



CLASSROOM COACH

Improving Preschool Classroom Quality

Classroom Coach Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

1. *Does Classroom Coach specifically measure fidelity to the HighScope Curriculum?*

Classroom Coach measures classroom structure and process quality regardless of the preschool curriculum used by the classroom. It was not developed as a measure of fidelity to the HighScope Curriculum or approach.

2. *The terms “support” and “scaffold” are used throughout the document. Does “support” still refer to meeting the children at their current level, and does “scaffolding” refer to extending or giving a gentle nudge?*

Yes, “support” means meeting children at their developmental levels and “scaffold” means providing a variety of strategies that promote student learning, such as activating prior knowledge, ensuring that the activities are engaging, providing hints or clues, showing examples, and breaking up complex tasks into smaller parts.

3. *What about the three-hour minimum observation rule?*

Although HighScope has set a three-hour minimum observation time with the added criteria that evidence for each row must be entered during the observation time, the agency or program you work for may set a different observation time to adhere to. For Section 3, HighScope recommends that the assessors and teachers work together to score the rows outside of the three-hour observation time.

4. *The assessment uses the following descriptors “rarely/never,” “sometimes,” “usually,” and “always,” can these be used with all of the rows within Classroom Coach?*

Not every row in Classroom Coach uses those descriptors, but for every row in Classroom Coach that uses those descriptors has a verb within the row that can be described by those terms such as “provides” or “uses.”

5. *“Many,” “some,” “few,” and “none” are also used frequently. Is there any guidance on these terms?*

Your knowledge about preschool teaching and learning, knowledge gained from visiting many preschool classrooms and/or teaching in a preschool classroom,

and all of your professional experience to date should help guide your professional judgement about whether the classroom you are observing has *few*, *some*, or *many* of the materials you are observing. Let the examples, your professional experience, and your judgement guide your scoring for those descriptors.

6. *How do I distinguish between a Level 1 and Level 2 row score?*

Again, your knowledge about preschool teaching and learning, knowledge gained from visiting many preschool classrooms, teaching in a preschool classroom, your professional experience to date, and/or referring to the second page of the paper version of the Classroom Coach assessment will help guide your professional judgement about whether to score evidence a Level 1 or Level 2. The Classroom Coach collects a snapshot of the day, not a comprehensive study of one classroom's level quality over multiple days. You can justify both Level 1 and Level 2 scores dependent upon whether the assessor observed missed opportunities or observed directive practice. Either score indicates low quality.

7. *We noticed that there are no longer any item rows related to technology in the Classroom Coach. Was there a particular reason for taking them out?*

The technology rows were removed because we received extensive feedback from users that assessing the technology items is unfair, as the use of technology is governed by the programs for which the adults in the classroom work, and that some programs will not permit the use of technology in general, and/or access to the internet specifically. The results of an assessment have to be valid, reliable, and fair. In this case, assessing the quality of using technology and planning for technology for preschoolers would not provide fair results for the classrooms assessed.

Learning Environment Questions

I-A The indoor space has a variety of interest areas that have names and are intentionally organized.

Row 1 states: *"Variety of interest areas that provide diverse activities and can be tailored to individual children's interest are evident and have names." I am assuming that programs no longer have to have interest area names that are 'easily understood.'"*

This item is simply stating that there must be a variety of distinct interest areas in the classroom that have names and are organized as interest areas. These areas and names should be understandable to both the teacher(s) and students so that they can talk about the different areas. Using names that are "easily

understood” should be considered, but is not a requirement for getting full points for this item.

Row 2 — *It appears there is no longer an item that tells programs that their materials and shelves need to be labeled. Is it assumed that this is something that will happen in item I-A, Row 2?*

It is important to note that Classroom Coach isn't specific to the HighScope Curriculum, which requires labeling of materials. While Item I-A, Row 2 could imply that labels are a part of the organization, Item I-D, Row 2 regarding environmental print includes labeled objects as an example of environmental print. Remember that examples are just examples, not requirements.

I-B Classroom materials are plentiful. (Use Classroom Materials Checklist for scoring.)

