



Creating A Rich Environment Using the ECERS Tool

Healthy Children, Strong Families, Caring Communities



DRAMATIC PLAY

Why dramatic play is important:

Dramatic play is pretending or make believe. This occurs when children act out roles themselves and when they manipulate figures such as small toy people in a doll house. In doing this children practice many skills and attempt to understand what happens in their world. Children practice the most language skills in the dramatic play area and develop social skills in this activity. Children often imitate what they have experienced and try to make sense of things they do not yet understand. In this way, many emotional issues can be resolved through dramatic play. Dramatic play should be available indoors as well as outdoors. To get the most out of dramatic play children must be free to use materials in their own way. Don't forget the boys in dramatic play!

ECERS

In order to achieve a score of 5 or above in dramatic play, materials need to be accessible a substantial portion of the day. Props for at least two different themes including dress-up clothes and representation of various cultures and abilities need to be accessible. Pictures, stories and trips should be used to enrich dramatic play. The dramatic play area needs to be clearly defined with organized storage and materials need to be rotated. Props need to be provided for active dramatic play outdoors.

What Children Learn:

- To be flexible in my thinking and to make decisions
- To express myself with words
- To try on different adult roles and interact with others
- To solve social problems through negotiation with friends
- To sort and organize play things
- To improvise and use things in a symbolic way to represent something else (abstract thinking)
- To carry out my ideas with the cooperation of others
- To exercise my imagination and creativity
- To demonstrate an understanding of the social expectations and attitudes of others
- Anticipate how to act in new situations
- Address fears and worries and how to show empathy for others
- Draw on past experience to solve problems



What materials should be available:

- Dress-up clothes: shirts/blouses, dresses, jackets, shoes/boots, ties/scarves, costume jewelry, aprons, uniforms, suitcases, pocketbooks, briefcases, wallets, hats/wigs
- Kitchen equipment: pots/pans, eating utensils, cooking utensils, dish towels, dishes, tea kettle/ coffee pot, clean up materials like a broom, mop, sponges, play food including ethnic foods, empty food containers/boxes
- Furniture (child sized): stove, refrigerator, table/ chair, doll beds, doll highchair, full-length non- breakable mirror, telephones, ironing board/iron, clock
- Basic props for different kinds of themes: office supplies, cash register, money, menus, hardware, chef hats, construction hats, tools/ tool belts, medical equipment, gardening tools, seed packets, airline/bus/train tickets, steering wheels, capes, magic wands, crowns, badges, camping gear, sports equipment, picnic basket, fishing equipment, birthday parties, beauty parlor accessories

How to expand on dramatic play through conversation:

- Ask open-ended questions (that require children to think and respond): "What kind of cupcakes are you making?" "What do mommies do when their children get sick?"
- Expand vocabulary: colander, ladle, Laundromat, pretend, cooperation, cash register
- Emergent mathematical thinking: using cash registers and play money, shoes, rulers for measuring feet, and grocery ads in the dramatic play area helps children look at how math is used everyday. Counting out money to buy a meal, giving change, measuring feet, choosing which items to buy when grocery shopping. They do not need to count the money or measure feet correctly, using these skills reinforces important concepts that they will use throughout their lives.
- Reinforce the play using descriptive comments: "I see you are carrying a big briefcase; you must have a very important job to do." "You are taking such good care of that baby, I see you checking her heart with the stethoscope."

- Ask questions that encourage children to use information: “Are you a pilot?” “Where are you going to land your plane?” “Are you going to work?” “Where do you work, what do you do at your job?” “I am planning a camping trip, what should I take with me?” “Mmm, it sure smells good here, what are you making?”
- Help children recreate the world around them by making suggestions that help extend their ideas (look at what they are doing and the accessories that they are using to get an idea of what they are trying to recreate): “Have you ever been to the post office?” “What did you see when you were there?” Introduce shopping lists, receipts, letter writing, addresses, phone numbers, time of day.

When you comment on or ask children about their work, you are conveying the following to them:

- I am aware of what you are doing
- I am interested in your efforts and therefore in you
- I will help you look closely at your own work
- I am aware of your growing confidence

All of these interactions are very important in helping children develop self-confidence and self-esteem!!!



Supplemental Props for Dramatic Play

(Make sure to include items to represent the different ethnic backgrounds in your care)

Supermarket:

Shopping baskets
Signs for sections in the grocery story
Plastic fruit/vegetables
Empty containers of food
Money
Cash register
Paper/plastic bags

Laundromat:

Large cardboard boxes (washers/dryers)
Cash register
Ironing board/iron
Clothes for washing
Laundry baskets
Empty detergent containers
Clothesline/clothespins

Barbershop/hairdresser:

Combs/brushes
Empty shampoo containers
Curlers/pins
Smocks Hand mirrors
Towels
Hat style hair dryer
Hand held hair dryer
Shaving cream/empty razors
Magazines

Office:

Pads of paper
Stapler/staples
Paper clips
Typewriter/calculator
Briefcase
Telephone
Pencils/pens/markers
Stamp pad/stamps

Garage/repair shop:

Tools/tool box
Gas pump
Car parts
Steering wheels
Traffic signs
Old credit cards
Cash register

Shoe store:

Assorted old shoes
Shoebboxes
Cash register
Money
Shoe shine kit (clear polish)
A ruler for measuring feet

Camping:

Tent Canteen
Tackpacks
Compass
Boxes of food
Cooking utensils



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