

## An introduction to the High/Scope approach

### **What is High/Scope?**

High/Scope is a way of working with children based on the idea that children learn best from active learning experiences which they plan and carry out themselves. In this way children learn that they are capable, able to make decisions and solve problems about activities which are personally meaningful to them.

### **Where did it begin?**

High/Scope began 30 years ago in an area of Michigan, USA, called Ypsilanti where the High/scope Educational Research Foundation is based. Research shows that the young children who used the High/Scope approach in the early year's school in Ypsilanti developed, as they grew older, very positive attitudes to education, work, personal relationships and society.

High/Scope is now used in over twenty countries throughout the world. It is a registered charity and is used in Education, Social Services, Private and Voluntary caring settings. Adults working in early years settings which use the High/Scope programme should all have special training with a High/Scope trainer.

### **Why is it so widely used?**

Everyone is unique, we all develop at a different pace, have different interests, learn in different ways and have different experiences. This is particularly true of children and High/Scope recognises these differences, starts with what the child CAN do and encourages children from a very early age to make choices and decisions for themselves and be responsible within their own world. High/Scope also recognises that children need to be Active Learners.

### **What do we mean by Active Learning?**

Young children need to be active, and they base all their growing knowledge, understanding and skills on real experiences by using real materials and through sharing their discoveries with others, not by sitting at a desk and learning things off by heart, doing repetitive paper and pencil work or attempting to do activities which are appropriate only for older children. Children, in their first five years of life, will learn more than they will ever learn again and much of this learning will occur

through their play, these learning experiences need to be supported in an appropriate way.

High/Scope suggests the following ingredients for the young child's Active Learning:-

### **Materials**

Having a variety of interesting materials which are always available and easy to find

### **Manipulation**

This means that children are free to handle and explore the materials in many different ways.

### **Choice**

Research tells us that children need early experiences in practising this important life skill. They need opportunities to make choices about what materials they want to use, what activities they are interested in and would like to do.

### **Language**

Children need to be allowed to choose their own words and express themselves in their own way. It is through practice and other children's and adult's examples as communicators that children will become fluent in language.

### **Support from Adults**

The role of the adult is to encourage children's efforts, talk with them, join in with their play, help them to solve their own problems and sometimes introduce new experiences.

### **Why Does The Learning Setting Have To Be Organised In a Certain Way?**

High/Scope believes that children learn best in a play environment which is stimulating but ordered. In early years settings the room is organised into interest areas which are easily recognised by the children and are stocked with materials which are clearly labelled and sorted so that children know where everything is and can get out, and put away, materials for themselves. This also helps children to begin what they have planned to do independently quickly and efficiently.

At home children can also have a special place where their toys and books are kept and can be sorted into labelled containers to which they have easy access so that they can play independently.

### Why is a Daily Routine Important?

Everyone uses some kind of routine at least some of the time, doing certain things at certain times helps us to know where we are. A predictable routine helps children to feel secure and so they are able to learn with confidence. A routine also helps them to relate to time and sequence. Knowing what is happening next is important for children, it helps them to feel secure, helps them to learn about the passage of time and to remember things that are past.

### In the early years setting each day the children:-

**PLAN** what they would like to do. Children begin by planning in a simple way, as they gain experience of planning they will talk about what they want to do, what they will use, where they will do the activity, possibly with whom they will do it and what they hope to achieve. Planning will be supported by an adult who will ask appropriate questions and give encouragement. Planning is a complex and valuable skill, when children become familiar with the techniques of planning they will use them throughout their lives, at the early stage it encourages them to think before acting.

**DO** whatever play activities they have planned using all the materials available to them. The role of the adult at this time is to observe the learning which happens naturally and to share in it, supporting children by playing with materials etc.

**TIDY UP TIME**, tidying away the materials they have been using is an important learning experience for children, it develops their sense of ownership of, and responsibility for, looking after their environment. Tidying also develops mathematical understanding and ability to co-operate with others.

**REVIEW** their activities by telling (or showing in a variety of ways) other children and adults about what they have done. In an early years setting this will usually happen with the adult and group of children with whom they did their planning. At home children may talk about what they have done with family and friends.

Other parts of the High/Scope Daily Routine in early years settings include:-

### **Circle Time**

This is the time when all the adults and children meet together to share songs and rhymes.

### **Small Group Time**

In early years settings the High/Scope Daily Routine also includes activities which are initiated by adults. The children will work in groups with carefully selected materials which will help them to develop learning 'Key Experiences'.

### **The Long Term Aims of the High/Scope Approach**

Everyone wants what is best for their child. High/Scope has long term aims which adults in the early years setting will be, in partnership with parents, working to achieve.

1. Develop each child's ability to make choices and decisions about what to do and how to do it, using their own time and energy effectively.
2. Develop each child's self discipline and ability to identify, pursue and complete self chosen goals and tasks with originality and responsibility.
3. Develop each child's ability to work with other children and adults in group planning, co-operative efforts, and with shared leadership, and to be open to knowledge and other people's viewpoints.
4. Develop each child's knowledge, skills and understanding in all curriculum areas.
5. Develop each child's ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings and communicate them of others.
6. Develop each child's ability to understand other's spoken, written, dramatic and graphic representations.
7. Develop each child's ability to apply their reasoning abilities to a wide range of situations using a wide variety of materials.
8. Develop each child's positive 'learning dispositions' - initiative, responsibility, curiosity, independence, trust and confidence.