
A Letter to Families About Dramatic Play

Dear Families,

In the Dramatic Play area, children take on different roles and enact real-life experiences. They use props and make-believe to deepen their understandings about the world.

Pretending is very important to your child's development. Children who know how to make believe develop good vocabularies, which are important for reading. They learn to cooperate with others, to solve problems, and to think abstractly. All of those skills are important for success in school. When children pretend, they recall and re-create experiences. To do this, they need to form mental images. For example, to play the role of a doctor, children have to remember what tools a doctor uses, how a doctor examines a patient, and what a doctor says. In playing a doctor or other roles, children learn to cooperate with others and to share their ideas.

When children make believe, we talk with them and participate in their play to extend their thinking. We might ask,

“Is your baby sick? What are you going to do?”

“Are you the storekeeper here? I need to buy some food.”

“What are you cooking for dinner tonight? It smells very good!”

What You Can Do at Home

You can encourage the same kind of pretend play at home as we do at school simply by playing with your child and providing some simple props. Draping a sheet over a table creates a house or a hideout. A large empty cardboard box can become almost anything: a pirate ship, a doghouse, a castle, or a train. The nice thing about dramatic play is that it requires only your imagination. Here are some simple ways to encourage your child's learning through dramatic play:

- During baths, offer plastic boats, cups, and rubber dolls and pretend together.
- Save empty food cartons, make some play money, and play store with your child.
- Read stories together and involve your child in acting out different parts.
- Collect some old clothes for your child to use to dress up and make believe.
- Say to your child, “Let's pretend we're going on a train ride. What do we need? Tickets? Suitcases? Do you want to collect the tickets?”

When you engage in pretend play with your child, you are teaching important skills and strengthening the relationships that are the foundation for all learning.