Developing the Learning Potential of your Role Play Area





Aims of the Session

To look at the benefits of a high quality role play area and consider how this supports learning

To develop knowledge on the components that make up a high quality role play area

To explore the development of pretend play skills and how we can best support these



Press Esc to exit fullscreen

Bright future

Every child deserves the best possible start in life to support their potential.

A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances.

(DfES 2007)



No job is more important than working with children in the early years. (DfE 2021)

High-quality early education is good for all children. (DfE 2021)

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success. (DfE 2021)

Ofsted (2018)

At Ofsted we know just how important the early years are. They go by so fast, but they are the very foundation of a happy, successful future. And the right education and care at this time can have a profound impact on children and their life chances.

We know that the greatest opportunity to make a real difference to a child's life happens between the ages of 0 and 5, when children's brains develop faster and they learn more rapidly than at any other age.

Amanda Spielman; Chief Inspector (2018)



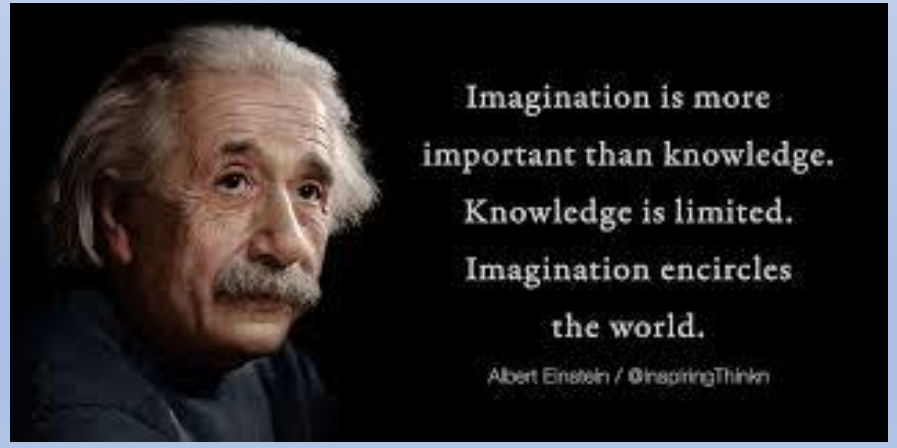


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The Importance of Role Play

Role play is a very important part of a child's education. The imagination is a powerful tool which is often innate in some children but needs encouraging in others.

It is important that we provide children with the opportunities to develop their imagination through the equipment, time and resources we provide including the spaces, scenarios, props and support they need to explore their real life or imaginary worlds.





Imaginative play develops and supports children to

- Use their imagination
- Imitate adult roles
- To practice grown up skills
- To pretend to be others/animals
- Think about other people views/roles
- Provides understanding of job roles

The Importance of Role Play

Through role play children are learning to understand very fundamental principles of our society and how it actually functions; what the rules and routines of more traditional things are.

Role-play is vital because it allows children to revisit familiar and unfamiliar events whilst also supporting the development of their imagination. Some of their role play will be very real and familiar (like ‘house’ and ‘dogs’) and some will be complete fantasy.

So a good role play space should allow children to experiment with familiar and fantasy every day.

(Alistair Bryce Clegg)



Why is Role Play Important to Children's Development?

Many studies show that 'make-believe' strengthens a wide variety of mental abilities, including sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding emotions, and the ability to reflect on one's thinking, inhibit impulses, control one's own behaviour, and take another's perspective' (Berk, 2009)

"There is no activity for which young children are better prepared than fantasy play. Nothing is more dependable and risk-free, and the dangers are only pretend"

'The Importance of Imaginary Play'

(2004) Vivian Gussin Paley





What Are Children Learning Through Role Play Experiences?

