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Extensions

Curriculum Newsletter From HighScope

Using the COR for Inspired Lesson Planning

BY EMILY THOMPSON, HIGHSCOPE EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST

Teachers in many classrooms use the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) on a daily basis. They use it to record observations about children's interests and development and then compile reports for parent conferences and agency records. These uses of the COR provide great benefits, but if we understand this assessment tool more broadly, we can use it in other ways as well. To better understand the entire scope of the assessment, we first must understand the intention. Providing a meaningful, objective, and all-inclusive picture of a child's developmental progress is really what the COR is about. Using it to write and score anecdotes creates a timeline of children's development while they are in our programs. Likewise, by looking across children — combining individual scores to create a classroom profile — we can also get a picture of the range and variability of the group as a whole.

We can use this information to support and extend children's growth and learning in a developmentally appropriate way. That is, we can fulfill our primary role as teachers by intentionally using the COR in daily planning at the individual and classroom level. You can plan by thinking about the interests reflected in the children's play that you document with COR observations, additional

This teacher takes anecdotes on children's play that she will score with the COR to create a timeline of the children's development.

HighScope developed the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) in response to the need for an early childhood assessment that would give a comprehensive portrait of a child's developmental progress. The success of the Preschool COR helped many different early childhood programs assess their children and improve their programs (HighScope Extensions, "How the Preschool COR Can Work for You!" by Polly Neill, Summer 2004 Vol. 18, No. 6, p. 1).

areas of the COR that you want to expose children to, areas of the COR where you have missing data, and areas where the scores are consistently low or where you don't see much growth occurring.

Blending children's interests with the COR can take some thought. When you are planning a small-group time, review your COR anecdotes to see what materials the children in your classroom have been playing with. Then try to incorporate that material with the curriculum content you have in mind when planning your small-group time.

For example:

- *Dinosaurs* — If children have been interested in using the toy dinosaurs and you want to focus on sorting, you can offer dinosaurs in different shapes and colors. If the interest is dinosaurs and you want to focus on pretend play, you can add in some props for the children to tell stories with.
- *Water table* — If children in your classroom have been playing in the water table a lot and you want to give them more opportunities to name and recognize letters, you can give children their own tubs of water, small plastic letters, and some spoons.

Of course, not all child interests will blend as seamlessly with COR areas, and that is okay! Just make sure that you are planning for children's interests in other ways throughout your routine (for example, based on the curriculum content) and giving them chances to make their own choices about the play they want to do.

You can also use a computer to analyze this data with the OnlineCOR. If you are seeing low scores in particular areas and want to get ideas for boosting them, you can use the classroom profile report. This report lets you choose which area of the COR you want to look at and then arranges children's names according to levels where you have scored anecdotes. For example, it might tell you that you have scored Olivia, Kendal, Matthew, and Robert at a level 2 for COR item Y. Sorting objects; that no children are scored for a level 3 or

By analyzing what they note about children's interests using the COR, teachers can identify areas with low scores and develop ideas for boosting them.

4; and that only Amelia is at a level 5. This type of information can really help you identify specific objectives to plan for in the classroom and help you see what levels of development your children are currently at.

Once you have this information, you can plan an activity related to sorting and know how to support children at their current level while offering gentle extensions of their skills. In other words, you can be more intentional about scaffolding their learning as you work together during the activity. If there is an area of the COR that you feel you never take anecdotes for, the Classroom Score Report in OnlineCOR can be very useful. This report will show you how many anecdotes have been taken for each child at a specific level. So, for example, you can see that for item M. Moving with objects, you have one anecdote for Ella, none for Bryce, two for Brady, and none for Veronica. Now that you have confirmed your initial thoughts about missing this COR item, discuss with your teaching team whether children might be engaging in this area but you are just not seeing or recording it. On the other hand, you may not be providing enough of the materials and experiences that would encourage them to engage in activities in this area. Then you can brainstorm with your teaching team about when you might see this item in children's work and play during the day, and the best way to take anecdotes during this time. Or, you might think about providing materials and planning a large- or small-group time around this COR item.

If you use the COR kit, you can also make these reports by taking a look at your Child's Developmental Summary sheet and focusing on the area that you think you are missing or have low scores for. Label a separate piece of paper with levels 1–5* across the top. As you scan through your children's Developmental Summary sheets, you can keep a tally of the levels of the anecdotes that you have scored in the area you are focusing on. See the example below:

A. Making Choices and Plans

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
	2		1	1

According to the information above, most children in this group (6 out of 8) are scoring at a level 2 or below. You now can take a deeper look into the item and see whether children need more opportunities to make choices and plans. You can also think about some strategies that would support children in giving more details about their plans.

