

# Creating Meaningful Preschool Lesson Plans

*The Path to Intentional Teaching*

# Week 1 Learning Unit

## *The Components of HighScope Planning*



# Lesson Plans

Many curriculums (and teachers) approach lesson plans in a variety of ways. Do any of these sound familiar?

“I sit down on the weekend and plan for the whole month. That way, I get it over with and don’t have to worry about it again.”

“I like using weekly themes. I get bored with the same old things in my class week to week. Themes let me switch it up. Plus, the parents think I’m really teaching something.”

“I’ve been teaching FOREVER!!! I keep all my old lesson plans and reuse them from year to year. If you’re in my class, and it’s the third week of March — you’ll be doing the same thing that all my children have done for the past 20 years.”

“You know, I’m not really one for planning ahead. I’d rather just do what feels right at the moment. I guess you’d say I’m more the spontaneous type!”

“I buy lots of books of plans. I’ve got a whole book shelf full of them. I just take down a book and follow the plan exactly as written. It takes all the work out of planning. In fact, you might call it ‘Lesson Planning for Dummies!’”

## So... What’s the **problem**?

# Who are the Lesson Plans for?

Each of those methods of planning would make you think that the lesson plans were there for the benefit and/or ease of the teacher.

Is that really why we have lesson plans?

Of course not!

Lesson plans aren't there for the convenience of the teacher, nor are they there to add more paperwork to the teacher's job.



# HighScope Lesson Plans

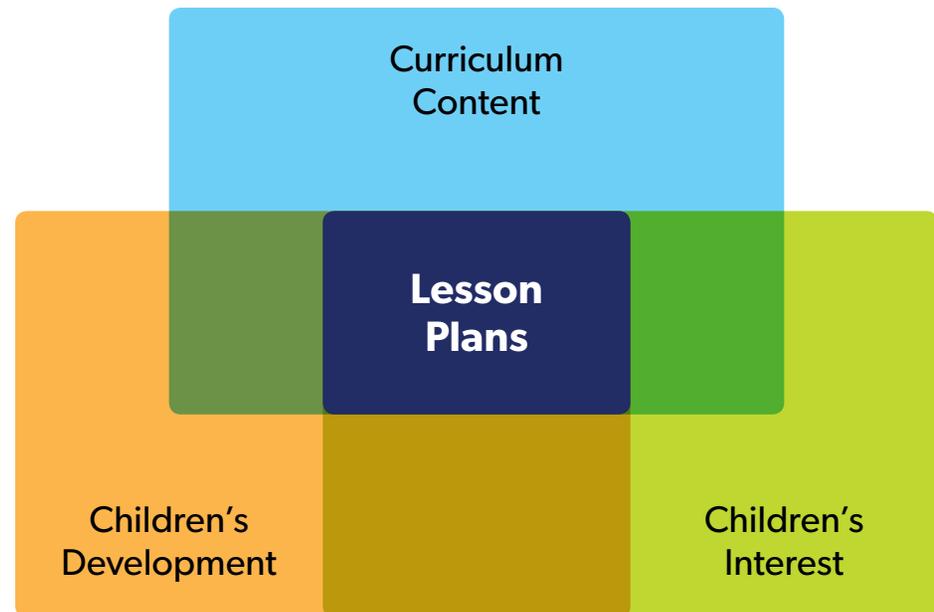
At HighScope, we believe that the purpose of lesson plans is to support **children's** learning and development!

HighScope teachers plan by looking at:

- Curriculum content we want to support
- Children's development
- Children's interests

These can be illustrated by the graphic on right.

## Components of HighScope Lesson Plans



Let's take a **closer look**.

# Curriculum Content

- Think about the curriculum content you want to support.
  - ▢ In the HighScope curriculum, this might come from the Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) or items from COR Advantage.
- You might want to support content you've seen emerging from children, or you might want to introduce content that you're not seeing.
  - ▢ Either is acceptable!



## Curriculum Content (continued)

### Curriculum Content Examples

#### Example 1:

##### Supporting Emerging Content

Yesterday, I saw children counting pebbles they found in the sand box.

I'd like to support more counting in the classroom.

#### Example 2:

##### Supporting New Content

In looking over my anecdotes and COR Advantage items, I've noticed that I don't have much information about children's counting.

I'd like to support more counting in the classroom

**Remember,** either way is acceptable!

# Children's Development

- It's crucial to think about your children's developmental levels.
- Consider how this information will affect the ideas that you have for the lesson plans.
- You might ask yourself:
  - What can my children do or not do?
  - How might this child respond to the activity?



## Children's Development (continued)

### Children's Development Examples

#### Example 1:

##### **My children are bored at recall time.**

During recall time, I find myself dealing with a lot of behavior problems. I typically ask children to tell me what they did at work time. While I'm talking to one child, the others start acting up.

This group is pretty advanced, at later stages of development. Perhaps they are just bored. Tomorrow, I'm going to ask them to show us what their hands are doing and the rest of us will guess. I think this might challenge them, and keep the rest involved in the recall process

#### Example 2:

##### **Small-group time with Larry**

I'd like to do a small-group activity where children can write stories. Most of my children are very interested in writing words (e.g., some copying from word cards, others using simple invented spelling).

Larry is in my small group. He has shown no interest in writing. He is at an earlier stage of development in this area.

I want to make sure that I support Larry if he just wants to draw his story. I could offer to write down the words, if he wants to add them.

# Children's Interests

- One of the strengths of HighScope lesson planning is planning based on children's interests.
- Use your observations (anecdotes) to identify
  - Activities and materials children choose on their own.
  - How children work with the materials.
  - How children interact with each other and with the teachers.
  - Any themes that emerge from children's play.
- If children are interested in the materials, they are more likely to be engaged in the activity.



