-rounded experience for the children.

CS: When Molly and I started working together, my least favorite part of the daily routine was large-group time. I was really hoping that this was her favorite, but it turned out it was her least favorite also. At first I was a little worried, but it ended up being a huge blessing. We were able to strengthen our skills and comfort level with large-group time at the same time and laugh at our mistakes or at activities that didn’t go the way we wanted them to. There was no real pressure because we had the same learning curve.

MJ: Large-group time also helped Christine and I strengthen our nonverbal communication skills quickly. We often exchanged glances, when things might not have been going as smoothly as planned; hand signals, about when to end an activity or to indicate a child needing assistance; and smiles, when activities went as we envisioned.

“Molly and I had very different backgrounds to blend.... but because we were aware of them, we remembered to talk about them and consult each other on decisions.”
– Christine Snyder

CS: Molly and I noticed one difference in our teaching styles that related to how I love to sing. I love to sing so much that I never mind getting us started or taking the lead. Molly started singing more as the year went on, and she became more comfortable with it. She told me up front that she didn't really like singing, so I never put any pressure on her to do it.



When teachers talk together about their strengths, weaknesses, teaching styles, and preferences, they are able to coordinate their efforts during each part of the day.

MJ: I am very thankful for Christine's support in my lack of confidence with singing. Her eagerness to help and take the lead allowed me to feel more comfortable with this task, especially when we were being observed by our many visitors at the Demonstration Preschool.

Previous Experiences

Just as each person has individual teaching styles, we also bring to the table a variety of previous experiences that contribute to our knowledge base, skill set, and classroom habits. Sharing about previous experiences can help in getting to know one another, identifying strengths, and assigning tasks based on experiences. Asking each other questions and sharing our own experiences can help blend skills and emphasize differences in a beneficial way. It has been helpful for us to consider each of our varying experiences with specific age groups, children with special needs, diverse families, administrative and classroom roles, and teaching models.

CS: Molly and I had very different backgrounds to blend. She was used to being the lead teacher in a classroom with an assistant, and I was used to team teaching. I had spent more of my professional years as an administrator and Molly had spent more years as a classroom teacher. Each of these differences required some adjusting to, but because we were aware of them, we remembered to talk about them and consult each other on decisions. I tried to ask Molly often how she had divided up tasks with her assistant teacher. We compared experiences and made decisions based on our respective strengths and preferences, and, above all, what would best support the children.

“Christine offered a lot of insight during the planning process about the learning styles and developmental abilities of our three-year-olds. Conversely, I was able to offer the same during the planning process for our four-year-olds.”

– Molly Jourden

MJ: In addition, Christine had more experience with children aged 0–3, and most of my experience was working with four-year-olds. This past school year was my first time working with three-year-olds — I was very nervous when I found out that the classroom would be made up mostly of three-year-olds. Christine offered a lot of insight during the planning process about the learning styles and developmental abilities of our three-year-olds. Conversely, I was able to offer the same during the planning process for our four-year-olds.

Keeping the Partnership Working

Talking Through Classroom Issues

Working well as a team goes far beyond getting to know each other and respecting each other’s differences. Periodic classroom issues will arise that require sharing ideas, collaborating, and making adjustments to ensure that each member of the team feels supported. Teachers can support one another by sharing the less-than-desirable jobs, taking turns in stressful situations, and trusting the other person to do his or her part. This requires that teachers be able to read one another’s body language for signs of stress, but it also requires that each person is honest and up-front about when they are starting to feel stressed.

CS: My small group is located at the table in the art area. In the fall, art was very popular, and I would find that I spent all of work time in the art area every single day, supporting children in learning how to use the paint pumps and showing them where to find the supplies they needed in order to clean up spills. After a few weeks, I was burned out but also feeling like I wanted to experience other areas of the room and interact with the children using dif-



Christine talks with a child about how she is using materials and imitates the child’s actions.

“Molly and I had to be honest with each other when we needed a break. After a while, the children even saw the benefit of having a fresh perspective and would sometimes request that the other teacher step in.”

– Christine Snyder

ferent materials. When I expressed how I was feeling, Molly was very willing to switch with me and hadn't even realized I had been feeling that way.

