Extensions

Curriculum Newsletter From HighScope

HighScope's Curriculum Content Areas and the KDIs[*]

BY ANN S. EPSTEIN AND MARY HOHMANN

"All children — not simply some — are entitled to early experiences that will foster their optimal development."

— National Education Goals Panel (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995, p.1)

What are young children like? What kinds of play experiences and activities do they seek out, no matter where they live? How do they make discoveries and achieve an understanding of their world? What kinds of support do they need to grow and prosper? As early childhood educators, our answers to these questions are embodied in the HighScope Curriculum's content areas and **key developmental indicators (KDIs).** These guideposts define both our *beliefs* about how children develop and the *actions* we must take to support that development.

HighScope has just published *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, a set of nine books that

With the KDIs as a guide, educators can be sure they are providing the essential learning experiences that all children are entitled to, in this case opportunities to use gross-motor skills (KDI 16) and experience cooperative play (KDI 13).

describes all aspects of the curriculum and its implementation. The first book (Epstein & Hohmann, 2012) is a complete manual that details the curriculum's proven practices with regard to adult-child interaction, active learning, the learning environment, daily routine (including HighScope's signature plan-do-review sequence), family involvement, daily team

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*Adapted from *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum,* 2012, HighScope Press.

planning, and observation-based child and program assessment. Accompanying this manual is a series of eight books (Epstein, 2012a–h) that describe the HighScope curriculum content in detail. That content is the focus of this article.

HighScope is a comprehensive curriculum model that addresses all areas of development. In the HighScope Curriculum, the *content* of children's learning is organized into eight major divisions that are easily aligned and are consistent with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, Common Core Standards, and other national and state early learning standards (Gronlund, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education [NAECS/SDE], 2002). HighScope's eight curriculum content areas are

A. Approaches to Learning

B. Social and Emotional Development

C. Physical Development and Health

D. Language, Literacy, and Communication

E. Mathematics

F. Creative Arts

G. Science and Technology

H. Social Studies

HighScope Preschool Curriculum Content:
Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs)

Key developmental indicators (KDIs) are the building blocks of thinking, learning, and reasoning at each stage of development. The HighScope Preschool Curriculum identifies 58 KDIs organized under eight content areas.

A. Approaches to Learning
1. **Initiative:** Children demonstrate initiative as they explore their world.
2. **Planning:** Children make plans and follow through on their intentions.
3. **Engagement:** Children focus on activities that interest them.
4. **Problem solving:** Children solve problems encountered in play.
5. **Use of resources:** Children gather information and formulate ideas about their world.
6. **Reflection:** Children reflect on their experiences.

B. Social and Emotional Development
7. **Self-identity:** Children have a positive self-identity.
8. **Sense of competence:** Children feel they are competent.
9. **Emotions:** Children recognize, label, and regulate their feelings.
10. **Empathy:** Children demonstrate empathy toward others.
11. **Community:** Children participate in the community of the classroom.
12. **Building relationships:** Children build relationships with other children and adults.
13. **Cooperative play:** Children engage in cooperative play.
14. **Moral development:** Children develop an internal sense of right and wrong.
15. **Conflict resolution:** Children resolve social conflicts.

C. Physical Development and Health
16. **Gross-motor skills:** Children demonstrate strength, flexibility, balance, and timing in using their large muscles.
17. **Fine-motor skills:** Children demonstrate dexterity and hand-eye coordination in using their small muscles.
18. **Body awareness:** Children know about their bodies and how to navigate them in space.
19. **Personal care:** Children carry out personal care routines on their own.
20. **Healthy behavior:** Children engage in healthy practices.

HighScope Preschool Curriculum Content:
Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) continued

D. Language, Literacy, and Communication[1]

21. **Comprehension:** Children understand language.
22. **Speaking:** Children express themselves using language.
23. **Vocabulary:** Children understand and use a variety of words and phrases.
24. **Phonological awareness:** Children identify distinct sounds in spoken language.
25. **Alphabetic knowledge:** Children identify letter names and their sounds.
26. **Reading:** Children read for pleasure and information.
27. **Concepts about print:** Children demonstrate knowledge about environmental print.
28. **Book knowledge:** Children demonstrate knowledge about books.
29. **Writing:** Children write for many different purposes.
30. **English language learning:** (If applicable) Children use English and their home language(s) (including sign language).