Y. Sorting Objects

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
1	1			

*Note that the chart shown in the example illustrates levels 1–5 because it pertains to the print versions of the COR. OnlineCOR uses level 0–5 and will enable users to tabulate similar information showing all six levels.

After tallying the scores for this item, you can see that there are not many anecdotes taken in this area; you might brainstorm with your teaching team about why this is. After looking closely at item Y. Sorting objects on the COR, you can see that there might be certain materials that would promote sorting. Doing a small-group time with these materials or simply adding them to the classroom environment would support this type of learning.

If you are an OnlineCOR user and you think the children in your classroom are not growing or progressing within the COR framework, you can take a look at the Classroom Score Report. This report gives you a snapshot of the COR scores for all the children in your classroom. Scores are shown for each recording period. So this information will show you that for A. Making choices and plans, Grace scored a 3 for the first recording period and a 3 for the second recording period. We can clearly see that there is no growth for Grace in this area. For manual COR users, this report can be completed by first filling out the Developmental Summary for all the children in your classroom and then compiling these summaries. In the example below, you can see the reporting periods (1–4) for each item, and the highest scores for the children Grace and Anna. This report can show you where there is no growth, where children have decreased in scores, and where they are showing growth.

I. Initiative

	A. Making choices and plans	B. Solving problems with materials	C. Initiating play	D. Taking care of personal needs
Reporting period	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Grace	3 3	4 3	2 2	3 4
Anna	2 3	3 4	1 2	2 2

Running and compiling these types of reports can be very helpful for you in using your COR data in a more meaningful way. Make sure you are looking at this information often so that you have updated information with which to plan. We know children can grow very quickly, so we suggest looking at these reports about every two weeks. Since you are entering anecdotes daily, you will

Analyzing COR data can help teachers support children at their current level of development while encouraging them to take the next step.

also be able to keep tabs on the information that way. You don't have to formally compile COR scores every few weeks, but it is helpful to be looking at them on a regular basis. However, if you only compile the scores three to four times per year, you can't use the COR to support children's development.

Using the COR more effectively and efficiently can help you plan for supporting children at their individual levels while giving them the confidence to take the next step in their development!

Emily Thompson is an early childhood specialist, certified teacher, and certified trainer at the HighScope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In her work with HighScope, Emily writes articles for *the Foundation's curriculum newsletter, Extensions,* facilitates online courses, develops trainings, and aligns the HighScope Curriculum with state and national standards. She also served on the team that developed the key developmental indicators, which form the content of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum. Emily is also a public elementary school teacher in Dexter, Michigan, and previously taught in the HighScope Demonstration Preschool. She credits her knowledge about children and what they need developmentally to these experiences. Emily says she "learned *what* to teach in college and *how* to teach from HighScope."

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Intentional Planning With the COR

BY EMILY THOMPSON, HIGHSCOPE EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST

Once you have looked through your COR reports and have an understanding of where the children in your classroom are, developmentally, you can use this information to plan for your day. Many teachers tend to plan large- and small-group activities for their day, but we should also be planning strategies to support children throughout the day. When looking at a classroom daily plan (sample at right), you can see that some parts of the day will be planned with activities (including introductions, support strategies, content areas, and materials) and that other parts of the day will be planned for with reminders of observations to make, children to support, or adult-child interaction strategies to remember to use. Read the scenario below (and look at the sample "spreadsheets" in the lead article) to gain an understanding of the planning process of Karen, a teacher:

Children have been interested in playing with the cat and dog figures. They have been building them houses and finding things to give them as food. After running my reports from yesterday, I learned that many children in my group are scoring low in item A. Making choices and plans. I want to try and help children think about more details in their plan. I also learned that I am missing anecdotes for N. Feeling and expressing steady beat, and I would like to plan an activity for this item so that I can take some more anecdotes. The reports also told me that children are not growing in item V. Using letter names and sounds. I would like to support this area more throughout the routine.

Adults: Karen and Page

Greeting Time:

At door talking to parents: Karen

On carpet reading books with children: Page

Transition: By letters in children's names: "If you have a *B* in your name you can go to your planning table."