MJ: While Christine felt trapped in the art area, I felt the same way about the block area. I did not have as messy of an area to feel stuck in as Christine, but I realized that I was interacting with the same students on a daily basis. It was helpful for us to switch the areas we were in because we were working with different children and soon found that, since we switched where we worked typically, so did the children, who explored more areas of the classroom.

Many classroom issues are common or universal in preschool programs, but they require the same level of attention each time they come up. Teachers need to talk through how to rearrange the room, how to set limits for children, how to support specific children's development, and how to share responsibilities in the classroom. Even though teachers have different personalities and working styles, it is important for the children's development that adults be consistent with each other when it comes to carrying out classroom policies and implementing the curriculum.



Molly observes and listens to children as they explore rocks and shells.

“It was important for the children to see that, even though Christine and I may have different ideas, we both were going to follow the same steps when helping to solve conflicts.”

– Molly Jourden

Using the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool can help ensure that teachers and administrators are on the same page with program expectations and guidelines. (For more information, go to highscope.org and click on the assessment tab.)

MJ: Following the steps of conflict resolution to completion can be taxing when working with children who are new to the process. It was very helpful when Christine and I were able to work together to complete the process with children who were involved in a conflict. It was important for the children to see that, even though Christine and I may have different ideas, we both were going to follow the same steps when helping to solve conflicts.

CS: In preschool classrooms, children often are still learning many social skills, such as how to solve problems with each another. This can require varying levels of teacher support; and with some children, it can require seemingly constant support. Molly and I had to be honest with each other when we needed a break. After a while, the children even saw the benefit of having a fresh perspective and would sometimes request that the other teacher step in.

Accommodations

Many people have some kind of limitation or special circumstance from time to time that requires understanding and support. Whether it is a headache, an injury, or a family situation, we can each benefit from working with someone who cares enough about us to make adjustments for our circumstance. Recognizing these limitations and making accommodations for our team member is crucial to maintaining a positive working relationship, and also sets a caring and compassionate example for the children.

CS: As I mentioned before, Molly had the ultimate challenge, as I was five months pregnant with my first child when we started working together. She was really flexible about my doctor appointments, physical limitations, and personal needs (I always had to have a snack during our teacher planning; I couldn't make it all the way until lunch!). If Molly hadn't been so understanding of my temporary needs, the first half of the year would have been really uncomfortable. I would have felt like a constant inconvenience, and she would've spent the whole time feeling resentful that she had to work with a teacher who wasn't able to lift things or go long stretches of time without snacks and restroom breaks.



Molly Jourden is a teacher at the HighScope Demonstration Preschool. She has been working with young children for the past eight years and enjoys watching her young students learn and grow throughout the year. In her free time, she enjoys reading, dancing, traveling, and spending time with her husband.

MJ: I am glad that I set the stage for flexibility and accommodations so well! Recently finding out about my pregnancy, we will get to switch roles this school year. I have always felt that, ideally, a relationship would be a 50/50 division of responsibilities; but, in reality, the relationship rarely can exist in this fashion. Sometimes one partner is able to give more than his/her half, and other times that partner might need to take more than his/her half. The realization that the division of responsibilities will equal out over longer periods of time, rather than on a day-to-day basis, will lead to a successful partnership.

It can be helpful to remember that, while we have work expectations and professional personas, we have other needs and challenges outside of work; and when our needs are taken into account, we are better able to perform and meet professional work expectations.

Having Fun

Last — but not least important — teaching teams need to find a way to have fun together! Working with children gives us a lot to smile at and be happy about. Sharing stories about silly things kids say or do can open a door to laughter and discovering one another's sense of humor. Our moods easily carry over to children, so when we share a laugh and are playful with each other, we are more likely to be playful with the children as well.

MJ: My small group loved to read the same book repeatedly at snack time. Christine became very amused at the many different ways I could read the same book. As soon as the children left my table to pick out the book, Christine and I would glance at each other and watch to see if a new book was chosen. The glance we exchanged allowed this to be a fun and humorous experience instead of a frustrating one for me. When rotating the books in the classroom, we always made sure to say good-bye to my group's favorite book.



