

Reading Assignment

Finding Time for Teacher Planning



Finding Time for Teacher Planning

By Christine Snyder

One of the biggest challenges of working in teaching teams in early childcare settings is finding time to meet and plan daily. This is an important aspect of high-quality programming as it allows teachers to compare observations of children, create meaningful plans for the following day, and complete authentic ongoing child assessment such as HighScope's COR Advantage. The emphasis on daily planning is important as children develop quickly and their interests change frequently. Children's interests and development are a key factor in how we create meaningful plans for each day.

While teachers agree that this time is important and valuable they are often faced with hurdles and lim-

itations regarding time, extra support staff, technology, and resources for creating collaborative plans quickly that are also meaningful to the children. In addition, time allotted for classroom responsibilities such as teacher planning is often shared with calling parents, writing daily notes, documenting children's bodily care routines, cleaning materials and the classroom, program meetings, and other necessary tasks. Strategizing to overcome these hurdles is essential in ensuring that teachers have ample time to create meaningful lesson plans for their children.

As a former classroom teacher and center director supporting multiple teaching teams, I have found the following strategies to be effective in helping teachers complete meaningful plans on a daily basis:

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- **Set aside time daily.** This may seem obvious but a key factor in making this work is creating a habit that doesn't allow it to fall to the wayside. Protecting this time as you would meeting time or professional development time can help make sure this remains a regular part of each day.
- **Choose a time that works best for your program.** As a toddler or preschool teacher, the children's nap or rest time worked for us. As an infant teacher, the children's naptimes were staggered and sometimes inconsistent so we had to plan when most children were sleeping and we had a third teacher in the room to care for awake infants. In another program I worked in, we had 30 minutes built into our schedule after the children left each day that we could use to complete daily planning and assessment.
- **Get help.** Depending on your program dynamics, you may need an additional person to step into your room for 15–30 minutes each day to cover teacher planning time. This might be the same person that covers teachers' breaks or it may be a person from another teaching team. For example, in one program, the preschoolers took long naps and it was easy for the preschool teachers to plan. It was not so easy for the infant teachers next door so each day, when the preschool teachers were finished planning, a preschool teacher would go over to the infant room and play with the awake infants while the infant teachers discussed their anecdotes and made a plan for the next day.

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- **Take notes throughout the day.** Of course you will take anecdotes on your children's development and use them to guide your plans for the following day. But in addition, as ideas come to you throughout the day for the following day's plan, jot them down. As I interacted with children, ideas would jump into my mind about materials to add or a group time related to what children were doing. Jotting this down saved me a lot of time later trying to remember or think of new ideas.
- **Keep planning materials handy.** It can be helpful to have notetaking materials in your pocket, on a lanyard, or in several areas around the room. In addition, having blank lesson plans and any HighScope resource books you may use to create your plans in the classroom for easy access can help develop plans quickly.



Finding Time for Teacher Planning (continued)

- **Get creative.** Let's be honest, finding time to connect with your coteacher and share uninterrupted thoughts is ideal but not always possible. You may need to find other ways to share ideas so when you do connect the conversation can be quick and focused. One idea is to create a laminated, poster-board-sized daily plan and post it on the inside of a closet door or cabinet where it can be easily accessed but not a visible distraction to children or parents. As the day goes on and each of you on the teaching team thinks of ideas, use a dry erase marker or post it to write the idea in on the plan for the following day. This will occur gradually throughout the day. Then during your designated time to discuss the plan for the following day, you can quickly review ideas, make connecting thoughts, and fill

in any blanks. This can be copied onto a regular-sized daily planning form or photographed, printed, and hung for parents to see and for teachers to refer to. Clear the board to start over again on the next day.

Planning time is going to look a little bit different in each program. Work together to come up with a method for making a plan as a team each day. Talk with other teams and find out how they make it work in their programs. Try out different strategies until you find a rhythm that works well for your team. While the exact approach to team planning may look different in each program, the outcome is going to be the same: meaningful and engaging plans that are connected to children's interests and abilities, a key element of a high-quality program.