Child Messages for message board:
1) New foam blocks in block area

Planning Time (Karen)	**Planning Time (Page)**
Have children roll a die that has numbers 1–3 on it. Have them tell me that number of details about their plan.	Place area signs on the table with some blocks around them like walls. Give children a dog or cat to place on the area where they want to play. Then they can tell their plan.

Work Time
Support the pretend play with cats and dogs.
Help children use new blocks within their play.

Cleanup
Have children clean up to music that is fast and slow; they can clean fast or slow with the pace of the music.

Recall Time (Karen)	**Recall Time (Page)**
Children can use the recall wheel (round cardboard with area signs drawn on) and place a clip on the area where they played.	Children will use two cell phones to "call" each other and tell each other what they did at work time.

Snack: Juice, water, apples
Karen and Page: Read an alphabet book

Large-Group Time

Easy-to-join activity: Sing the song "We're jumping, jumping, jumping. We're jumping, jumping, jumping. We're jumping, jumping, jumping, and now we stop." Sing the song a few different ways and then get children's ideas of ways to move.

Songbook: Today is Brian's turn to choose a song. Watch and take notes about who can keep a steady beat to the song.

Activity: Tell a story about cats and dogs. The children can act out the story as we tell the parts; they can also add ideas to the story about what is going to happen next.

Large-Group Time (continued) *Transition:* Have children move to their small-group tables by colors of their clothing.	
Small-Group Time (Karen) *Content:* Using letter names and sounds *Materials:* Wooden tracing letters, crayons and paper *Earlier level of development:* Children will say some random letters *Middle level of development:* Children name more letters they are looking at or tracing. *Later level of development:* Children ask how to spell a particular word and name the first letter in the word.	***Small-Group Time (Page)*** *Content:* Pretend play; language *Materials:* Cats, dogs, foam blocks *Earlier level of development:* Children use materials and say a few words, mostly playing by themselves. *Middle level of development:* Children use words and actions while pretending, and will add more details to their play. *Later level of development:* Children pretend with other children and have a story line. They add a lot of details to their play.
Outside Time Get out bikes; sandbox or sand table toys. Support pretend play happening outside; remind children they can bring out toys from the room outside.	
Things to remember Remind parents to start bringing warm clothes for outside time.	

Reading through the scenario and daily plan can help you see how using your COR data can make your planning more intentional. You can also start to see how the particular times of day are planned for:

Greeting time: Interaction strategies, messages to share with children, reminders of things to look for, materials to add to the classroom

Planning time: Strategies, reminders of things to look for

Work time: Interaction strategies, materials children might use

Recall time: Strategies, reminders of things to look for

Small-group time: Activities, reminders of things to look for; how to scaffold children at earlier, middle, and later levels of development

Large-group time: Activities, reminders of things to look for

Outside time: Materials

Mealtimes: Interaction strategies, books to read

As teachers, we want to make sure that we are being intentional about our whole day, without over planning. Children will still make choices and manipulate materials in their own ways during all these times, so our intentions for an activity or use of materials may not be fulfilled. This is okay — remember that children are learning just by doing. If we don't get the anecdotes we are looking for on a particular day, that often means that children are not ready for whatever our intentions are, or that their interests are leading them in another direction. We can learn from what children *are* doing today, and we will get those anecdotes another day or time provided we intentionally plan opportunities that can capture children's interests when they are ready!

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Planning Around the Preschool COR

The following is an excerpt from HighScope's new book *Planning Around the Preschool COR* by Emily Thompson.

Category IV. Movement and Music

ITEM M. Moving with objects
1. **Child throws or kicks an object.**
2. **Child catches an object.**
3. **Child coordinates both hands to manipulate one or more objects.**
4. **Child dribbles a ball.**
5. **Child strikes a moving object with a bat or paddle.**

Planning Time

Activity: Planning With Area Signs
Materials: Area signs; buckets or baskets.
Place area signs on large buckets or baskets. Have children throw a soft ball into the bucket with the area sign of where they want to play.

Suggestions for English Language Learners (ELL): Ask the child's family for translations of the different classroom interest areas. Use these translations and the classroom language as you plan with the children.

Activity: Making Area Signs for Planning
Materials: Markers; paper; scissors.
Draw area signs with markers on a piece of paper and make enough copies for your planning group. Have children cut out the sign for the area in which they want to play. Watch and see who uses both hands while doing this — one to hold the paper and one to cut the paper.