E. Mathematics

31. **Number words and symbols:** Children recognize and use number words and symbols.
32. **Counting:** Children count things.
33. **Part-whole relationships:** Children combine and separate quantities of objects.
34. **Shapes:** Children identify, name, and describe shapes.
35. **Spatial awareness:** Children recognize spatial relationships among people and objects.
36. **Measuring:** Children measure to describe, compare, and order things.
37. **Unit:** Children understand and use the concept of unit.
38. **Patterns:** Children identify, describe, copy, complete, and create patterns.
39. **Data analysis:** Children use information about quantity to draw conclusions, make decisions, and solve problems.

F. Creative Arts

40. **Art:** Children express and represent what they observe, think, imagine, and feel through two- and three-dimensional art.
41. **Music:** Children express and represent what they observe, think, imagine, and feel through music.
42. **Movement:** Children express and represent what they observe, think, imagine, and feel through movement.
43. **Pretend play:** Children express and represent what they observe, think, imagine, and feel through pretend play.
44. **Appreciating the arts:** Children appreciate the creative arts.

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[1]Language, Literacy, and Communication KDIs 21–29 may be used for the child's home language(s) as well as English. KDI 30 refers specifically to English language learning.
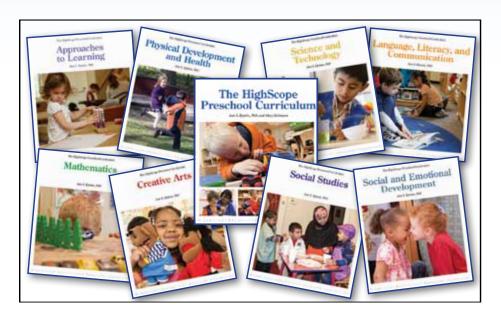
HighScope Preschool Curriculum Content:
Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) continued

G. Science and Technology

45. **Observing:** Children observe the materials and processes in their environment.
46. **Classifying:** Children classify materials, actions, people, and events.
47. **Experimenting:** Children experiment to test their ideas.
48. **Predicting:** Children predict what they expect will happen.
49. **Drawing conclusions:** Children draw conclusions based on their experiences and observations.
50. **Communicating ideas:** Children communicate their ideas about the characteristics of things and how they work.
51. **Natural and physical world:** Children gather knowledge about the natural and physical world.
52. **Tools and technology:** Children explore and use tools and technology.

H. Social Studies

53. **Diversity:** Children understand that people have diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities.
54. **Community roles:** Children recognize that people have different roles and functions in the community.
55. **Decision making:** Children participate in making classroom decisions.
56. **Geography:** Children recognize and interpret features and locations in their environment.
57. **History:** Children understand past, present, and future.
58. **Ecology:** Children understand the importance of taking care of their environment.

The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP; Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995) emphasizes the interdependence of these areas and the importance of addressing them all at every age and grade level. It is also valuable to note that children's development varies widely within and across content areas. No two children are alike, and any individual may be more or less advanced from one domain to another. The objective of early childhood programs is to provide the kinds of experiences that support and nurture all of these areas of learning and development in every child. Adults scaffold children's learning when they support them at their current level and gently extend their knowledge and thinking as they progress along a developmental trajectory.

KDIs — Guideposts for Child Development

Within each content area, HighScope identifies the KDIs that are the building blocks of thinking and reasoning. The KDIs are based on current child development research and national and state early learning standards but also reflect HighScope's educational philosophy and teaching practices. KDIs pave the way for later schooling and entry into the adult world. In terms of the two major types of learning objectives used by many educational theorists, the indicators include both *knowledge* and the application of this knowledge in *thinking* (Marzano, 2001). For example, preschoolers need to know color names (knowledge) in order to sort objects by color (thinking).

The term *key developmental indicators* encapsulates HighScope's approach to early education. The word *key* refers to the fact that these are the meaningful ideas children should learn and experience. HighScope acknowledges that young children need to master a wide range of specific knowledge and thinking skills — the list could be almost endless in scope and detail. To avoid losing sight

The KDIs apply to the activities of children in all early childhood settings. In every country and culture, for example, children enjoy imitating, pretending, and using items they see adults using.

of what is essential and important, the content captured in the individual KDIs stresses the broader areas of knowledge and skills that lay the foundation for further learning.

The second part of the term, *developmental,* conveys the idea that learning is gradual and cumulative. Learning follows a sequence, generally moving from simple to more complex knowledge and skills. Moreover, the word *developmental* emphasizes that it is inappropriate, not to mention futile, to expect preschoolers to behave and learn as kindergarten or first-grade students do. Whatever level we are addressing, from infancy through adulthood, the curriculum must be consistent with what we know about human development at each stage of life.

