

# Week 2 Reading Assignment

*Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day*



# Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day

## Daily Events:

### *Arrival and Departure*

*What and why.* Arrivals and departures involve the rituals that set the tone for the child's away-from-home experience. At arrival time, warm, leisurely greetings from caregivers help to assure infants and toddlers that even though their parents must leave, they are in the hands of trustworthy people who will respect them and keep them safe until their parents return. Caregivers help children separate by encouraging parents to establish a daily morning ritual for their children to depend on. At departure time, the caregivers' pleasant, friendly good-byes and warm wishes for return allow children to reunite with their parents; they are relieved to see their parents and, at the same time, know that the adults

saying good-bye care about them and they feel comfortable with returning to the center the next day. In the short run, learning to deal with the daily greetings and good-byes at arrival and departure times allows children to enlarge the scope of their trust from parents and family at home to caregivers and peers at the center. In the long run, coping successfully at these times gives children a solid basis for coping with the comings and goings of relatives and friends for the rest of their lives.

*Where.* There is no definite place in the care setting where greetings and goodbyes must take place. Where they occur depends on the needs and preferences of the child and parent. One mom may sit in a comfortable chair, nurse her infant, chat with the caregiver, and give her child to the caregiver without ever leaving the greeting area.

## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

Other parents will come into the play space and say goodbye and hello wherever their child is comfortable that day — at the sand table, on the mattress next to the books, or in the play yard.

### *Choice Time*

*Where and why.* Choice time is a sustained block of time when infants and toddlers can investigate and explore materials and actions and interact with their peers and caregivers. In a supportive and safe environment that affords interesting materials and opportunities as well as space to move in various ways, each child chooses what to do based on personal interests, inclinations, and level of development and ability. Choice time provides children with a virtually uninterrupted period of exploration and play.



## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

A great deal of learning occurs at choice time. Through their self-chosen sensory-motor explorations, infants and toddlers engage in experiences that support learning in all the content areas and KDIs. They fill and empty, put in and take out, discover that objects still exist when out of sight, repeat an action to make something happen again, and so forth. As they interact with people and materials, children practice skills and begin to construct knowledge in all the areas of the KDIs: approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; communication, language, and literacy; cognitive development; and creative arts. Choice time takes place within a rich social context, so children have the opportunity to watch others at exploration and play, imitate their actions, and build relationships with

others. They can also communicate their frustrations and triumphs to attentive, interactive caregivers.

Caregivers familiar with the HighScope Preschool Curriculum may recognize choice time is the infant-toddler version of work time, when HighScope preschoolers pursue activities of their own choosing. Unlike the preschool work time, choice time for infants and toddlers is not flanked by a time for planning and time for recalling. However, older toddlers may begin to plan and recall once they are able to hold mental images in mind and thus think about what they want to do or have done. In a very basic way, choice time promotes infants' and toddlers' sense of themselves as doers, decision-makers, and problem solvers. By carrying out their own initiatives, they learn how to make things

## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

happen. They discover they can choose where to crawl; what to climb; what to mouth, stack, or carry; and whose hand to hold. This time of being fully in charge of these decisions forms the heart of the infant's and toddler's day in a HighScope program.

*Where.* The segment of the day called choice time takes place in thoughtfully equipped and arranged infant and toddler play spaces. For infants, these play spaces include plenty of space to move, and a variety of materials including pleasant reminders of home, materials for sensory exploration and play, materials infants can set in motion, movement equipment, and first picture books. Toddler choice-time play spaces include variety of well-stocked interest areas including a movement area, sand and water area, book area, art area, block area, house area, and toy area.



## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

### *Outside Time*

*What and why.* Outside time allows infants and toddlers to extend their exploration and play to an outdoor setting. As at choice time indoors, children make choices about what to do outdoors. Children find the outdoors rich in sensory-motor experiences for constructing new knowledge. They can feel the texture of lawns, leaves, pine needles, snow, sand, dirt, wood, bark, brick, and stone. They hear the sounds of wind, birds, traffic, sirens, airplanes, older children at play. They smell flowers, earth, grass, rain, animals, good aromas wafting from kitchens or bakeries. And they see the many shades of green, the seasonal changes, light and shade, the play of shadows, the movement of branches and clouds. At outside time, infants and toddlers begin to gain a sense of distance as they experience what

is up close — spiders, worms, grass — and what is far away — the treetops, the house next door, the clouds. They have the rare opportunity to be big compared to ants, grasshoppers, birds, squirrels, and dandelions. They can freely move, throw things, and play in water and snow. They gather and collect leaves, twigs, rocks, walnuts, and seed pods. In the sunlight, they soak up the vitamin D they need to absorb calcium for strong bones and teeth. Overall, spending daily time outdoors in all seasons positively affects the way even very young children eat, sleep, and feel.