Special Needs Accommodations: Have adaptive scissors to accommodate children with varying fine-motor abilities. These scissors spring open and can be easier to use for some children.

Activity: Stringing Beads
Materials: Beads; string; masking tape.
Have children string beads on strings that have been labeled with area symbols. You can label the strings by making masking tape tabs and drawing the symbols on them.

Work Time

Strategy:
Incorporate soft balls or beanbags into some areas. Allow children to toss these objects into buckets or to each other.

Strategy:
Provide a lot of clothes for children to dress dolls in. Observe as they use both hands to fasten the buttons, Velcro, etc.

Strategy:
Add small toys that can be put together and taken apart, for example, nuts and bolts, Legos, Tinker Toys, and so forth.

Strategy:
Create a woodworking area, or incorporate woodworking materials into the art area — for example, screwdrivers and screws, hammers and nails (or golf tees and Styrofoam), and appliances to take apart.

Recall Time

Activity: Playing Hot Potato
Materials: One small beanbag or a soft ball.
Use a small beanbag or a soft ball. Play a version of "hot potato." Toss the beanbag to children and have them toss it to other children. When you say "Freeze," the child with the beanbag recalls.

Activity: Making Area Signs for Recall
Materials: Markers; paper; scissors.
Draw area signs on a piece of paper and make enough copies for your planning group. Have children cut out the sign for the area in which they played. Observe to see who uses both hands while doing this — one to hold the paper and one to cut the paper.

Activity: Recalling With a Ball
Materials: Ball.
Sit together with children in a circle and roll a ball to a child for his or her turn to recall. After recalling, the child then rolls the ball to another child.

Large-Group Time

Activity: Kicking Balloons
Materials: Balloons — enough for each child, and extras in case some pop (blow them up in advance of activity).
Have children kick the balloons around the large-group area. Balloons are soft enough that they will not hurt children or materials around the area.

Activity: Moving With Materials
Materials: Soft balls or balloons; paper towel tubes (one of each material for each child).

Have children go outside and play with soft balls or balloons and paper towel tubes. Children can choose how to move with the materials; they might toss and catch the balls, hit them with the tubes, or kick the balls.

Activity: Playing With Rubber Balls
Materials: Large rubber balls; buckets or hoops.
Use large rubber balls on a hard surface, such as the gym floor or pavement outside. Introduce buckets or hoops for children to toss balls into.

Activity: Kicking Balls
Materials: Balls, enough for each child.
Kick balls in large grassy areas.

Activity: Marching With Musical Instruments
Materials: Musical instruments.
March, as in a parade, with instruments.

Small-Group Time

Activity: Playing Basket Toss
Materials: Baskets for each child; soft balls.
Have children play "basket toss": they can toss their ball into their basket. Children can also keep their "score" on a board if they want.

Developmental Range for Playing Basket Toss: What You May See Children Doing

Earlier (level 1–2)	Middle (level 3–4)	Later (level 5)
Children may • Throw the ball toward the basket. • Throw the ball up in the air and catch it. • Catch the ball that another child, or you, toss to him or her.	**Children may** • Throw the ball into the basket. • Dribble the ball on the ground, then throw it into the basket.	**Children may** • Throw the ball up in the air and hit it with their hand or kick it with their foot. • Walk and dribble the ball toward the basket.

Activity: Cutting Out Pictures
Materials: Scissors; magazines; envelopes.
Have children cut out pictures from magazines. They can choose what they want to cut out. Children may want to place their cuttings in an envelope.

Special Needs Accommodations: Have spring-loaded scissors available for children who have varying fine motor abilities.

Developmental Range for Cutting Out Pictures: What You May See Children Doing

Earlier (level 1–2)	Middle (level 3–4)	Later (level 5)
Children may • Tear the paper with their fingers. • Use two hands to open and close the scissors.	**Children may** • Make small snips along the edge of the paper, like fringe. • Use one hand to move or hold the paper and one hand to open and close the scissors.	**Children may** • Cut around a picture using one hand to manipulate the scissors and the other hand to turn the picture.

Outside Time

Strategy:
Incorporate materials that children can easily kick, throw, or bat.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Dr. Tomoko Wakabayashi Named Director of Research

Dr. Tomoko Wakabayashi has been named Director of Research of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, it was announced by Dr. Larry Schweinhart, HighScope president.