## Children's Interests (continued)

### Children's Interests Examples

#### Example 1:

##### Several children love to race.

From my classroom observations, I've noticed that several of my children love to race — they run, they race cars on the floor, they race to get their coats on!

Tomorrow for small-group time, I think I'll plan to use the small Matchbox cars and planks in the block area. Children can use the blocks and planks to make ramps. I think it will be interesting to see them discover how to raise the planks to make their cars go fast, to see if the planks can be too high, and to discover if they have any other ideas about why some cars go faster.

#### Example 2:

##### Dinosaurs

Dinos, dinos, dinos. My children are dinosaur crazy.

I think I'll try using dinosaurs as a planning strategy. I'll ask children to put a dinosaur figure on the area sign representing where they'd like to play. Then, I'll ask them to tell me what they'll do there and what materials they'll use. I think this will really help to engage them as they share their plans.

# Intentional Lesson Planning

- We've just shared the three components of HighScope lesson planning.
- The real trick comes in combining these components, allowing teachers to intentionally scaffold children's learning.

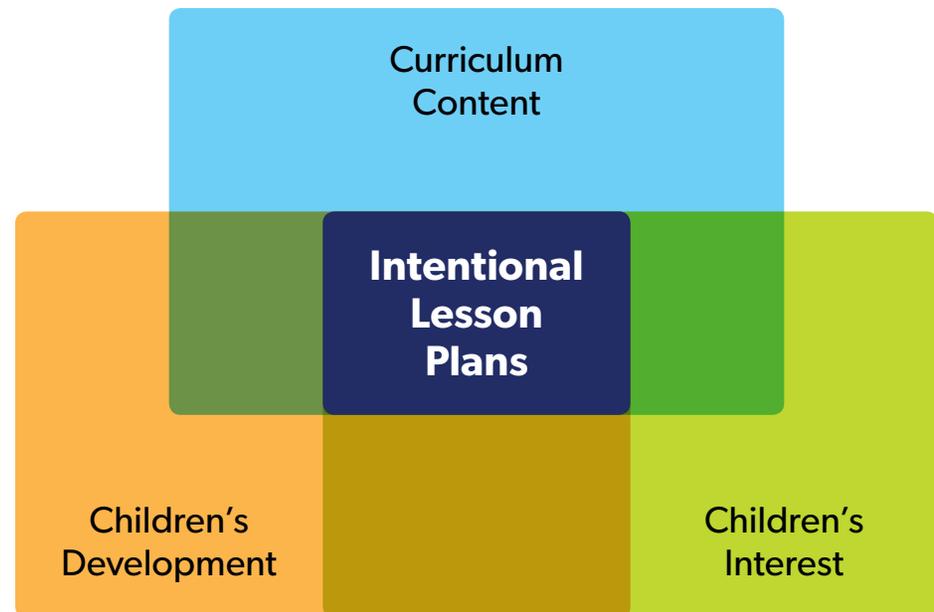
Let's take a **closer look**.



## ■ Intentional Lesson Planning (continued)

Intentional lesson planning comes when you overlap, or use several of the components in one planning idea.

Take a look at the following slides for examples of intentional lesson planning.



## ■ Intentional Lesson Planning (continued)

### Content and Interests

- I don't have any anecdotes for COR Advantage Item BB — Observing and classifying.
- Several children in my group love picking up rocks on walks.

**Lesson Plan Idea:** For small group time, I'll give each child an ice cube tray and a bowl of small pebbles. I can watch for how they sort the pebbles into the compartments.

### Development and Interests

- They stack them on top of each other and then call them “houses.” They seem to get stuck there, and don't seem to know what else they might do. I would say they are probably in the earlier stages of development.
- Some children love the blocks, others really enjoy the small dog and cat figures.

**Lesson Plan Idea:** For small-group time, we'll go to the block area and use the blocks. Halfway through, I'll add the dog and cat figures (as a back-up material). I'll look to support children who might pretend that the dogs and cats live in the block “houses” they build. Some children might make block roads for the animals to go down. Others might not use the figures at all, and that's fine with me.

## Intentional Lesson Planning (continued)

### Content and Development

- I would like to support COR Advantage Item X — Art.
- Some of my children scribble, others are drawing with details.

**Lesson Plan Idea:** For recall time, I'll give each child a piece of paper and crayons. I'll ask them to draw something they worked with at work time. For children at earlier levels of development, I'll suggest they go get something to draw around if they prefer. For children at later levels of development, I'll look for details in their drawings

### Content Development Interests

- I would like to support COR Advantage Item Z — Movement.
- Some of the children really respond to what they hear in the music (later development), others seem to have more random movements (earlier development).
- Children love playing with the scarves in the house area.

**Lesson Plan Idea:** For large-group time, I'll play an instrumental music selection that has fast and slow parts. I'll give the children scarves to use as they move to the music. For children at earlier developmental level, I'll see if they can imitate what others are doing and perhaps even name their movement. For other children (later development), I'll see if they can do a movement pattern to the music.

# Remember!

Our lesson plans always start with our observations (anecdotes) of what we see children doing and saying.

It is from those observations (anecdotes) that we learn more about

- Curriculum content evident (or absent) from children's play.
- Children's developmental levels.
- Children's interests.



# A Peek Ahead

## This week you will

- Watch a HighScope lesson planning session and share your reflections on the forum.
- Observe in your classroom and share your initial planning ideas.

## Next week you will

- Learn more about integrating content, development and children's interests into your lesson plans.