*Where.* Outdoor play spaces appropriately designed and equipped include materials and equipment that encourage movement, things that flutter in the wind, a variety of crawling surfaces, water-play materials, and things that are visually interesting. For toddlers

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the play space includes natural features like hills and boulders; things to climb and swing on; things to get inside of, crawl through, and balance on; sand and water; toys to rock, ride, push, and pull; and items like balls, beanbags, chalk, painting materials. Occasionally at outside time, caregivers, infants, and toddlers take a walk around the block, to a nearby park, a neighbor's garden, or a local shop.

### ***Group Time***

*What and why.* Group times are caregiver-initiated parts of the day that include opportunities for older infants and toddlers to engage in active learning. Caregiver-initiated means the caregiver has an idea for the activity and plans what might happen based on mobile infants' and toddlers' interests and development. The purpose of group time is not to



## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

instruct children in some area of knowledge or have them practice a skill, nor is it intended to enforce social interaction. Rather, group time allows children who are interested to explore materials and actions, and if they choose, to observe, imitate, or play alongside others. A child's participation in group time is wholly voluntary. Group times generally focus on either exploring and using materials or enjoying songs, nursery rhymes, and movement and music activities. During a typical group time, one or two caregivers gather with older infants and toddlers. The group is small — generally no more than four children per caregiver and no more than eight children altogether. The adult gets the activity started and encourages children to use materials or move their bodies in their own way.

Typically, smaller groups engage in exploring materials while larger groups join in a music or movement activity. However, there are no hard and fast rules. There may even be as few as two children in a group, depending on how many choose to participate. This small group size makes it easier for even quiet or withdrawn children to join in, enables children to have close physical contact with their caregiver, and allows the caregiver to pay close attention to each child while monitoring the tenor of the group as a whole. It is a daily opportunity for children and caregivers to communicate in an intimate social setting as they share or use common materials or enjoy moving together to music.

## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

Caregivers gather the group together and introduce the materials or activity for group time, but children are the doers and choice-makers, actively shaping what happens as the group time unfolds. Children also determine the length of group time. Some children, for example, may squeeze dribble salt for 10 minutes, whereas others may spend several minutes watching the activity, then turn to play with other materials around the room. To suit the nature of older infants and toddlers, group times are fluid and dynamic, varying in length and content, depending on the actions, ideas, and interests of the children involved.

Group times help children build a repertoire of shared experiences they can turn to in their play and in communication give-and-take at other times



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of the day. Caregivers will notice that over time, children grow in their ability to communicate and interact with one another during group time; also, the time they remain together in common pursuits gradually increases.

Group time can also serve as a time when children check in for reassurance and support from others after venturing out into the play space during choice time and outside time. For teachers, group time serves as a unique opportunity to offer children materials and challenges that reflect the key developmental indicators and to observe the various ways different children think of using the materials, and solving any problems they meet along the way.

*Where.* Group time needn't occur at the same place every day but it is helpful as children learn to depend on the routine. Where the group gathers depends on the materials called for and the nature of the activity. Group time may take place in the infants' play space, in the art area, in the toy area, or in the movement area. At other times, the group might gather for their activity in a tent, on the deck of the climber, around the sand and water table, on the steps, under the lowhanging branches of a pine tree, or in the garden. Children and their caregiver might sit on the floor, on the ground, at a table — wherever the chosen activity dictates. Group times involving singing and movement generally take place in the movement area or outdoors, where there is plenty of space for children to move freely.

## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

### Caregiving Routines:

#### *Feeding and Mealtime*

*What and why.* Babies' feedings and children's mealtimes go beyond fulfilling a basic need for nourishing food. For infants, these times provide close physical contact with an attentive adult. When a young infant's cries of hunger are met with a full bottle and the comforting arms of a pleasant caregiver, that child is able to grow and thrive because he or she learns to trust the world as a place where people recognize and respond to an infant's needs. For the older infant, mealtime is a time to eat but also to explore new tastes, smells, and textures and try out selffeeding with fingers, a spoon, and or a cup. As toddlers eat, they usually enjoy interacting with others and being part of the



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meal-time conversation. They also continue to explore and try new foods and gain skill at feeding themselves. As infant educator Peter Mangione (1990) has said, “Young children are in the process of developing lifelong attitudes toward food and the experience of eating. In a relaxed setting they form positive attitudes and learn vital social skills” (p. 11). In short, feedings and mealtimes are social interludes based around eating and enjoying food.