Christine and Molly enjoy time to walk and talk together outside the preschool day.



Christine Snyder is a HighScope Early Childhood Specialist as well as a teacher in the HighScope Demonstration Preschool Classroom. She has worked with young children for 15 years in a variety of settings. She enjoys the ways in which children are genuine, playful, and creative. Christine holds a master's degree in early childhood education from Eastern Michigan University. In her free time, she enjoys reading, making jewelry, traveling, and being outdoors.

CS: Molly and I quickly discovered that we share a favorite sitcom. During teacher planning times or other times away from the children, we'd find ourselves quoting and laughing about that show. Not everyone is going to have this same kind of thing to laugh at, but I think figuring out our respective senses of humor really helped us connect as a team. We both like to laugh a lot and we have a lot of fun together.

Having fun together doesn't just mean laughing and joking around. It might mean doing things together that you enjoy, making thoughtful gestures, or taking part in shared hobbies. This could be eating lunch together, listening to the same kind of music during time away from children, planning staff bonding events based on common hobbies, or decorating the break room based on shared interests.

CS: Molly figured out quickly that I have a sweet tooth! She could easily brighten my day by surprising me with a doughnut when she stopped to buy snacks for the preschool on the way to work.

MJ: Christine is gifted with remembering small details. She always followed up on the details I shared with her, many times when I forgot about them myself. It really showed that she cared and that she had listened to what we had talked about. For example, while my husband and I were house hunting, we had a lot of appointments to visit houses, and Christine always remembered when those were and asked how they went. She even remembered little features about houses that were really important to us.

Small acts of kindness or thoughtfulness can show that you understand and recognize your teammate as an individual.

Conclusion

Communication is essential! We must value one another as professionals and partners in establishing an enjoyable and successful work environment. This means being open with our ideas, needs, and feelings, but also being equally open to learning about and respecting the people we work with. Working effectively and positively as a team isn't luck or magic — it requires effort and commitment from everyone involved, but the reward is worth it. Working with children is fun, and our adult relationships at work can be fun too.

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CLASSROOM HINTS

Establishing Cohesion in a New Teaching Team

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER AND MOLLY JOURDEN

There's no question that working with a new team can be exciting but also challenging at times. Learning how to communicate, share ideas, and provide one another with support can take some practice and troubleshooting. When both people have a commitment to establishing a professional relationship and providing quality care for young children, a positive teaching team can flourish. The following ideas can help create a supportive, positive teaching team within a classroom setting.



Use the Group Agreement Approach

Group agreements can be used in a variety of ways. It is initially helpful to create a general group agreement when a new team starts working together, to establish an agreed-upon way for members to interact and communicate with one another. This can be posted and referred to over time in meetings and informal conversations. Group agreements can also be used to troubleshoot situations in the classroom. For example, when an issue arises in the classroom regarding

behavior or limit setting, establishing a group agreement regarding the issue can help ensure that each member of the teaching team has an opportunity to discuss his or her observations and concerns and support consistency in how limits will be set and how children will be supported in the classroom.

Last winter while getting children ready to go outside, we had to figure out how to make sure each teacher was supported – not having too many children outside alone while the other teacher was inside helping the last few children get ready. Likewise, we made sure that not too many children were left inside still needing support. We worked out an agreement to be sure we were staying within state required ratios as well as supporting children in completing tasks they were capable of and encouraging children to help one another.

Establish a Group Agreement

A group agreement is a statement of shared principles that the members generate together and agree to abide by. Whether you are working in a small team or a large team, it is helpful to agree about how you want to work together. This creates your common ground and your shared vision for working as a team. All members will benefit from each person feeling his or her ideas are valuable, having a chance to contribute, and participating in a discussion that models respect and inclusion. In addition, when people contribute, they are more likely to be committed to the vision and believe in the goal. Having a shared vision and common goal ensures the group is moving forward on the same path.

Create a Child-Focused Classroom

Being an early childhood teacher or caregiver is a profession with a sensitive nature. We cater to children's feelings, biological needs, and educational growth and development. Every time we make a decision in the classroom we should be asking ourselves, "How will this impact the children? Is the idea we are considering in their best interest?"