Finally, *indicators* was chosen to emphasize that educators need evidence that children are developing the knowledge, skills, and understanding considered important for school and life readiness. To plan appropriately for students and to evaluate program effectiveness, we need observable indicators of our impact on children. Further, by defining these child outcomes in measurable terms, we can develop assessment tools that are consistent with the curriculum. In other words, an assessment system tied to the KDIs should *indicate* whether the program is meeting its goals.

The continuity across content areas and KDIs allows for the fact that development occurs along a continuum, and children of different ages and abilities cannot be pigeonholed into a single age-based category. This article focuses on the 58 KDIs that make up the HighScope Curriculum's content for preschoolers, that is, children aged three to five. However, some children in this age range may exhibit behaviors characteristic of older toddlers or early elementary students. For this reason, each KDI has a developmental scaffolding chart (included in the individual KDI books) that describes what children at early, middle, and later stages of development might do and say, and how adults can scaffold (support and gently extend) learning at each level. Furthermore, children with special needs can fall at different points along the learning continuum, without regard to age, so this flexible system for presenting the content helps practitioners understand and plan for their development as well.

For children to learn the content contained in the KDIs, it is not enough for adults to simply pass along information. Children must experience the world firsthand. Moreover, true learning takes time and repeated exposure. Therefore, the discussion of each KDI in the separate KDI books includes multiple strategies that adults can use to support each child's current level of understanding, and scaffold his or her progress to a new level of knowledge, skill, and insight.

The rest of this article touches on why the KDIs are an important curriculum component and how adults use them as they work with young children. The eight KDI books that accompany *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum* manual present a more detailed exami-

nation of the KDIs in every area of children's early learning and explain the thoughtful and practical strategies HighScope teachers use to promote them.

The Significance of the KDIs

The eight content areas and 58 KDIs within them are significant for adults using the HighScope Preschool Curriculum because they provide a framework for supporting children's *real* activities. When children are actively engaged with people and materials, they naturally encounter these key concepts and skills. As children play — build with blocks, look at books, draw pictures, pretend to be firefighters — they construct knowledge and gain a sense of competence. For adults, the KDIs give meaning to what children are doing. Adults who understand the importance of the KDIs as tools for observing, describing, and supporting children's development can use them to shape their work with children — in the ways outlined next.

By using a planning chart, this child thinks intentionally about what he will do at work time.

KDIs focus adults' observations and interpretations of children's actions

Curriculum content provides adults with a child development "filter" for observing children and for choosing appropriate interactions. For example, through the filter of the KDIs, an observation such as "Johnny is playing in the sand" might expand to "Johnny is playing in the sand filling pots and colanders (KDI 35. Spatial awareness) and watching to see what happens to the sand in each case (KDIs 45. Observing and 46. Classifying)." KDIs can help adults interpret what children do and say throughout the day and can shape adults' support strategies: "Perhaps if I sit down next to Johnny and start filling and emptying the sieve, he might begin to put his observations about the sand into words." Or, "At recall time, I'll ask Johnny if he can show us what happened to his sand."

KDIs serve as a cross-cultural reference for observing and interpreting children's actions

Practitioners from many different cultures around the world report that they see their children doing such things as playing with the sounds of language (KDI 24. Phonological awareness), comparing the length of two sticks (KDI 36. Measuring), looking intently at plants

(KDI 51. Natural and physical world), and acting out familiar scenarios from home (KDI 43. Pretend play). Each child is an individual and each culture and community is unique, yet child development occurs in similar progressions everywhere. For example, children like to build things. Although they may use different materials depending on what is available (mud, twigs, blocks, shells, empty food containers), given the opportunity, they will spend considerable time making various structures with them, using them to stand for whatever they need in their play and describing in their own words what they are doing with them.

KDIs help adults maintain reasonable expectations for children

Adults who understand how specific skills develop are more likely to provide appropriate support and less likely to either underestimate what children can do or push them to achieve beyond their abilities. For example, adults familiar with the KDIs in Language, Literacy, and Communication know that many young children are intrinsically motivated to write, and that this process emerges slowly through a series of imitations — drawing, scribbling, and making letterlike forms — that are themselves as valuable and necessary as children's later attempts to make conventional letters. These adults understand that imitation is a part of learning to read as well. Therefore, they are happy to provide Rachel with writing tools and listen to her "read" her story about a storm, even though what she has written looks to the adults like a series of squiggles and blobs. They are not concerned that Rachel does not yet make conventional letters or decode actual text because they understand and expect her to be engaged in the kinds of "writing" and "reading" that are appropriate to her level of development.

