

A LETTER TO FAMILIES ABOUT DRAMATIC PLAY

Dear Families,

In the Dramatic Play Area children take on different roles and recreate real-life experiences. They use props and make-believe to deepen their understanding about the world they live in.

The ability to pretend is very important to your child's development. Children who know how to make believe develop a good vocabulary, which is important for reading. They learn to cooperate with others and solve problems, and are able to think abstractly—all important skills for success in school. When children pretend, they have to recall experiences and re-create them. To do this, they need to picture their experiences in their minds. 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 the doctor or other roles, children learn to cooperate with others and to share their ideas.

When children make believe, 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 so good.

We talk with children and participate in their play to extend their thinking.

What You Can Do at Home

You can encourage the same kind of pretend play at home that we do at school simply by playing with your child and providing some simple props. 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 bath time, include plastic-boats, cups, and rubber dolls and play pretend.
- Save food cartons, make some play money, and play store with your child.
- Read stories together and involve your child in acting out different parts of the story.
- Collect some old clothes your child can 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 learning skills, and you are spending valuable time together.