Row 1/CMC Item 9 — *I am assuming that a set of 3-D alphabet letters can include alphabet puzzle pieces, letter stencils, and magnet letters, but I'm wondering if you have any other examples for this?*

If the alphabet puzzle is made up of 3-D letters, 3-D letter stencils, and 3-D magnet letters, any of those are appropriate. Other examples might include letters made out of Legos, thick paper, cardboard, wood, etc.

Also, one of our teachers asked if blocks that have letters printed/painted on them also fall into the 3-D category? (She had wooden 3-D letters and magnetic letters, but both were uppercase.)

Wooden blocks are 3-D, but the letters themselves are not 3-D. However, the letters on the blocks could be used as evidence for Item I-D, Row 2, Environmental Print. Overall, a classroom needs “Two complete sets of upper-case and two complete sets of lower-case letters, with one complete set of 3-D letters to score a “Yes.”

Row 1/CMC Item 11 — *I am interpreting this as if they must have all of these items (crayons, pencils, pens, and markers) in the classroom. Correct?*

Yes.

Row 2/CMC Item 14 — *Can classrooms count a number chart on the wall if it posted at child level?*

A number chart (at least 0–20) would count because the children can copy the numbers from the chart.

Could they have 2 sets of 0–9 and combine them to make larger numbers?

No, we are stating that there have to be two sets of 0–20. Our research shows that having these materials has a positive effect on child outcomes.

Row 3/CMC Item 28 — *Is it acceptable to count "ambidextrous" scissors in place of "left-handed scissors," or must they be actual left-handed scissors?*

Left-handed scissors must be part of the "sufficient supply." During children's development in the preschool years, having proper-handed scissors makes a difference for both right-handed and left-handed children. Being able to hold their paper and their arms and head naturally (not craned), and see where they are cutting is important when children are developing the scissor skill, particularly as fine-motor skills are developing.

Row 3/CMC Item 33 — *For the purpose of the materials checklist, if an item is in the outdoor play area, do we count that as a "yes?" For example, a classroom has their music and movement interest area set up outside with instruments, dancing scarves, etc. Do I count the rhythm items in the checklist as a "yes" because they do have it in their outdoor environment or mark "no" because they do not have it in their indoor environment?*

The issue is access to the materials during choice/work time. If the children do not have access to the items during choice/work time, then mark it "No." If children are allowed to move freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces during choice and work times then mark it "Yes."

Row 4 and Row 6/CMC Item 35 — *When counting dress-up materials for professions/occupations, must there be a specific number of items for it to be counted as a complete set? For example, I may have a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, and band aids but not a doctor's coat. How would that score?*

Count the stethoscope and blood pressure cuff as dress-up materials, so it would count as two items toward the **eight needed**.

Row 4 and Row 6/CMC Item 37 — *Many classrooms have photos of the children's families and photos of community buildings (like the library, post office, and stores) without any people. Does this count as a "yes" or a "no"?*

Count as a "yes" as long as the photos of the buildings are reflective of the community the children live in and experience.

I-C There is a safe outdoor play area with ample space, structures, and materials to support many types of movement.

Row 1 — *How do you score an outdoor space with no structures?*

In these cases, where the outdoor space has no structures, score a Level 1. (For any row throughout Classroom Coach, choose the level that best represents your evidence.)

Row 2 — *If the classroom doesn't have any materials that it takes out for outside time and there are no portable materials accessible to children, would we count this as a 1?*

Yes, it is scored a 1.

Teaching and Learning Routines and Adult-Child Interactions Questions

II-A The classroom follows a consistent sequence of events during the school day.

Row 2 — *The example in the notes section refers to “loudly announcing” that snack will be coming. Is the emphasis on the warning or on the way the adult gains the children’s attention? Is a chime, flipping the lights off, shaking a rain stick, etc. okay? Is a warning of 5 minutes okay?*

The emphasis is on being thoughtful about how you let children know a transition will occur soon that won’t obtrusively, unnecessarily, or repeatedly interrupt their conversations or play, such as announcing it every minute for five minutes, or announcing it very loudly.

II-B There is time each day for child-initiated activities in the classroom and during outdoor time.

Row 1 — *In the Notes column there’s information about research supporting the idea that child-initiated activities should be at least 30 minutes long, but most high-quality programs allow for 60 minutes. Is Classroom Coach encouraging programs to have 60 minutes?*

This row’s scoring note states that **at LEAST 30 minutes** are required for children to have an “extended period of time” for child-initiated activities. However, based on our observations of high-quality classrooms, we would encourage classrooms to allow for 60 minutes.