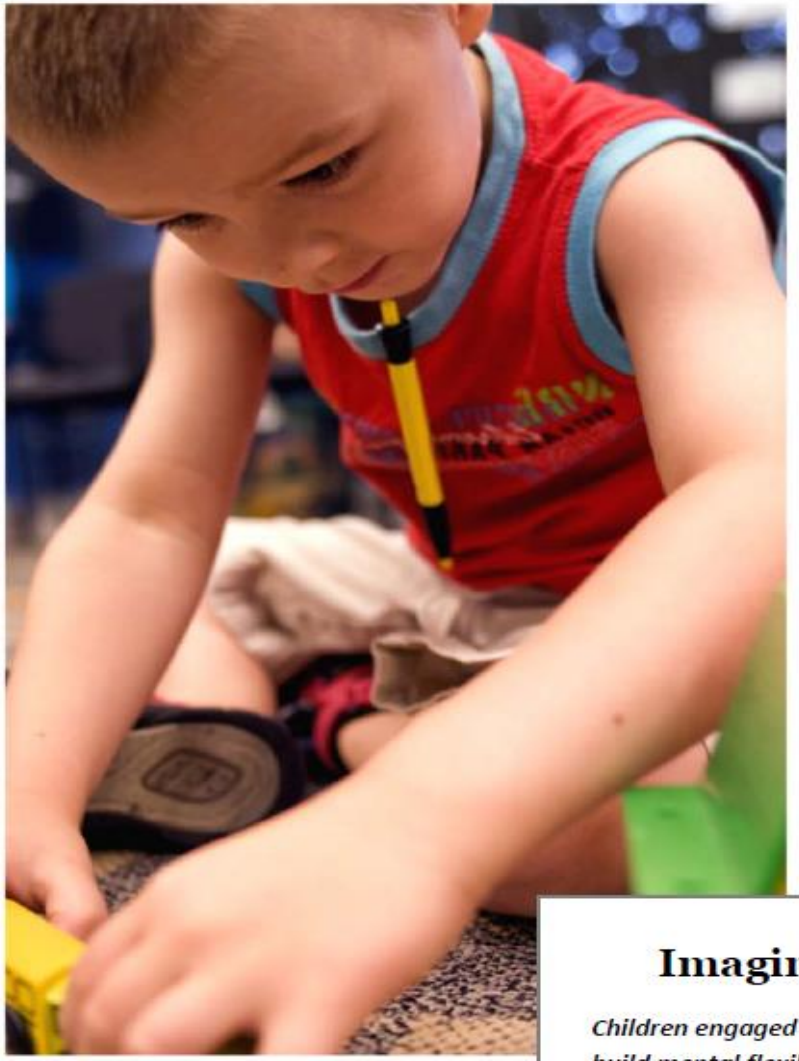


Think about the range of

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Behaviours
- Attitudes &
- Overall Learning

that you think children can learn through role play

The following slides are taken from the document:
Imaginative Play: Setting the Stage for Learning
By Arkansas State University childhood Services



Imagination

Children engaged in fantasy play build mental flexibility – an important executive function skill.

Creative aptitude in adulthood is linked to pretend play in early childhood.



Social Navigation & Flexibility

As they join in social pretend play, children learn to lead and follow appropriately and show an increased capacity for empathy.

They grow to understand the point of view of others.



Sense of Self

Imaginative play connects children to their own home, family, and community culture.

As they play with peers, children also come to understand other cultures.



Communication

Through pretend play, children often use more words and more complex language structure than at any other time in their day!



Emotional Regulation

Children process strong feelings and powerful ideas through pretend play.

Children who have ample opportunity to explore through dramatic play are better equipped to handle and express their feelings.



Narrative Ability

Children learn to think in stories and communicate these with peers. Children make sense of their world through this repetitive play.



Organizational Skills

Like an air traffic controller at a busy airport, the child plans, multi-tasks, recalls, and prioritizes as she engages in complex play.

This structured thinking will serve her well in elementary school and beyond.



Abstract & Symbolic Thinking

Imaginative play is linked to strong reading comprehension and reasoning skills in years to come!

Links to the New Frameworks & Curriculum Documents (2021)



Through conversation, story-telling and *role play*, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures. (EYFS Statutory framework2021)

BIRTH TO 5 MATTERS Guidance by the sector, for the sector

Children may be pursuing different purposes in sensory play, exploratory play with objects, schematic play, symbolic play, pretend play (alone, in role or with small world objects), cooperative role play with others, fantasy and superhero play, physical play, rough and tumble play, risky play, or digital play. As each of these supports children's development and learning in different ways, early years provision should ensure that opportunities are available for all types of play. (B-5 Matters 2021)

Include familiar environmental print in the role play area.

Resource role-play areas with listening and writing equipment, and ensure that role-play areas encourage writing of signs with a real purpose, e.g. a pet shop.

