**Active Learning**

This is a 55-minute workshop.

**Materials**
- Play dough
- Toothpicks
- Small buttons, beads, or dried beans
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Handout — Active Learning
- PowerPoint slides

**Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs)**

Active learning is a component of all the KDIs.

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**Welcome and Objectives**

5 minutes

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself. Explain that you would like to talk about how to support children’s active learning.
- Tell participants that, in this workshop, they will
  - Learn about HighScope’s philosophy of active learning
  - Discuss the five ingredients of active learning
  - Learn and share ways to support active learning at home

**Opening Activity**

20 minutes

- Give each participant some play dough. Have participants follow your directions to make a snowman with their play dough. Tell participants that they should make each of the three balls of play dough the same size as yours. Talk about the concepts of size (e.g., small, medium, and large), and quiz participants on the different sizes.
- Instruct participants to use toothpicks to create the snowman face and to place the small buttons down the front of their snowman, as you direct. Make sure that participants follow your directions and do not work ahead.
- Next, ask the participants to set aside their snowman. Give them another ball of play dough and the buttons, beads, or dried beans. Invite them to take a few minutes to use the play dough in any way they would like. Interact with the participants by showing interest and making comments about what they are doing.
- Have participants break into groups at different tables; ask the participants to compare their two play dough experiences. Which was more enjoyable? From which activity did they learn the most about how to use play dough?
- Using two pieces of chart paper, create lists of the concepts participants learned during each activity (e.g., in the first activity, participants learned how to follow the teacher’s directions and about the concepts of small, medium, and large).
- If needed, help participants “see” the learning that took place during the second activity. Make connections between what you saw participants doing with the play dough and curriculum content (e.g., math concepts, problem solving, cooperative play).
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Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs)
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Young children learn by testing out their ideas and exploring through all their senses.

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### Main Ideas

**Active Learning**

- 15 minutes

In comparing the two different experiences in the opening activity, it should be clear to participants that more learning occurred when they were able to manipulate the play dough in their own way. Summarize by making the following points:

- Learning is not simply a process of adults giving children information to memorize or telling children what to do.
- Children learn when they are actively engaged with materials and ideas.
- Through exploring and playing with materials, children build knowledge of the things around them (e.g., adding water to dirt makes mud; if you stack blocks too high, they fall down). Keep in mind that not all children will learn the same thing at the same time.
- Teachers using the HighScope Curriculum make sure that the five ingredients of active learning are present in all they do with children.

Introduce the five ingredients of active learning and explain how each of these ingredients supports children’s learning.

- **Materials:** There are lots of open-ended materials that children can hold and use in many ways.
- **Manipulation:** Adults encourage children to explore materials using all of their senses, to transform and combine materials, and to manipulate objects freely.
- **Choice:** Children choose materials and decide what to do with them.
- **Child language and thought:** Children think about and talk about what they are doing.
- **Adult scaffolding:** Adults recognize and encourage children’s ideas, problem solving, thinking, and creativity.

Ask participants to think back to the open activities and determine which ingredients of active learning were present in each activity.

- In the first activity, participants had play dough (materials) to form into a snowman (manipulation). However, because participants had to follow directions (no choice) there was limited opportunity for them to talk to each other (no language). In this directive activity, there was not opportunity for the teacher to scaffold learning, that is, to support each participant at his or her own level, then provide gentle extensions to build on each individual’s learning/skills.
- In the second activity, all of the ingredients of active learning should have been evident.

**Introduction**

**Active Learning At Home**

- PP 5 (["Active Learning"])

Discuss the following strategies, which your workshop participants can use to encourage active learning at home:

- Ask participants to think of an activity their child enjoys doing at home. Have participants discuss with the other members of their table groups whether their child is experiencing the five ingredients of active learning from that activity. Have participants determine whether the materials their child uses are open-ended. Share ideas from each table group with the entire group.
- Reiterate that when more of the ingredients of active learning are present, the learning experience becomes richer.
- Discuss the following strategies, which your workshop participants can use to encourage active learning at home:
  - **Open-Ended Toys**
    - Introduce the concept of open-ended toys. That is, toys and materials that can be used in endless ways based upon a child’s interest, imagination, and development.
    - Open-ended toys offer children choices in how to use/manipulate them and can be used by children at all developmental levels. They are limited only by a child’s imagination.
  - **Application**
    - **Active Learning At Home**
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        - **At Home**
          - **Active Learning At Home**
            - Talk about how, throughout the daily routine, teachers in HighScope settings make sure that children are engaged in active learning experiences. Refer back to the list of what participants learned during the play dough activity at the beginning of this workshop.
            - Emphasize again that when children have the opportunity to play with toys and materials in their own ways, they are also learning.
          - **Open-Ended Toys**
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**Materials**

- PP 6 (["HighScope’s Five Ingredients of Active Learning"])
- PP 7 (["Open Ended Toys"])
- PP 8 (["Active Learning at Home"])
- PP 9 (["How to Support Active Learning"])

**Handout:** Active Learning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Activity</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Ideas</strong></td>
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<td>◗ Allow your child to use materials in different ways.</td>
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