Also, the KDIs can put children's mishaps into perspective for adults. Pouring juice at snacktime, for example, becomes a valuable experience for children because it gives them a real-life opportunity to develop *spatial awareness* (KDI 35) and use their *fine-motor skills* (KDI 17). However, pouring is an emerging capacity that takes lots of practice, since children in their excitement about pouring sometimes forget to stop. But that is a valuable experience, too, because cleaning up spilled juice provides children with an opportunity for *problem solving* (KDI 4) and sharing responsibility for the classroom *community* (KDI 11).

KDIs answer questions about the legitimacy of children's play

Play is a legitimate and necessary activity for young children. However, for adults who may be concerned that play prevents children from engaging in the "real work" of learning, the KDIs identify 58 concrete and meaningful learning experiences. Moreover, the words used to identify the content areas (such as *mathematics, creative arts, science* and *technology*) and to label the KDIs (such as *empathy, vocabulary, history*) are the same terms that appear in national and state early learning standards. Using the KDIs can therefore deepen adults' appreciation of the complexity of children's play and the wide range of knowledge

and skills they acquire through it.

KDIs guide decisions about materials and the daily routine

The broad content areas and specific KDIs provide adults with a comprehensive set of criteria for selecting appropriate materials in an active learning environment. They encourage teaching teams to ask themselves such questions as, What kinds of materials can we add for children to rearrange and reshape as they develop *spatial awareness* (KDI 35 in the content area of Mathematics)? Would children engage with *music* (KDI 41 in Creative Arts) more often if we added relevant sound-making materials to different areas of the room? Since many children have been involved in "building the longest train in the world," how can we rearrange the block area to make more floor space and promote *gross-motor skills* (KDI 16 in Physical Development and Health) and *cooperative play* (KDI 13 in Social and Emotional Development)?

The KDIs also provide a window on the daily routine, that is, some indicators may tend to occur more often or more readily at certain times of the day. For example, in a well-organized setting, there are days when cleanup time is characterized by concentrated *classifying* (KDI 46) as children sort and match toys before putting them away. After children decipher a message board announcement about a new material in the classroom, they

KDIs help teachers plan for the segments of the daily routine. This large-group movement and music activity is planned around KDIs in Creative Arts and Physical Development and Health.

may enjoy participating in *decision making* (KDI 55) about which area of the room to store it in. On the other hand, if the need for *conflict resolution* (KDI 15) tends to escalate right before lunch, this may indicate that a change in the daily routine is in order.

KDIs enable adults to recognize and support children's emerging capacities

Knowledge of the content areas and KDIs guides adults in planning activities and supporting children's play. For example, Lisa made "pizza" in the house area and invited Beth, her teacher, to "sample" a piece. Beth exclaimed that the pizza was delicious and asked Lisa for the recipe. Hurrying to the art area, Lisa chose some writing materials and returned to the

house area to write her recipe in scribble form. Beth knew from her previous observations that Lisa was beginning to write (KDI 29) and, by asking her for the recipe, was able to create an occasion for her to use her emerging skill.

In summary, the HighScope content areas and KDIs can broaden adults' understanding of what children do, say, think about, and enjoy. This appreciation of the complexity of children's pursuits enables adults to support children's emerging capacities with appropriate materials and interactions rather than to focus on children's mistakes and deficits.

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Using the KDIs to Support Teaching and Learning*

BY ANN S. EPSTEIN AND MARY HOHMANN

The best way to become familiar with the KDIs is to use them in your daily planning for, and interactions with, young children as you support their learning. Following are six ways to get started.

1. Use the KDIs as a basis for assessing the materials available to children

To begin this process, select the entire group or a subgroup of KDIs in one content area (for example, the content area Mathematics or the KDIs 34. Shapes and 35. Spatial awareness). Identify materials in the interest areas and on the playground that currently support those KDIs. If you come up with few items or none at all for one particular KDI, brainstorm a list of materials to add. For more ideas for materials, you might also skim the corresponding KDI chapter in the *Mathematics* companion book (Epstein, 2012d) and ask the children for their ideas as well. Repeat this process periodically over the course of the year to systematically assess and provide materials related to each of the eight curriculum content areas and their KDIs.