Encourage children to use marks to represent their mathematical ideas in role play.

Provide equipment with varied capacities and shapes in the sand, water, mud kitchen and role play areas.

Model and encourage counting and representing numbers within role play, e.g. making a telephone call using a list of numbers. (B-5 Matters 2021)

Links to Development Matters EYFS (2020)

How many times do you think the DfE's Development Matters document makes reference to role play or pretend play? Around 20 times!

Communication & Language: *Develop pretend play: 'putting the baby to sleep' or 'driving the car to the shops'.*

PSED: *Talk together about how others might be feeling. Bring these ideas into children's pretend play.*

Literacy: *Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example: writing a pretend shopping list…*

Understanding the World: *Introduce characters, including those from the past using songs, poems, puppets, role play and other storytelling methods.*

Expressive Arts & Design: *Help children to develop their pretend play by modelling, sensitively joining in and helping them to elaborate it. Help to develop a child's home corner play of feeding a 'baby'..*

Provide related costumes and props for children to incorporate into their pretend play.

CTC: *Use pretend play to think beyond the 'here and now' and to understand another perspective*

Self-Regulation: *Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.*



What Are Children Learning Through <u>This</u> Role Play Experience?



What important learning is taking place here?

What Are Children Learning Through Common Role Play Experiences?

PSED

- building relationships
- working co-operatively
- showing empathy
- helping each other

Physical Development

- fine motor skills
- hand to eye coordination
- motor planning

Communication & Language

- talking; developing language
- listening; developing understanding of language
- developing non-verbal communication
- giving & following instructions

One snapshot demonstrates learning across 3 Prime Areas

Communication & Language

Lots of research shows that engagement in role play can have a positive impact on children's language development and significantly widen their vocabulary.
This will then strengthen their ability to develop reading & writing skills later on.

Education Endowment Foundation (2018)

When researching good practice in schools & E.Y settings, Ofsted noticed the '*positive impact on children's language development when every member of staff promoted opportunities for children to speak in sentences and engaged in children's imaginative role play scenarios.*'

OFSTED (2014) Are you ready? report

Reflection Point:
How often does an adult join in with children's play in the role play area in your school or setting?



Physical Development

Aspects of children's role play can support children's physical development, both their gross & fine motor skills, but this often depends on:

- the resources you provide & whether these challenge children's fine motor skills
e.g. using real kitchen tools such as whisks, spatulas, small saucepans, opening real packets such as gravy tins or unscrewing lids from coffee jars or milk bottles

- how children's independence is encouraged or the level of help an adult offers during play
e.g. encouraging children to put on dressing up clothes by themselves, fastening buttons or zips etc.

PSED

Role play can also support children to develop important life-long skills such as:

- Building relationships
- Talking to and listening to others
- Taking on board other peoples ideas
- Taking turns
- Experiencing & expressing different emotions
- Understanding that others may think differently to them
- Solving social problems
- Working & playing cooperatively
- Initiating play with another
- Resolving conflicts & negotiating
- Being independent
- Developing empathy



Cross-Curricular Play Spaces

A high quality role play area should be cross-curricular and include links to a variety of area of learning, including:

- writing/mark-making
- reading opportunities
- number
- space,
- shape,
- measure opportunities
- technology
- physical development opportunities
- creative & imaginative opportunities
- understanding the world through diverse resources
- resources that reflect the children's lives, communities and experiences
- opportunities to re-live or play out familiar experiences
- opportunities to learn about new or unfamiliar experiences





Ideas for home corners using real objects with text & numbers included, relevant for the baby room up to pre-school room:





Writing opportunities e.g. write a shopping list

Numbers, text & hand written labels

ICT (mobile phone) included

Books included

Labels on some items

Numbers on some items

Organised & tidy shelves

Table set up with plates, cups, food, cutlery etc.



Real packets of food

Real kitchen utensils

Real shopping bags

Real fruit & veg included

Additional resources to support children in role playing their own home experiences e.g. babies, dustpan, saucepan on the cooker etc.