II-F Adults create a sensitive and responsive learning environment for all children.

Row 3 — *I am noticing that all of the examples of encouragement are verbal. What about acknowledging with a nod of the head or imitating, etc.?*

The examples are not exhaustive.

How do you score if you have one adult that offers encouragement to children and one who does not?

You will have to choose either *usually* or *sometimes* depending on your professional judgement and experience.

II-G Adults encourage and support children to make plans for and reflect upon their work.

Row 2 — *Does every child have to reflect every day in order for the classroom to get a score of 4?*

Scoring a 4 is more about specific evidence that adults encourage children to expand upon their reflections than every child reflecting every day. Adults should include all children in the recall experience through conversations, comments, and activities, but sometimes not every child may individually recall with an adult, and the classroom can still score a 4 on this item as long as there is specific evidence that adults encourage the children to expand upon their reflections.

II-H Adults support children’s language and literacy development throughout the day.

Row 1 — *What if I observe multiple give-and-take conversations between adults and children throughout the day and observe that adults serve food and pour milk during lunchtime, get cots out, and direct children what to do next? Is this a Level 3 or Level 4?*

Score a Level 3. The descriptor states, “Listening and talking to children during mealtimes.” In the *Notes* column, there is a scoring note that states in order to reach a Level 4, “Conversations between adults/children need to take place during meal-and snack times.”

II-I Adults support children’s mathematics development throughout the day.

Row 1 and Row 2 — *Where might this show up in the classroom?*

When opportunities arise for children to tell “how many there are in all” and there are fewer than six objects, they should be encouraged to answer without counting one by one or, in other words, *subitize* (Row 1). Subitizing can happen at any point during the preschool day; whether a child asks a number-related question (e.g., *how many?*) or a teacher points out an amount without counting. Just like the definition of subitizing (from the Italian word *subito* meaning “rapidly”), the observation of subitizing happens at a glance. Opportunities for children to count objects might show up any time in the classroom or even outdoors. All objects can be counted using one-to-one correspondence (Row 2).

Row 3 — *The counting of sets is throwing me off. This is not just about counting; it is about naming the number in the set. Does scaffolding the process count? The examples appear to be the child doing the counting and naming of the set.*

In this row, you are rating the teacher’s ability to support and scaffold cardinality. The more often the teacher supports and scaffolds the child’s understanding of cardinality the higher the score should be. The example portrays a child who does not understand cardinality as the child responds by saying there are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 steps instead of saying the cardinal number 7. The teacher supports understanding of cardinality by simply saying the cardinal number.

II-J Adults support children’s reasoning and problem-solving throughout the day.

Row 3 — *“Observe, predict AND draw conclusions on a daily basis.” Is this possible?*

There are many opportunities throughout the day for children to observe, predict, and draw conclusions. Observing, predicting, and drawing conclusions is not necessarily a linear process. We often observe and then do nothing. Sometimes we observe and draw a conclusion based on inadequate information (i.e., we don’t have enough observations), and after many more observations have to revise our conclusions. Sometimes we make predictions without even observing the action, such as predicting that a child will never be able to build a five-foot tower and then watching the child build it. This row measures a teacher’s ability to support and scaffold these processes. Asking children to look closely, to watch what happens, and to use their senses during explorations supports observations. Asking children to guess “*What will happen next?*” or “*What would happen if?*” based upon your observations of them or what they know, supports *predicting*. Asking children why something happened and questioning their answers, such as “*What made you say that?*” supports *drawing conclusions*. In addition, the teacher(s) in the classroom may have one child observe, another predict, and still another draws a conclusion during entirely different activities. It doesn’t have to be the same child doing all three and it does not have to be all three processes at the same time.

Curriculum, Planning, Assessment, and Parent Engagement Questions

III-A Adults use a comprehensive, evidence-based educational model(s)/approach(es) to guide teaching practices.

Row 2 — *When we look for modifications, are we looking for environmental, academic, or both?*

Both.

III-B Adults document the developmental progress of each child using measures validated for preschool-aged children.

Row 2 — *Do “assessment results” refer to assessment reports or what teachers observe daily?*

It refers to both formal and informal assessments.