For example, one teaching team, while evaluating the materials available to support the Creative Arts content area, particularly KDI 43. Pretend play, made a list of what they had and what they wanted to add. They also decided to consult their children. At greeting circle the next day, they asked, "What do you think our house area needs that would make more children want to play there?" "A dog!" was the children's immediate response (a surprise to the adults). Nevertheless, taking their children's interests to heart, one team member arranged to bring her gentle family dog, Daisy, into the house area for several days along with her water and food dishes, leash, grooming brush, and bed. During her visit, Daisy was well cared for, and after she left, the children continued to play doggy, making their own beds and dishes from blocks, boxes, and blankets.

2. Use the content areas and KDIs to organize and interpret observations of children

As you interact with children throughout the day, jot down specific, short observations about what they do and say. During daily team planning, share these anecdotes and together decide which of the KDIs they most closely illustrate. Then save the anecdote, for example, by creating a separate page or file for each curriculum content area. Then you can refer to the anecdotes during subsequent planning sessions, when filling out assessments such as the *Preschool Child Observation Record* (COR; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2003a), and in meetings with parents.

3. Use KDI-based child observations as a basis for daily team planning

After you have discussed your observations of children's actions during various times of the day and interpreted them in light of the KDIs, use what you learn from your observations and discussions to plan support strategies and experiences to use with children the next day. You can also use these notes as part of the COR assessment process as described below.

During one daily team planning, for example, two teachers discussed how they had observed how Jonah placed all the black chess pieces on the black squares of the chessboard and all the white chess pieces on the white squares. They noted this as an example of KDI 46. Classifying under the Science and Technology area. After discussing Jonah's "chess playing," his teachers went on to consider how they could build on this insight about Jonah in their interactions with him the next day. If Jonah planned to play with the chess pieces again, they decided that one of them would try to be near him (1) to see if he

As she observes and interacts with a child during a bookmaking activity, the teacher jots down brief anecdotal notes. Later, she will interpret what the child did using the KDIs in Language, Literacy, and Communication and/or items on an assessment instrument such as the Preschool COR.

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said anything about what he was doing and (2) to make one of the teachers available if Jonah asked her to play. They also decided to add a set of colored marbles and a Chinese checkers game board to the toy area next to the chessboard to provide another game-like classifying opportunity. For small-group time, Jonah's small-group teacher decided to bring in enough checkerboards for each pair of children in her group to have one. For game pieces, she planned to provide a box of small varicolored plastic counting bears to see what kinds of "chess games" the children might make up. She was particularly interested in seeing what Jonah would do with colored bears that were not the same color as the squares on the board.

4. Use the KDIs as a guide to planning small- and large-group times

Building on your observations of what interests children, you can introduce activities at small- and large-group times that provide opportunities for children to engage in activities related to specific KDIs. For example, if box elder bugs are swarming outside and have attracted the children's attention, you might plan for children to observe the bugs and draw them at small-group time (Science and Technology: KDI 51. Natural and physical world; Creative Arts: KDI 40. Art). Or, if some children have recently talked about seeing circus clowns walking on stilts at a community festival, you might plan an outdoor large-group time in which children try walking on tin-can stilts tied to their shoes (Physical Development and Health: KDI 16. Gross-motor skills) or look at and read a picture book about the circus at small-group time (Language, Literacy, and Communication: KDI 26. Reading).

5. Use the content areas and KDIs to guide on-the-spot interactions with children

As you talk with children and support their problem-solving efforts, observe what children are doing in terms of curriculum content. This type of observation will often give you ideas for ways to support and extend their play. Asking yourself, "What is Sally doing? What is she involved in at this moment? What KDIs are at work here?" will often yield cues about ways to enter children's play without disrupting it. Here is an example of how this process works:

Jessa and Anna are building an elaborate "beehive" in the block area with blocks of all sizes and colored scarves. Later they come over to the art area (where you and several other children are working with play dough) and press a small triangle block into your arm. Giggling, they wait for your response. At first you are taken by surprise, but then you remember the "beehive" and think of KDI 43. Pretend play (in the content area Creative Arts). "Ouch,

bees," you reply. "Please don't sting me!" The two giggling "bees" fly back to their hive. You have understood and entered into the spirit of their play.