More Natural Looking Home Corners







Home Corner Enhancements Throughout the Year

- Babies & associated resources; *cot, pram, baby clothes, changing bag, baby bath, bottle, books to read to baby at bed time*
- Winter time; *hats, scarves, gloves, jumpers, fire place, hot water bottle, hot chocolate*
- Pet care; *toy animals, water & food bowls, dog/cat/fish food, leads, dog/cat bed, toys, brush or grooming equipment, care leaflets*
- Christmas time at home; *Xmas tree & decorations, wrapping paper, Sellotape, catalogues, Advent calendar, cards, envelopes, writing equipment*
- Birthday party; *party hats, cake, paper chains, banners, balloons, cards, paper plates, napkins, candles*
- Shrove Tuesday; *frying pans, spatula, play-dough, rolling pins, pancake toppings (lemons, role fruit, syrup bottles, whisks, recipe books*
- Chinese New Year; *chopsticks, cutlery, cooked & dry noodles, red envelopes, fortune cookies, wok, take away menus, recipes, signs or food packets with Chinese symbols/writing*
- Diwali; henna tubes, *Mehndi patterns, sarees or bright coloured material, bangles, diva lamps, battery operated candles, food packets*

Role play
Home corner

Displays

Numbers in the home
Party invitations
People wearing different clothes
Images of different room layouts.
Positive images of different family groups



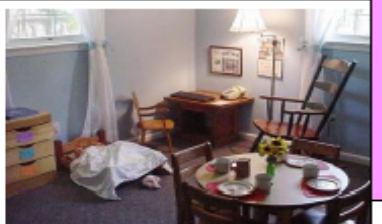


Consider changing the home corner to reflect different rooms within the home

- Kitchen
- Lounge
- Bedroom
- bathroom

Supportive texts

Recipe books
Newspapers, adult books and magazines
Car manuals
e-readers
Argos catalogues
I will not ever never eat a tomato
Alfie get's in first
Mog the forgetful cat
Tiger who cam to tea
Peace at last



Open-ended challenges

- How can we organise this area so we can get to all the things we need?
- How can we make sure things don't run out?
- Can you find the hidden parcels and sort them by weight?
- Can you set the table for all our guests?
- How many times can we wrap the sari fabric around our body?
- Where will your magic carpet take you? What will you need to take?
- Can you make sure everyone will come to the party?
- Can you change the ending of our story?
- How can you retell the story of….



Resource suggestions for cross curricular learning:

Pictures, photographs, posters
Crockery and cutlery
Clock/alarm clock
Vegetable rack and vegetables
Note pad, paper and pens
Food packages and containers
Notice board
Tea towels, washing up liquid and pan scourers
Telephone, mobiles and directories
Teapot and kettle, tea bags, coffee and sugar pots
Fruit bowl and fruit
Plants, real or plastic
Cooking utensils
Television/music system
Lamp and shade
Photo frames
Spice rack
Swing bin
Dog or cat basket
First aid kit
Smoke alarm
Lunch boxes
Brooms and dust pans
Clothes tree and pegs
Laundry basket
Bedding, sheets and duvets
Till receipts
Store cards
Greeting cards
Take away menus/taxi cards
Calendars and diaries
Appointment cards
Mirrors
Scales
Magazine rack

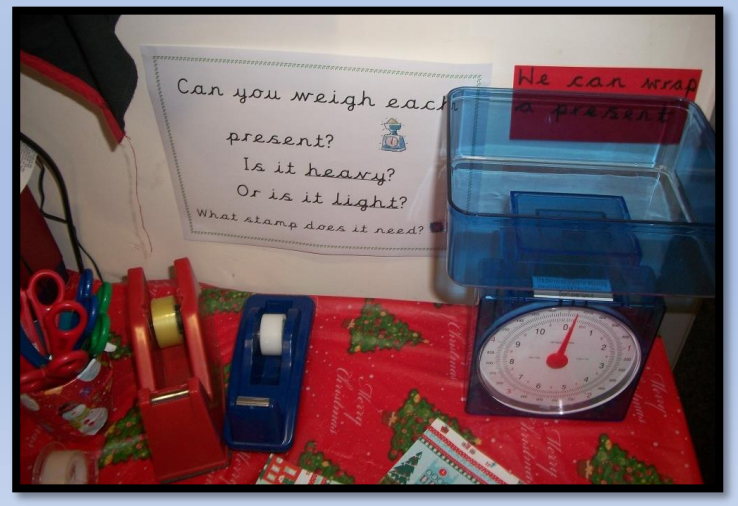
Examples of Cross-Curricular Role Play Spaces

