

Learning Environment

Third in a series of nine

-Adapted from *All About HighScope* by the HighScope Press.

What Do HighScope Classroom Interest Areas look like?

The arrangement of HighScope classroom interest areas allows children to have hands-on experiences with people, objects, events and ideas. By doing these things, children have an active part in their learning.

Logical arrangement of areas and materials helps the classroom make sense to children. The organized areas make it easier for children to make choices of what to do in safe, comfortable and uncluttered spaces either by themselves or with friends.

Children are able to carry materials without tripping and banging into things. The areas have plenty of light and many different colors, different things to feel (e.g. smooth, rough, and bumpy). The children can choose things that look fun or interesting to them by what they see or how it feels. HighScope areas meet local licensing regulations for safety, maintenance of equipment, eating and personal care.

The areas are arranged to encourage different types of play.

Children's interest areas are set up so the children can see the different areas and be able

to choose what they want to do. This lets the children have some control or choices in what they do during Work Time. The areas have simple titles young children can understand – house area, block area, toy area, reading and writing area and art area. The areas encourage children to build things, make things, read and write, play and pretend, draw and paint, play games and do movement/music.

Low shelving and furniture define the areas and help children to see their choices. Purposeful grouping of materials within the interest areas places similar items or items best used together near one another. This helps children to understand similarities between items and their uses. It also assists children in finding things they plan to use.

The areas are set up so that children can both see the different areas and can take materials from one area to another area. For example, children may take some blocks from the block area over to the house area to make a “washing machine.” These areas, placed near one another, encourage children to make logical connections between the items and ways they are used.

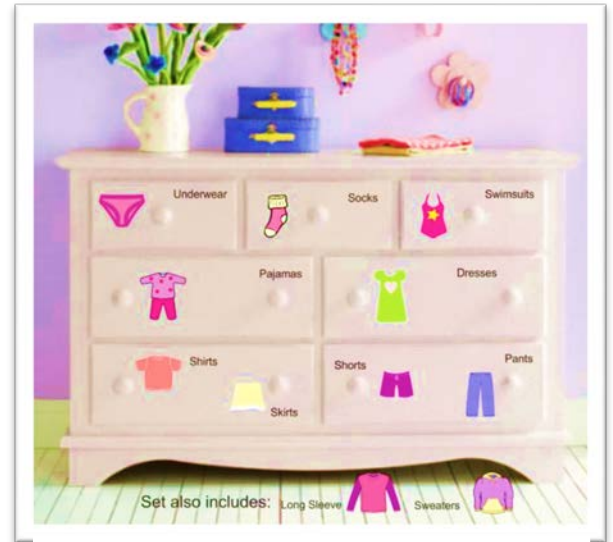
Teachers label materials with symbols, pictures, drawings, tracings or samples of the items. Labeling shows the children what is in the area and where things are stored so children can find



their choices and put things away afterward. The labels also help children learn to match things by color, shape and size.

There are many materials in each area so several children can play in one area at the same time. Many things in the areas are similar to items found in your own home---recycled paper and non-breakable containers, old clothes and natural items like wood, fabric and stones. There are family photographs, magazines, familiar cooking utensils and dolls from various cultural backgrounds.

The room has space for low tables for small-group time or eating, open space for large-group times and a cushioned area just big enough for two children to read in. Each child has a cubby to store personal things (coat, hat, papers). This gives children responsibility for taking care of their own things and an easy way of locating them.



Try picture labels at home to encourage your child to put his/her own things away.

Using Ideas from HighScope in your own home

Your child knows there are many different areas in his Head Start classrooms and a variety of things to do in each one. He also knows that your home has different rooms used for different things. He knows which shelf in the refrigerator holds the milk or which drawer has the spoons.

You can store and label different art supplies and your child's toys so he knows where to find each item and where to put items away when he is done playing with them.

You can label where your child should hang his coat or hat each day by drawing or cutting out a simple picture and hanging it where you want items put away.

Also, spend time playing with your children indoors and outdoors in the yard, playground, or park. This will give you many opportunities to learn what currently interests your child and will give him time to develop his large muscles and coordination, which is part of his healthy physical development.