Focusing on the needs of the children makes decision making less personal and more neutral. Keeping children at the center of our conversations reminds us why we are here: for the children. Particularly when differences or challenges arise in the classroom, consider approaching the situation in relation to the impact on the children. For example, if you differ on where or how to set a limit,

ask yourselves, “How can we guarantee safety while not unduly restricting children’s exploration and expression?” When you reach a decision, also commit to sharing your observations of its impact in the classroom. Revise your idea if you see that it is not working in the children’s best interests.



Set a Positive Tone in the Learning Environment

Emotions, moods, and tones spread easily and quickly through groups, so establishing a positive tone in the environment is essential to making sure the experience of children, parents, and staff is an enjoyable one. As teachers, our mindset has a tremendous impact on our coworkers and the children and families we serve. It is easy to allow stresses from our personal lives to follow us to the workplace. When you feel this happening to you (or see it happening to a coworker), you can acknowledge the stress by taking a few minutes with a coworker after classroom time to talk (listening to and validating the other person’s feelings without judging them); enjoying a favorite food or beverage; listening to a favorite song; writing in a journal; or simply sitting, breathing deeply, and relaxing for several minutes. By working to reduce or eliminate the stresses we bring to the workplace, we are better able to create a positive tone in the classroom.

Identify and Focus on Individual Strengths

Acknowledging strengths, assigning tasks based on skill competence, and recognizing the abilities of individuals contributes to a positive atmosphere. Teachers are more likely to perform at a high level when their work and strengths are recognized and valued. In addition, each person feels uniquely valued and is more likely to acknowledge how other people add value to the work environment as well. A focus on individual strengths allows partnering teachers to complement each other’s skill sets. An awareness of personal attributes allows for more supportive teaching relationships, and it allows team members to learn from the strengths of others.

At the same time that you make use of team members’ strengths, be open to areas in which they want to grow, and find ways that you can support one another as you each explore and develop new abilities. (For example, in the lead article, see how Molly felt supported by Christine as Molly developed her confidence singing with the children.)

Share Responsibilities

Being part of a team requires an understanding that we each make contributions toward achieving the team goal. We each have different roles within a team, and sometimes those roles change. Successful teams have leaders, visionaries, organizers, supporters, and doers. Sharing the lead, and sharing the responsibility for putting ideas into action, is all a part of teamwork. Understanding what role we play, and valuing the roles of others, can help maintain balance in sharing responsibilities. In dividing responsibilities, it can be helpful to again focus conversations on how all roles and actions are important and impact the children. For example, when assigning the task of washing dishes in a center, it might be helpful to say, “It’s important that the dishes be brought to the kitchen by one o’clock to be cleaned so the children have them for afternoon snack.” Bringing our focus back to the needs of the children reminds us that all of our actions contribute to the children’s experience.

Conclusion

Learning to work successfully as part of a new team can take time. Maintaining a successful team requires ongoing intentional efforts to value one another and a commitment to working toward the shared vision. By using a group agreement, keeping things child-focused, approaching situations with a positive attitude, and recognizing each person's strengths, responsibilities are shared in a productive and cohesive manner.

Tips for Creating a Cohesive Teaching Team

- Establish and use a group agreement
- Create a child-focused classroom
- Set a positive tone in the learning environment
- Identify and focus on individual strengths
- Share responsibilities



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TRAINER-TO-TRAINER

Working Together as a Team

BY MOLLY JOURDEN AND CHRISTINE SNYDER

What's the best way of working in the preschool classroom? Working together as a team! In this 90-minute workshop, participants will (1) explore benefits of and strategies for developing strong, positive working relationships with one another; and (2) engage in a series of activities to help recognize one another's strengths, set a positive classroom tone, establish a child-focused classroom, and share classroom responsibilities.

What You'll Need: Chart paper, note cards, 5 nonhelium inflated balloons, dominoes (at least 20 for each group of four participants), sticky notes, markers, a Hula Hoop, and a copy of this issue's Classroom Hints article for each participant.