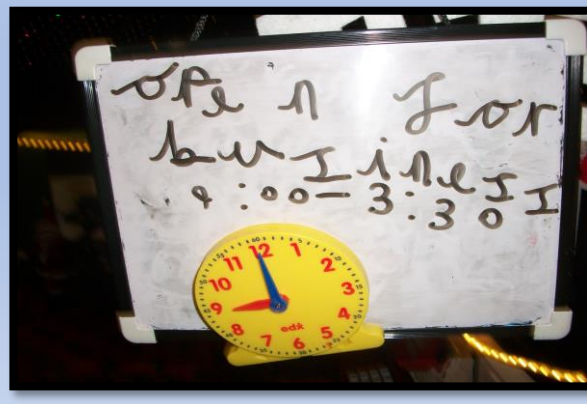


Santa's Workshop













Pizza Restaurant & Take-away






onion
pepper
cheese


phone
RECORD
Pizza Orders
FREE


Pizza Hut
booktrust
www.booktime.org.uk


Oven
350 °F

Builders Yard – Construction Area

Both natural, plastic & open-ended materials offered to develop imagination and creative play.



A range of real resources used e.g. drills, paint brushes, buckets, measuring tapes, screwdrivers etc.
(risk assessment and teaching of safe use required beforehand!)



A range of purposeful maths & literacy opportunities offered through role play opportunities.





- **Labels & non-fiction texts included to support literacy**
- **Real objects used**
- **Cross- curricular (also embeds all 3 Prime areas)**







The farm & a farm shop with real & fresh produce

- Non-fiction leaflets to provide information on caring for animals
- Labels & pictures to support early reading
- Mark making opportunities e.g. to write down appointment times



What potential learning can you see from these scenarios?









How Pretend Play Develops

In typical development, pretend play progresses through predictable stages. Children with developmental delays may progress through these stages at a slower rate.

Self-pretend (12-18 months)

During this stage, children perform one pretend action at a time on themselves, such as pretending to eat, drink, or sleep. Children tend to use toys that look quite realistic (e.g. a plastic toy spoon) or real-life objects (e.g. a real spoon).

Simple pretend (18-24 months)

Children at this stage perform simple pretend actions on toys or people. Children continue to use realistic-looking toys at this stage. Examples of simple pretend play include feeding a doll with a toy fork or making a toy airplane "fly". Children also imitate familiar adult actions at this stage, such as pretending to talk on a toy telephone.







How Pretend Play Develops

Series of familiar actions (24 - 30 months)

Just as children this age are learning to combine words together to make short sentences, they are also learning to combine pretend actions together. At this stage, children can act out a series of pretend actions related to a familiar routine, such as the steps involved in eating or going to bed.

For example, the child may get out a toy bowl and spoon, pretend to pour cereal into the bowl, add some milk, and serve it to a doll. Children can use less realistic objects at this stage, as long as they are similar in shape to the real object. For example, a toy ball could be used as an apple to feed a doll.

(early stages of symbolic play)




1
2
3
4


Freezer
Fridge
Soap
Wheat Bisks

How Pretend Play Develops

Series of less familiar actions (30 - 36 months)

Less familiar themes enter children's play at this stage. They may pretend about going to the doctor or being a waiter at a restaurant. Children can pretend without an object (they can pretend their hand is a cup and drink out of it). Children can also substitute objects that do not resemble the "real thing". For example, a child can pretend a block is a mobile phone or a car driving on a ‘pretend’ road or a banana is. (Symbolic play developing)






Doctor
Nurse





At the Beach



Indoors or Outdoors


3p
Toffee
Ice-cream Parlour
Vanilla
3p
Cone
1p
Sprinkles
2p
Strawberry
Mint
3p
Chocolate
3p
Chocolate Flake
1p
"How much change do I get?"
fifty pence
Can you choose the correct money to pay for your ice-cream?
£1 - one pound
10p - ten pence
Please Pay Here
Price List
Ice-Cream 3p
Sprinkles 2p
Flake 1p


ICE CREAM SHOP
DRAMATIC PLAY SET




chair
"How much change do I get?"
fifty pence
Can you choose the correct money to pay for your ice-cream?
£1 - one pound
10p - ten pence
Please Pay Here
Ice-Cream
Sprinkles
Flake







Anyone for a babyccino?