Dr. Wakabayashi is an experienced educational researcher with expertise in assessment and program evaluation. Her post-doctoral research experience includes work at the Center for Infant Studies at Stanford University. She has extensive experience in higher education teaching and has served as the lead evaluator for a federally funded five-year responsible fatherhood project.

Prior to joining HighScope, Dr. Wakabayashi served as research manager for Parents as Teachers, was a lecturer in the Child and Adolescent Development Department of San Jose State University, and served as a Postdoctoral Research Coordinator in the Center for Infant Studies in the Department of Psychology at Stanford University.

A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan, Dr. Wakabayashi earned a Master's Degree in Child Study at Tufts University, was a research student at Kyoto University in Kyoto, Japan, and earned both a Masters of Education and a Doctor of Education Degree in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"We are very pleased to have Dr. Tomoko Wakabayashi as HighScope's new Director of Research," noted Schweinhart. "Her problem-solving orientation, research interests, experience, and educational background fit well with HighScope's character and culture," he added.

OnlineCOR Updates

You may have noticed some changes in **OnlineCOR** – that is because we are in the last step of testing, which is a "live" test of the new features being introduced. We hope you find many of the new features useful in your work with children.

The January release includes:
Teacher Planning Form — A new interactive teacher planning form is available! Teachers may create, edit, and save daily lesson plans.

ASK US

BY KAREN "KAY" RUSH

Although this year's gain scores were the same as last year, our overall scores weren't as strong. Should I be concerned?

— A Preschool Teacher

We applaud your awareness of your children's COR scores from this year compared to previous years. However, we think there is no cause for concern at this time. Your children's gain scores are the same, so one could say that your program is having the same impact this year compared to last year. If you look at your first set of COR scores, you will see that they were lower than the previous year. In other words, the children started at a lower level but you were equally effective in supporting and advancing their development.

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NEWS BRIEFS (continued)

• Now you can make your own daily plan *online* — create and/or manage a daily routine that reflects *your* classroom schedule. We have added an advanced search option so you can easily find activities and strategies by topic, Preschool COR category or item, learning center, or routine.

• New activities and strategies from HighScope's new book, *Planning Around the Preschool COR*, provide a library of activities for possible inclusion in your lesson plan. Add your own activities to the online lesson plan — activities added by teachers show up in "My Activities" for later retrieval.

• Review planning reminders entered on child records in the "View Notes" link to aid in individualized planning. See more details below.

• Associate a lesson plan with a particular topic. From the keyword search, the lesson plans will appear in the topic search results and can be added to the daily plan by simply dragging the result to the plan window.

***Planning Reminders* to *Help Teachers With Individualized Planning* —** When entering an anecdote, teachers may now enter a planning reminder for individual children. The notes can be reviewed in the new lesson planner and make planning for each child easier and more meaningful.

***Mobile App* —** OnlineCOR Mobile is a new add-on feature for OnlineCOR.net users and runs on iOS (iPAD®) and Android® tablet devices. Syncing between OnlineCOR Mobile and OnlineCOR.net requires access to a wireless hotspot. Once synced, the OnlineCOR Mobile application can be used to enter and score anecdotes for children in your classroom while offline. When finished entering anecdotes, you will locate a hot spot and sync your tablet with OnlineCOR to upload your latest anecdotes to OnlineCOR.net. Soon the OnlineCOR Mobile App will be available to download from the iTunes® or Android Market® stores; watch for future OnlineCOR announcements.

***Head Start Reporting* —** Head Start reports at the cassroom level and above now include a new report page based on the Head Start approach to school readiness.

***Teacher User Guide* —** The Teacher User Guide located in the "Toolbox" has been updated with instructions for the new January 2012 features.

***OSEP* —** The method of identifying scores for OSEP purposes has been changed. A new Manage OSEP Scores has been added to the Anecdotes section of the teacher home page. Using this option, the teacher will be able to review anecdotes entered in during a selected time period(s) and record the score that best represents the child's entry or exit skill based on the scores entered. Users can change time periods and school years to correct for missing data. Users will no longer identify individual anecdotes as entry or exit when entering anecdotes.

***OnlinePQA* —** The Program Quality Assessment (PQA) may now be accessed from within the OnlineCOR application (requires a separate license). Visit **OnlinePQA** to learn more.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact us. Technical support is also available if you have questions about any of the new features — 888.386.3822 (option 5), M–F 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. EST.

Mark your calendar now for the 2012 HighScope International Conference!

The conference is scheduled for May 2–4, 2012, with preconference sessions taking place April 30—May 1.

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