*Where.* Where a feeding or mealtime takes place depends of the stage of the child involved. A primary caregiver of young infants lovingly holds each child and attends to his or her bottlefeeding while sitting in some comfortable place. Some infants, content with this close contact and attention, focus intently on their bottle and caregiver with little or no regard

for where they are and whatever is going on around them. Other infants, who are easily distracted and continually turning away from the bottle to watch other children and adults, may best be fed in a fairly secluded place.

Infants who are sitting and beginning to try out solid foods are generally propped up in some way while the caregiver offers food on a spoon. Older infants who are interested in picking up finger foods, guiding the spoon to their mouth, and exploring food with their hands, usually sit on low chairs or on the floor to eat at low one-person tables. Toddlers eat together with their caregivers in small groups at low tables. Both infants and toddlers enjoy mealtimes outdoors in pleasant weather.

## Brief Description of the Elements of the HighScope Infant and Toddler Day (continued)

### *Times for Bodily Care*

*What and why.* For infants and toddlers, the brief routines of bodily care — diaper changes, dressing, washing, and using the potty or toilet — occur frequently and fairly regularly throughout the day. This means whenever children are wet or soiled, before and/or after eating and napping — generally every hour or so, depending on the age, health, and habits of the child.

At the most basic level, these routines promote cleanliness, physical comfort, and health by minimizing children's exposure to infection and diaper rash, but they can also contribute to children's emotional well being. Through the gentle, one-to-one interactions involved in bodily care, children have an opportunity to build trusting relationships



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with caregivers and a sense of security at the care setting. Also, during in the process of washing, diapering, dressing, and undressing, infants and toddlers gain a sense of how their own bodies can bend and move. They eventually use this knowledge to accomplish such self-help tasks as holding and handing over their diaper or washcloth, or pulling up and pulling down their own pants. They also learn that while the inevitable bodily care routines may often interrupt their exploration and play, they can almost always return fairly quickly to the situation they left.

*Where.* In a child care setting, bodily care consistently takes place in the diapering and dressing areas and in child-oriented bathrooms that are easily cleaned, reasonably located, convenient for adults, and pleasant for children. To support the development of children's selfhelp skills and their "me-do-it"

approach to life, sinks and toilets need to be low; faucets, as well as soap and towel dispensers, need to be child-friendly. For toddlers, there should be steps leading up to the changing table and they should be able to access clean clothes themselves.

### *Naptime*

*What and why.* Naptime in an infant and toddler program occurs both on demand, when children tire, and as regularly scheduled parts of the day. Naps provide the sleep and rest that are necessary to children's growth and development. Like adults, tired children are often cranky and irritable; sleep helps restore their good nature. It also provides a quiet retreat from the intensely social demands of the child care setting. In short, napping allows children to reenergize physically and emotionally for the next part of the day.

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*Where.* Although an infant or toddler may fall asleep anywhere in the center — in a caregiver’s arms, in the cozy armchair, under the climber — caregivers usually move the child to continue and complete the nap in a cradle, basket, crib, or cot. In a child care setting, this practice frees caregivers to attend to other wakeful children, protects sleeping children from being stepped on by peers at play, and consistently provides each child with a personal, familiar sleeping place.

Toddlers, as they gain a stronger sense of self and a familiarity with the care setting, often express a particular preference about where to sleep. For example, a toddler may wish to nap close to a light source (for looking at books), near a particular caregiver, or alongside a special friend. Caregivers

may also decide to use one area of the room for the cots of the children who tend to sleep longer and another area of the room for the cots of those who wake up first. While most toddlers take either a long or a short sleeping nap, some get the rest they need by lying awake on their cots for some or all of their naptime, looking at books or busying themselves quietly with some chosen plaything.

**Source:** Adapted from Post, J., Hohmann, M., & Epstein, A. S. (2011). *Tender care and early learning: Supporting infants and toddlers in child care settings* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press, Chapter 5, pp. 280–391.