How Pretend Play Develops

Role play with other children (3 - 5 years)

Children pretend about imaginary themes now (things which do not really exist or that the child hasn't experienced yet in real life), such as pirates, castles, and superheroes.

Children start to pretend with other children at this stage, each taking on different roles during the play.

Language often drives the play at this stage. Children explain their roles and use language to act out their role. For example, a child pretending to be a doctor might say to another child "I'm the doctor, you be the patient, ok? Where does it hurt?"

(adapted from Learning Language and Loving It, Weitzman and Greenberg, 2002)







Pirates







Knights, Dragons & Castles









Search & Rescue
The Emergency Services







A Space Station





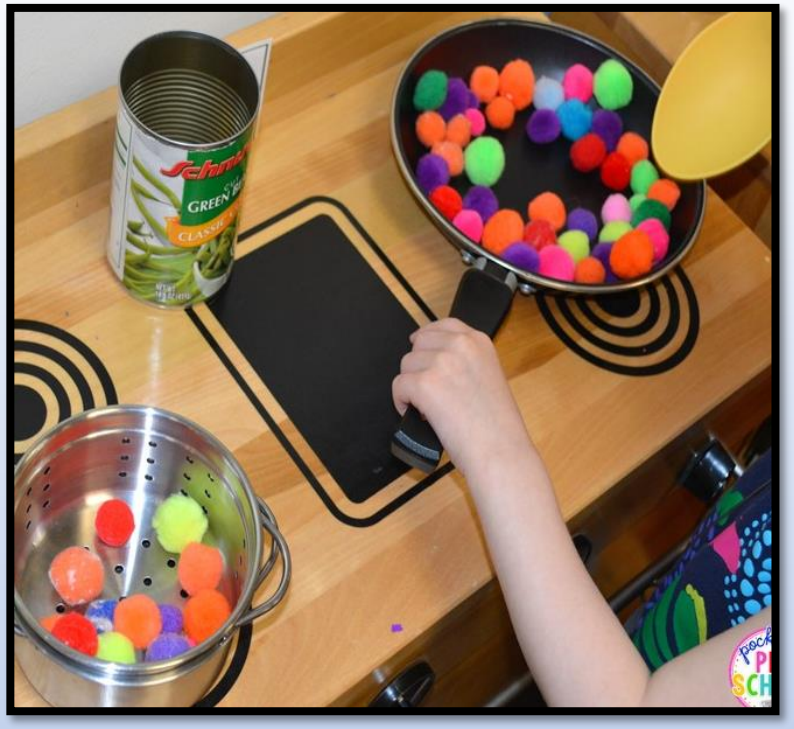


Re-Telling
Familiar Stories & Fairy Tales

Early Years Quality Team – Hillingdon Council







Provide opportunities
for *symbolic play*
using open-ended resources







Other Examples of Open-Ended Resources







