
INSERVICE TEACHER-TRAINING IS THE KEY TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

High/Scope study shows that systematic inservice teacher-training improves the quality of early childhood programs and promotes children's development

The High/Scope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart with Barnett & Epstein, 1993) shows that high quality early childhood programs can have lasting benefits for children living in poverty and at high risk of school failure. National debate centers on how to guarantee that such programs are of sufficiently high quality to have positive and enduring effects upon children's lives. Evaluation of the High/Scope Training of Trainers (ToT) initiative (Epstein, 1993) shows that *systematic inservice training* of early childhood practitioners can produce the desired quality. Moreover, such training initiatives can be successfully mounted on a large scale.

STUDY BACKGROUND

In 1982, the High/Scope Foundation developed the ToT program to provide inservice training to large numbers of early childhood practitioners throughout the country. The program includes an adult education model for training staff and an early childhood curriculum model for working with children. Groups of 20-25 adults participate in 35 days of workshops and practice activities conducted by a High/Scope consultant over seven months. Those who meet a set of rigorous requirements become High/Scope endorsed trainers. Endorsed trainers then work with teachers and caregivers in their own early childhood agencies to implement the High/Scope Curriculum, a developmentally-based program emphasizing children's active participation in the learning process.

Since 1982, High/Scope has conducted 94 ToT projects and endorsed over 1,300 trainers in 38 states and 12 foreign countries. These endorsed trainers have in turn trained an estimated 32,500 teachers working with 325,000 children annually. The ToT evaluation investigated the effectiveness of the adult education model for adults and the curriculum for children. The study sought to illuminate the features that characterize effective inservice training for early childhood practitioners. In an ambitious multi-method evaluation, High/Scope researchers:

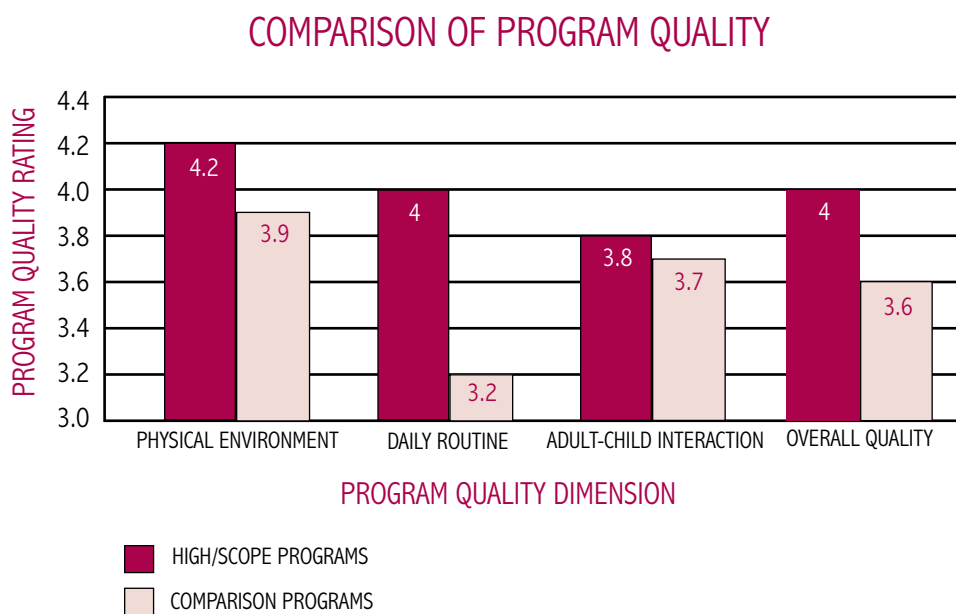
- collected anecdotal records from High/Scope consultants and 793 participants in 40 ToT projects

- surveyed a random sample of 203 High/Scope endorsed trainers around the country
- interviewed and observed teachers in 244 High/Scope and 122 non-High/Scope classrooms in Head Start programs, public schools, and non-profit and for-profit agencies
- assessed 97 children in High/Scope and 103 children in comparison programs

THE EVIDENCE FOR ACHIEVING PROGRAM QUALITY

Independent observers rated High/Scope programs significantly higher than comparison programs on most dimensions of quality. On a series of 5-point scales, High/Scope programs received higher mean ratings on:

- *providing a good physical environment* that was organized and gave children access to diverse materials
- *creating a consistent daily routine* that encouraged children to plan, carry out, and review their work
- *establishing supportive patterns of adult-child interaction* that promoted children’s reasoning and language skills



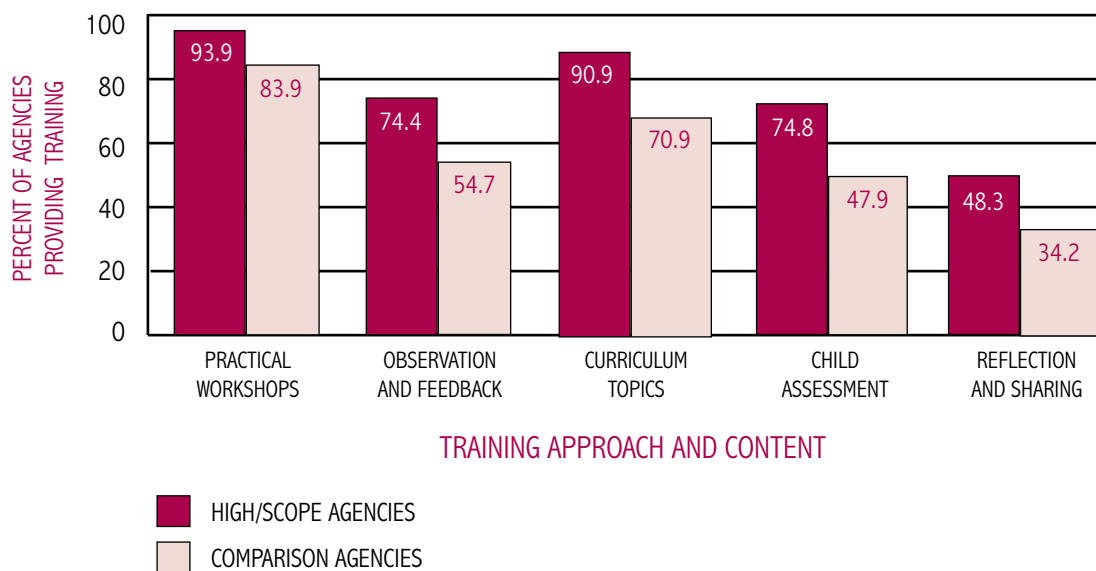
Systematic inservice training, over and above teachers’ formal education and experience, is a significant predictor of program quality. But inservice training improves program quality *only* if it includes:

- workshops that actively involve participants
- a curriculum model that provides teachers with both theory and practical application

- multi-session distributive learning instead of single-session workshops on trendy topics
- classroom visits by a trainer who observes and provides feedback to teachers
- opportunities for participants to reflect on their learning and share their experiences

Teachers in High/Scope programs received more of the types of training that promote program quality than did teachers in comparison settings. Significantly more High/Scope than comparison agencies provided systematic inservice training (94% vs. 84%) and required attendance at training (79% vs. 59%). Moreover, High/Scope teachers were more open to changing their teaching practices based on their training experiences.

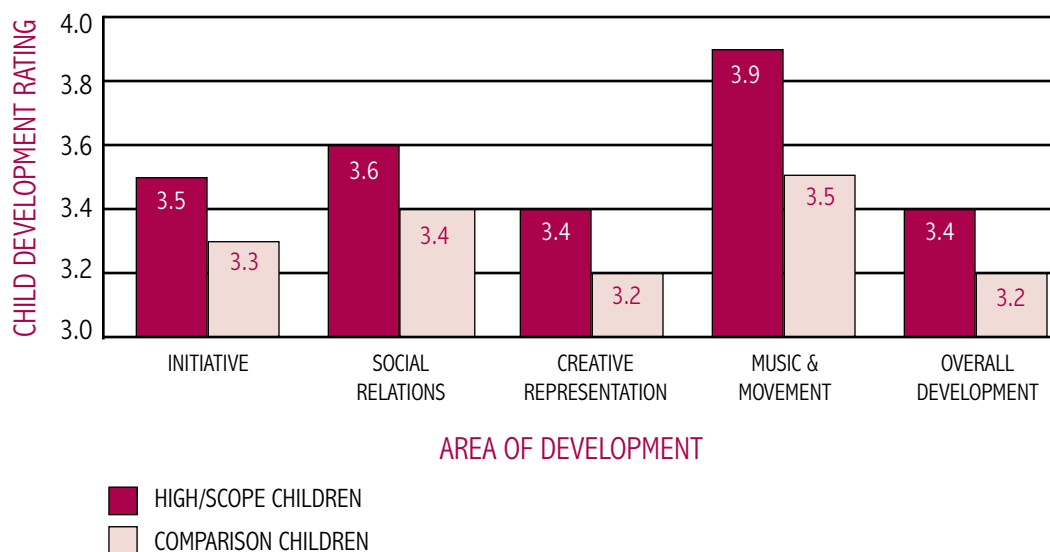
COMPARISON OF TRAINING EXPERIENCES



THE EVIDENCE FOR PROMOTING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Children in High/Scope programs significantly outscored those in comparison programs on measures of emotional, social, cognitive, and motor development. Comparison children showed no significant advantages over High/Scope children on any of the child assessments. Compared to those in the comparison group, children in High/Scope programs showed significantly more initiative (engaging in complex play and joining group activities), better social development (more interaction with peers and better social problem-solving), and better overall development. They tended to be better in certain cognitive areas (creative representation, classification, and language skills) and were rated higher in music and movement abilities.

COMPARISON OF CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT



Program quality was significantly associated with children's development. Access to diverse materials and opportunities for planning and recall were the two dimensions of program quality most strongly related to child measures. The areas of children's development most strongly affected by program quality were language and creative representational skills.

THE EVIDENCE FOR MOUNTING SUCCESSFUL TRAINING STRATEGIES

An investment in a systematic dissemination and training model can produce large-scale and long-lasting benefits. Following certification, each High/Scope trainer trained an average of 25 early childhood teachers and caregivers. Researchers calculate that between 1982 and 1995, High/Scope ToT projects resulted in:

- 1,300 High/Scope endorsed trainers
- 32,500 trained early childhood practitioners
- 16,250 programs implementing the High/Scope Curriculum
- 7,500 "showcase" High/Scope programs
- 325,000 children per year attending High/Scope programs

Evaluation of the High/Scope Training of Trainers initiative has taught us the elements crucial to making inservice training effective at both the individual program level and the national dissemination level. If we are concerned about the professional development of the nation's growing number of early childhood teachers and the quality of the services they deliver to our young children, then we must invest our resources in training for quality.

REFERENCES

Epstein, A.S. (1993). *Training for quality: Improving early childhood programs through systematic inservice training*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., and Weikart, D. P., with Barnett, W. S. and Epstein, A. S. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

HIGH/SCOPE TRAINING OPTIONS

High/Scope offers a wide range of training options for individuals, groups, and agencies at High/Scope Foundation headquarters in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and at sites throughout the United States and in other parts of the world. To find out more about High/Scope training, contact the Training Coordinator at info@highscope.org.

HIGH/SCOPE PRESS PUBLICATIONS

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