Opening Activity

Creating our Dream Team (20 minutes)

1. Have participants start by jotting down on a note card a challenge they are currently facing in regard to working as a team in their classroom or program. Let them know they can set this aside for later.
2. Instruct participants to have a conversation at their tables about groups they have worked in that were successful or that they looked forward to being a part of. Encourage each participant to share something in their small groups and let the table groups know that they will be sharing some ideas as a large group.
3. After the table groups have had some time to discuss, bring the whole group back together and generate a list of ideas from the large group. This list will be the overall group's agreement for how to interact as a teaching team or center staff team. Allow individual participants to add ideas to this list or to discuss any ideas that have been added. People might benefit from clarification or discussion about what a particular idea means.



Central Ideas and Practice

Creating a cohesive Team Through Engaging in Interactive Activities (60 minutes)

4. *Up, up and away!* (7 minutes; discussion in part 5 — 5 minutes). Blow up a balloon and, before tossing it into the air, let the group know that all participants are responsible for making sure the balloon stays off the ground. Allow the balloon to circulate around the room for a minute or two and then add in a second, third, and fourth balloon. Allow participants to work together to keep the balloons in the air for three to four minutes; then, gather the balloons back up. Have participants share their ideas about what they needed to do to keep the balloons off the ground and what happened if someone wasn't paying attention.
5. Refer participants to the "Creating a Child-Focused Classroom" section of this issue's Classroom Hints article handout. Have them discuss how this concept relates to the balloon activity. Point out that the similarities between the balloon activity and being a part of a teaching team is having a shared mission as well as trust in one another. Comment on how each person — regardless of his or her personal interests, stresses, strengths, etc. — was focused on keeping the balloon off the ground.
6. *A domino effect* (10 minutes; discussion in parts 7, 8, and 9 — 5 minutes). Have participants get back into table groups. Provide each table with a set of dominoes, and have all the participants add dominoes to make a line, using all the dominoes (be sure they are lining the dominoes up close enough that they knock each other over when tipped). Have each group choose one end to start with for knocking the line of dominoes over, which they will do by gently pushing the "lead" domino over. After knocking the dominoes over, have group participants work together to make a new design or path with the dominoes and knock them over. Participants will continue making new designs and knocking them over with the "lead" domino for the next few minutes.

7. After the domino activity, have groups consider the following:
 - Does it make a difference what the lead domino looks like? Or how many dots it has? Would the dominoes still fall over?
 - Would it make a difference if the domino had a powerful word on it such as “happy” or “angry”?
8. Have participants read the “Setting the Tone” section of the Classroom Hints article handout. Discuss as a large group how this section relates to the domino activity.
9. Acknowledge parallels between occurrences in the activity and characteristics of teaching teams, such as the following: gaps between dominoes — a disconnected team; variation in dot pattern not affecting the dominoes’ falling — regardless of team organization, emotional energies travel fast; everyone contributing to standing the dominoes up but realizing it only takes one person to knock them all down — as when one person comes to work upset or in a bad mood and that negativity quickly spreads around the center, with all feeling it.
10. *I got your back* (10 minutes; discussion in parts 11 and 12 — 5 minutes). Have participants write on a sticky note one thing they are good at and place the sticky note somewhere on their body. Next, have each person write down a strength of another person on a sticky note and place it on that person’s body. Participants will continue circulating around the room, adding sticky notes listing the strengths of others to their bodies.
 - After people have finished writing and posting sticky notes, circulate around the room, reading out loud the strengths of others on the sticky notes.
 - As a whole group, consider and discuss how each other’s strengths are similar or complimentary and how they benefit the teaching team.
11. Have participants read the “Understanding Strengths” section of the Classroom Hints article handout. Discuss as a whole group how this section relates to the sticky-note activity.
12. Point out that this activity contributes to a positive atmosphere by helping participants acknowledge how each person adds value to the work environment, learn about one another’s complimentary skill sets, gain an understanding of how others appreciate each person’s contributions, and learn how awareness of one another’s personal attributes allows for more supportive teaching relationships and allows members to learn from the strengths of others.
13. *Hoopla!* (15 minutes; discussion parts 14–17 — 5 minutes). Have the group create a circle, holding hands. Add a Hula Hoop to the human circle by momentarily separating one set of hands, putting the hoop over someone’s arm, and rejoining the hands. Tell the group that they will be moving this hoop all the way around the human circle without ever letting go of anyone’s hand, and let them get started!
14. Following the activity, ask participants to share how this activity felt for them. What did they have to do to get the Hula Hoop over their bodies? What was each person’s role when someone else was trying to get through?
15. Have participants read the “Shared Responsibilities” section of the Classroom Hints article handout. Discuss as a large group how this section relates to the Hula Hoop activity.
16. Point out that, in group situations, we all play vital roles (visionaries, organizers, worker bees, supporters, etc.), and that sometimes the role changes.
17. Summarize the training activities by pointing out that by using a group agreement, keeping things child-focused, approaching situations with a positive attitude, and recognizing each person’s strengths, responsibilities are shared in a productive and cohesive manner.

