THE HIGH/SCOPE K-3 CURRICULUM:
A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE APPROACH
THAT WILL WORK IN YOUR SCHOOL

The High/Scope K-3 Curriculum, one of various curriculum models based on developmentally appropriate practice, has proved its success on standardized achievement tests. This curriculum has been shown to help at-risk students improve their school achievement and literacy skills significantly more than the typical K-3 curriculum. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation developed this curriculum from its highly successful preschool curriculum for its role in the national Follow Through project. It has continued such work with the early elementary classes in the Family and Child Education programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Each school year since 1968, High/Scope has assisted in curriculum implementation at various public elementary schools around the U.S. High/Scope has provided each school with at least five site visits each school year, supported by a variety of print and audiovisual teacher training materials.

In 1991, the U.S. Department of Education’s Program Effectiveness Panel approved the High/Scope K-3 Curriculum for dissemination through the National Diffusion Network. It is one of the only current school reform models that focuses primarily on the classroom. In 1988-91, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (1991) conducted a study of the school achievement of High/Scope Follow Through classes at three public elementary schools (Schweinhart & Hohmann, 1992; Schweinhart & Wallgren, 1993). Comparison groups were drawn from other classes in these schools and classes in similar schools. About 1,024 children a year participated in the study. The analyses controlled for group differences in background characteristics in order to make the outcome comparisons as fair as possible.

As the figure summarizes, the High/Scope Follow Through groups scored statistically significantly higher than one or both comparison groups on 18 of the 25 composite

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High/Scope Early Elementary Evaluation
Achievement Test Scores

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Achievement Test Score

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Other-School Group  Same-School Group  High/Scope Group
achievement comparisons and significantly lower on none of them. Overall, the High/Scope Follow Through groups scored an average 12 normal-curve-equivalent (NCE) points higher than the comparison groups, a little over half the standard deviation of about 22 NCE points. Earlier studies also showed that the High/Scope approach had positive effects on school achievement, writing ability and dispositions, and social skills.

The High/Scope K-3 Curriculum is an open framework of educational ideas and practices based on the natural development of young children, originally developed by David Weikart and his colleagues in the 1970s and continuing its development today. Based on the child development ideas of Jean Piaget, the curriculum views children as active learners whom teachers help to plan, carry out, and reflect upon their own self-designed learning activities. Teaching staff observe, support, and extend children's activities as appropriate. They arrange instructional activity centers in the classroom and maintain a daily routine to provide active learning experiences in mathematics, language, science, art, social studies, movement, and music that match children's needs and address appropriate content, skills, and concepts in these areas. They join in children's activities, asking questions that extend children's plans and help them think. They engage children in key experiences that help them learn to make choices, solve problems, and otherwise actively contribute to their own intellectual, social, and physical development. Teacher guides address the subjects of language, mathematics, science, and music and movement.

The High/Scope K-3 Curriculum differs fundamentally from typical K-3 teacher-directed instruction in that it emphasizes the child as a self-initiating active learner. It differs from other child-centered curricula by using cognitive-developmental theory to place primary emphasis on problem-solving and independent thinking rather than social development and relationships. In the High/Scope K-3 Curriculum, teaching staff continuously gauge the child's developmental status and present intellectual challenges intended to stretch the child's awareness and understanding. Unlike other child-centered approaches, the teaching staff does not stand out of the way and permit free play to simply happen, but rather guides children's chosen activities towards developmentally appropriate experiences.

References