6. Use the Preschool Child Observation Record with your anecdotes on the KDIs

Drawing on your ongoing observations of children and the anecdotes recorded daily on the KDIs you observe, you will have the information needed to use the Preschool COR with each child in your program. The COR is a validated assessment instrument, based on the HighScope preschool curriculum content, that reflects the strands of development seen in all early childhood programs. To use the COR to assess child development, early childhood staff draw on the information gathered from daily child observations. The process of filling out the COR based on anecdotes gathered and recorded over several months will give your team an idea of where each child is developmentally in terms of many of the KDIs, and will let you chart each child's growth from one part of the year to another. For a complete discussion of the Preschool COR and how to use it, see the *Preschool COR User Guide* (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2003b).

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The HighScope curriculum content areas and KDIs are a set of tools designed to help adults understand young children and to use this understanding in their daily interactions with children. As adults use the KDIs to assess materials, interpret observations of children, plan for the next day, guide on-the-spot interactions, and assess children's development, they begin to appreciate their children's strengths and capacities, and to expand their own repertoire of support strategies

More information on using the KDIs to support learning can be found in the eight KDI books that accompany *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum* manual: *Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development and Health; Language, Literacy, and Communication; Mathematics; Creative Arts; Science and Technology,* and *Social Studies* (Epstein, 2012 a–h). Each of these books begins with a chapter summarizing the literature on why that content area is important, followed by a chapter discussing general teaching strategies to support early learning in that area. Following this overview are chapters focusing on the individual KDIs in that area. Each KDI chapter includes a detailed discussion of that KDI, including children's developmental progress in acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills, anecdotal examples of children's behaviors and supportive adult-child interactions, and specific strategies adults can use to support their development. Each KDI chapter concludes with a scaffolding chart with examples of what children at three developmental levels (earlier, middle, and later) might do and say as they engage with that KDI, and how adults

can support and gently extend learning at each level. Teachers can use the ideas in these charts to carry out the strategies described in the text as they play and interact with children throughout the program day.

Using the HighScope Preschool Curriculum content areas and KDIs, teachers will be able to understand early development, plan and carry out active learning experiences, conduct authentic assessment, and share information with parents as children progress through these exciting years.

Realizing that they need to make more materials available related to KDI 44. Appreciating the arts, teachers introduced a book about Picasso's paintings at snack time and then added the book to the classroom bookshelf.

As you will note from the lead article, the content areas and KDIs are useful tools for adults working with young children. Their daily usefulness, however, depends on accessibility. Since few people are likely to memorize the entire list of 58 KDIs, it is helpful to keep the list where adults can easily refer to it. For example:

- Post a large-print version of the KDI list in a central location where adults can glance at it throughout the day.
- Keep one-page lists of KDIs in places where team members can refer to them as needed — for example, with the daily team planning log, child anecdotal records, and parent conference folders, and on the parent announcement board. Lamination extends the lifetime of each list.

(To order KDI posters, laminated lists, and other related materials from HighScope Press, visit the Foundation website at highscope.org.)

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NEWS BRIEFS

Save the Date for the 2013 International Conference

Learn about best practices, products, programs, and teamwork! HighScope's 2013 conference will be held May 8–10, 2013, with preconference workshops available on May 6–7.

Educators from all over the world attend this event, which attracts 500–600 people annually. We purposely have kept it this size because it allows us to offer you up to 95 different, high-quality sessions presented by HighScope Certified Trainers and others in the field that have a proven record of excellence. And, we make sure there are many opportunities to network with people from around the world who are dedicated to helping the children in their communities learn, grow, and succeed.

Check highscope.org over the coming months to learn more about registration, conference and preconference schedules, speakers, entertainment, HighScope Demonstration Preschool visits, and travel information, and to get a preview of sessions.

ASK US

BY CHRISTINE SNYDER

What if I expect children to experience a KDI during an activity but I observe other KDIs instead?
                                    – A Preschool Teacher

The KDIs help us do many things when we are planning activities and arranging our environment. They give us an idea of what children might do with materials and also help us make sure the activities we are planning and the materials we have available are developmentally appropriate – that they match what children are capable of doing. Sometimes, when we plan activities or provide materials, children do different things than we expect. For example, when children are using colored blocks, we might expect that the children will create a pattern with the blocks (KDI #38: Patterns) but they might instead use the blocks to build towers and try out different ways to balance the blocks so they don't fall over (KDI #: 4 Problem Solving). Despite the fact that it is different from what we expected, the child is demonstrating a key part of development through his or her own exploration and curiosity. It's okay to let children take activities in a different direction, and it allows us to gather more information about what the children can do (what their strengths are) and what they are interested in. Following the children's lead and taking note of how they used the materials can guide our planning for future activities and additions to the learning environment.

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