Application Activity

Identifying strategies to use in your own programs (5 minutes)

18. Have participants retrieve the note card they wrote on earlier. Have them respond to the following questions:
 - What strategies from today’s training can help resolve the challenge you’ve listed?
 - What additional support might you need, and who can you rely on to provide that support?

Implementation Plan

Insights and Strategies (5 minutes)

19. Have participants respond to the following on a piece of blank paper:
 - From today's training, what kind of insights have you gained about the people you work with or about yourself as a team member?
 - Identify one strategy you would like to focus on in your classroom.
 - How do you feel this strategy will strengthen or benefit your teaching team?



ASK US

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER, MOLLY JOURDEN, AND ANN S. EPSTEIN

At my center I recently hired several new teachers. These teachers went through orientation and training together. During this time I saw the newly hired teachers quickly bond with one another by talking about classroom ideas, past work experiences, and their personal lives. Now that these teachers are working full-time in the center, I have not seen this same bonding occur between them and the veteran teachers. The veteran and newly hired teachers rarely speak to one another (even in the classroom) and have started to gossip and form cliques. Teachers have begun coming to me airing their frustrations about other teachers. I am worried about how these problems will transfer over into the classroom and affect the children. How can I get all my teachers to get along?

— Center Director

An important part of working as a team is learning how to effectively communicate with one another despite differences in personal interests, ideas, and individual teaching styles. Teaching partnerships are just like any other relationship; they need time and practice to develop supportive, reciprocal interactions. In a teaching team, it can be helpful to find a common starting point by meeting and discussing common goals for the children. Helping teachers see that they are on the same page — with the goal of providing quality care for children — can give them a strong and positive basis for discussing and making classroom decisions.

Support teachers in identifying their own strengths and in recognizing how the strengths of others contribute to reaching their common vision of providing a high-quality learning experience for children. Model and guide teachers through keeping conversations child-focused. That is, when making any classroom decision, keep the conversation centered on the needs of the children and the impact the decision will have on the classroom environment and the children's experience in care. It might also be helpful to meet with individuals — remember to keep these conversations child-focused too. Support teachers in modeling

positive interactions with other adults so children have positive examples from which to develop their own social interaction skills.

Finally, use your observations of the positive bonds that have developed among the new teachers to create similar connections between veterans and new hires. At the next staff meeting or inservice training session, plan activities in which old and new teachers work together, in pairs or small groups, and get to know one another as they discuss a staffing or curriculum issue. Develop a group agreement (see Classroom Hints) about how teachers should respect one another and speak openly about their concerns without gossiping or complaining behind closed doors.



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NEWS BRIEFS

A Career to Remember

Larry Schweinhart retired from the presidency of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation on October 31. A tireless advocate for high-quality preschool programs, Schweinhart has been an early childhood program researcher for 38 years and is a speaker for policymakers and educators throughout the United States and around the world.

Schweinhart began his work with HighScope in 1975. He became director of HighScope's Center for the Study of Public Policies for Young Children in 1979 and chair of its research division in 1989. He has served as president of HighScope since 2003. Schweinhart has been deeply involved in the HighScope Perry Preschool Study, the landmark study establishing the great human and financial potential of high-quality early childhood programs. The Perry Study was initiated by HighScope founder David P. Weikart in 1962 and was co-directed by Weikart and Schweinhart starting in 1979. Schweinhart took over as principal investigator in the study after Weikart's retirement in 2000.