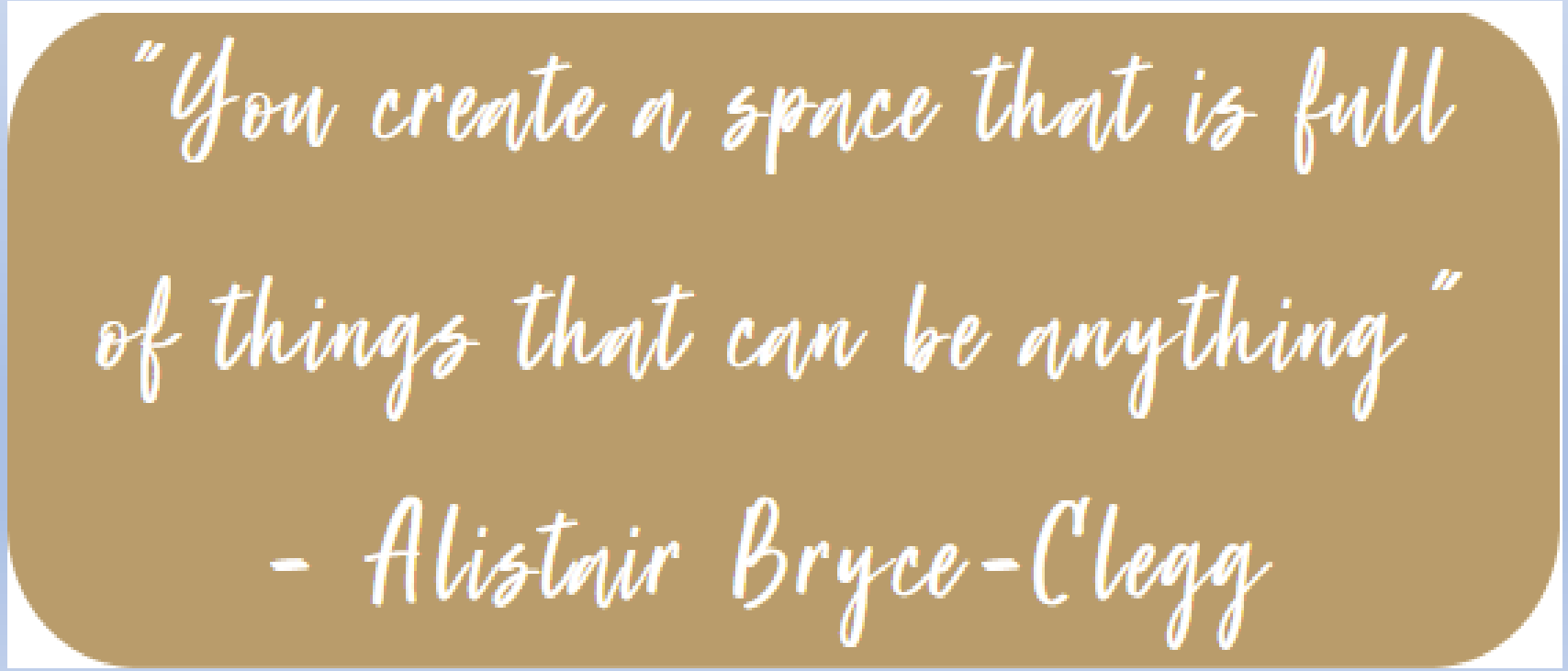



Building

De-Constructed Role Play

A concept formulated to promote real imaginative play and allows children to add their experiences to their play.

Rather than the adults setting up a themed & structured role play area, a range of open-ended resources are left there and the children can use these in whatever way they want.



De-Constructed Role Play

What resources do you need?

Lots of cardboard boxes
Crates
String
Fabric
Camping ground sheets

Open-Ended Resources!
Cardboard tubes
Empty cable reels
Masking tape
Pegs
Floor space!





De-Constructed Role Play

Enhancements

The children can use these materials to be anything they want them to be – really stretching their imagination!

You can also add 'Enhancement Boxes' which are more traditional role play resources, to enhance their play.

For example:





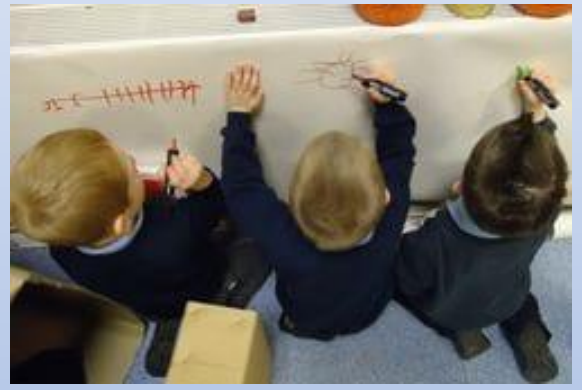


De-Constructed Role Play

Enhancements

Mark-Making resources should also be added so children can draw or write their own signs, labels, markings etc.