The Perry Preschool Study — the best known of HighScope's research efforts — examines the lives of 123 people born in poverty who were at high risk of failing in school. From 1962 to 1967, at ages 3 and 4, the study participants were randomly divided into a program group that received a high-quality preschool program that used HighScope's active learning curriculum and a comparison group that received no preschool program. In the study's most recent phase at age 40, 97 percent of the study participants still living were interviewed. Additional data were gathered from their school, social services, and arrest records.

The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, a better employment rate, and a lower arrest rate than adults who did not have preschool and that the girls with preschool had a higher high school graduation rate. "Most important, this study shows an extraordinary return on investment in high-quality preschools, over seven times as great as the amount originally invested," said Schweinhart. This return on investment can be achieved today, with current preschool programs, but "to get what we got, you've got to do what we did," explained Schweinhart. This means offering children a preschool



Dr. Larry Schweinhart

program that has certified and/or well-supervised teachers who use the HighScope Curriculum or another curriculum of proven effectiveness, systematically engages parents, and stays on track by regularly assessing program implementation and children's development. In addition to the Perry Preschool Study, Schweinhart has directed Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program Evaluation, HighScope's Head Start Quality Research Center, and the development and validation of the Child Observation Record. Schweinhart received his PhD in education from Indiana University in 1975.

As Larry Schweinhart's HighScope presidency comes to an end, his commitment to early childhood continues. As the foundation's newly appointed president emeritus, Schweinhart will continue to lead several research projects and meet with decision makers to continue his advocacy of high-quality, active learning preschool programs.

Schweinhart Welcomes New HighScope President

Dear HighScope friends,

I am pleased to welcome Dr.

Cheryl Polk as HighScope's new president, succeeding me. Dr. Polk joins HighScope with a long record of success in translating research knowledge about the first five years of life into programs that address the continuum of young children's needs,

from high-quality child care to mental health consultation and treatment. I know she will build on HighScope's strong tradition of commitment to highly effective early childhood programs that support young children's active learning and development. I trust that she will bring her own perspective to HighScope's work and challenge the organization to new achievements. She raises HighScope's potential to lift lives through education to new heights.

— Larry Schweinhart



Dr. Cheryl Polk

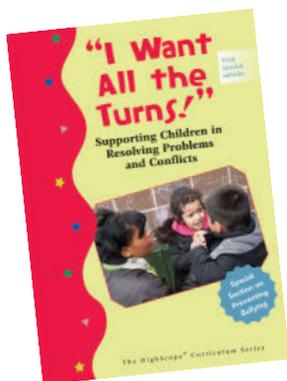
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NEWS BRIEFS CONT.**Introducing New COR Advantage!**

HighScope has announced the release of the new COR Advantage, the latest online version of the Child Observation Record (COR), which seamlessly integrates child assessment from birth through kindergarten. COR Advantage is aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, Common Core Standards for kindergarten, state early learning standards, and the standards of national organizations in content areas such as literacy, mathematics, and science. It is integrated with the HighScope Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) at all age levels, easily scored, research-based, and readily shared through reports generated for administrators, funders, and parents. To learn more about the instrument's features, validity, and reliability, and how to use it in the classroom, visit coradvantage.org.

**Now Available on DVD — “I Want All the Turns!” Supporting Children in Resolving Problems and Conflicts**

This three-part DVD program shows unstaged examples of preschoolers who are developing essential communication, empathy, and negotiating skills. The problem-solving process they are learning — with their teachers' guidance and support — fosters social, language, and cognitive abilities they will use throughout their lives. The diverse settings shown include two Head Start programs, the HighScope Demonstration Preschool, and a nonpublic school serving children with disabilities. The first section of the program shows teachers using basic HighScope Curriculum strategies to create an environment that nurtures children's problem solving. The second section illustrates six steps or strategies that make up HighScope's conflict resolution process for children. The third section offers strategies teachers can use now to prevent children from developing bullying behavior patterns in later years. Visit the HighScope online store for purchasing information. Introductory price available until December 23, 2013.

**HighScope at NAEYC Annual Conference**

HighScope will be participating in the 2013 annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in a number of ways. The NAEYC conference will take place November 20–23 in Washington, DC. HighScope is a Gold Sponsor for the conference, and will sponsor a special event during the conference called "A Day on Capitol Hill," which will provide NAEYC members a unique opportunity to meet with their United States senators. Registration for this event is required (deadline is November 4, 2013), and there is a fee of \$15. Participants are also required to attend the pre-visit briefing from 8:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m. at the Washington, DC, Convention Center. Buses will depart for US Senate visits immediately following the briefing. For more information, visit NAEYC's website or [click here](#) to register for the event.

HighScope will also be exhibiting at the conference: visit us in booth 1826, located next to our partner Discount School Supply, for a free demo of COR Advantage, the latest online version of the Child Observation Record (COR), and for a chance to win prizes and HighScope resources.



Additionally, HighScope staff will be presenting the following sessions at the conference:

- **Moving With a Purpose: Supporting Physical Development in the Preschool**, presented by Christine Snyder on Thursday, November 21, from 8:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. in the Washington Convention Ctr.: Room 150A
- **Early Math: From a Chance Occurrence to an Intentional Activity**, presented by Shannon Lockhart on Friday, November 22, from 8:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. in the Washington Convention Ctr.: Room 150A
- **Young Citizens in the Classroom: Social Studies in Today's Preschool**, presented by Christine Snyder on Friday, November 22, from 10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. in the Washington Convention Ctr.: Room 146B
- **Scaffolding Math Learning**, presented by Beth Marshall on Friday, November 22, from 1:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m. in the Renaissance Hotel (downtown), West A
- **Geometry: Moving Beyond Circles and Squares**, presented by Beth Marshall on Saturday, November 23, from 8:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. in the Renaissance Hotel (downtown), West A

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NEWS BRIEFS CONT.

- **Preliminary Findings From the 2012 Child Observation Record Validation Study: Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications**, presented by Tomoko Wakabayashi, Zongping Xiang, Jill Claxton, and Everett Smith on Saturday, November 23, from 8:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. in the Washington Convention Center: Room 158AB

2014 HighScope International Conference Call for Proposals

The 2014 HighScope International Conference will again be held at the Ypsilanti Marriott in Michigan. The conference will take place from May 7–9; preconference sessions will be held on May 5 and 6. We are currently seeking proposals for presentations by certified trainers, field consultants, and practitioners who want to share information about best practices in early childhood education. Wednesday and Thursday sessions are 90-minutes long while Friday sessions are three hours in length. We encourage you to submit proposals for more than one session — lead presenters of two or more sessions will have their registration fees waived! To fill out a proposal form, please [click here](#). Proposals are due by January 6, 2014. Notice of acceptance will be e-mailed to the primary presenter by March 3, 2014. For more information, please contact Marianne McDonnell at mmcdonnell@highscope.org or 734.485.2000, ext. 228.

CEEE at HighScope Holds Second Annual Conference

Building on the success of its inaugural Conference of Early Childhood Research and Evaluation last fall, the Center for Early Education Evaluation (CEEE) at HighScope held its second annual research and evaluation conference in Ypsilanti on October 11, 2013. Cosponsored by the Michigan Department of Education, the theme of the conference was “Working Together Toward a Common Goal: Using Research to Inform Practice and Practice to Inform Research.” This theme, which was chosen with input from members of the CEEE’s advisory panel, fit well with the goal of the conference to bring together local, regional, and national evaluators and researchers, as well as policymakers and stakeholders who use evaluations for decision making and advocacy. Speakers at the event included Betina Jean-Louis, PhD, director of evaluation at the Harlem Children’s Zone, New York City; Michael L. López, PhD, principal associate at Abt Associates, Bethesda, MD; Kurt Metzger, director of Data Driven Detroit, Detroit, MI; Milagros Nores, PhD, associate director of research at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), New Brunswick, NJ; Jason Sachs, PhD, director of early childhood education for the Boston Public Schools; and Deborah Stipek, PhD, professor of education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. The CEEE’s third annual conference is scheduled for October 3, 2014. We hope to see you there!