Ideas for Role Play Experiences:

- Home / House
- Baby clinic
- Doctors / Dentist / Hospital
- Vets
- Bakery
- Restaurant e.g. Pizza / Indian / Chinese
- Ice cream shop / Seaside cafe
- Pound shop
- Supermarket / shop
- Toy shop
- Farm shop / Greengrocer
- Cafe / Coffee shop
- Garden centre
- Builders yard
- Stories such as the Gruffalo cafe
- Fairy-tales e.g. 3 bears cottage
- Bear Hunt cave
- Pirate ship / Pirate shop
- Spaceship
- Farm / Zoo / Jungle
- Police / Fire station
- Train station
- Shoe shop
- Dinosaur dig
- Travel agents
- Superhero call centre
- Camping



Picnic



Superhero Den



Camping



Birthday Party




Middlesbrough X3A
Via Saltburn & Redcar
window
On The Bus
ticket
door
Wait for the bus to stop before getting up!
Bus fares
bus
door
ticket


TIP TAP


Film Studio
Lights, Camera, Action!
DIRECTOR


CAUTION!
Construction
Area
dump truck
Danger!
Dang
CONSTRUCTION
AREA
Caution!
Houses
HOUSES &
HOMES


Day
Date
Month
Weather
Season
SMART
MONSTERS
mighty
BEWARE
OF
MONSTERS
creature
giant
MONSTERS
DO NOT VENTURE BEYOND THIS POINT
gruesome
scary
ugly
BEWARE
OF
MONSTERS
horrifying
beast
Monsters


2
3
4
Pit Stop
spanners
oil can
exhaust pipe
4th
3rd
2nd
1st
ramps
accelerator
fuel gauge
pedals
petrol
wipers
wheel
tyre
window
trolley jack
indicator
Pit Stop
Pit Stop
Car Repairs Form

Planning for a Cross-Curricular Role Play Space

Role Play Area:

Garden Centre

Literacy; reading:	Literacy; writing:	Maths; number:	Maths; space, shape, measure:	ICT: technology
Garden centre catalogue & leaflets, Main sign for shop, Labels around the shop e.g. pay here, Diagram of a flower with main parts labelled e.g. stem, petal, stalk Jaspers beanstalk by Butterworth & Inkpen, The Tiny Seed by Carle,	Pens & small paper to write receipts Post-it notes to label simple items e.g. pots, plants, flowers, seeds etc. Shopping list template	Numbered flower pots,	Price tags, coins, notes, purse, wallet Small, medium, large flower pots, Open & closed signs with a small clock, Height chart & measuring tapes	Till Telephone

Other resources: Scooter / small bike to deliver flowers (physical development) Real items (seeds, soil, gardening tools, plants etc.)

Gender









Why are these experiences important?

Provide a role-play area resourced with materials reflecting children's family lives and communities. Consider including resources reflecting lives that are unfamiliar, to broaden children's knowledge and reflect an inclusive ethos. (B-5 Matters 2021).

The Adult's Role – Interacting or Interfering?

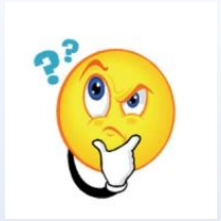
So what is our role in role play?

Our approach should be similar to supporting any other type of play e.g.

- Providing the resources
- Allowing the children to take the lead in the play
- Listening & responding to the children's ideas
- Modelling new language & vocabulary
- Providing a balance of comments & questions
- Suggesting new ideas (if appropriate)
- Modelling play & behaviours (conflict resolution)
- Having FUN!



Reflect on your current practice



- Consider how you are using the current interests of the children to plan your role play

- Are you fully utilising your role play area as a cross-curricular play space?

  e.g. by including mark-making resources, books (fact & fiction), numbers, money, measure opportunities, technology such as mobile phones, real & authentic resources etc.

- Think about the open-ended resources you provide to spark children's imagination and imaginative play

- Reflect on how you are encouraging older children to contribute to the planning & setting up of the area e.g. writing signs & labels, making the resources or props etc.

- What are your challenges? Can you think of any solutions to these?





How will you use the information from today?

- What changes could you implement straight away
  e.g. tomorrow/this week?
- What changes would you like to make this month/term?
- Who could help or contribute to this change?



To Finish….. A Little Inspiration



There is no job more important than yours
No job anywhere else in the land
You are the keepers of the future
You hold the smallest of hands



You foster the bonds of friendships
Letting no child go away mad
You respect and you honour their emotions
You give hugs to each child when they're sad

You have more impact than a professor
Your child's mind is moulded by four
So whatever you lay on the table
Is whatever the child will explore



Thank-you

Video recording will be uploaded on to the LEAP website.

Any questions or follow up support in your setting please e-mail:
alinnane@hillingdon.gov.uk

Please take 1 minute to complete the evaluation (6 questions)

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3WTZWFS

