

## Types of Play: Dramatic Play

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## Learning Centre

- **Learning Centre:** Specific area of the classroom organized around a topic, theme, or activity in which children engage in self-directed activities to learn, practice, or develop their abilities
  - **Specific area:** The learning centre is in a clearly defined part of the classroom
  - **Organized:** Learning centres take considerable preparation by the teacher, primarily in terms of gathering learning materials
  - **Topic, theme, or activity**
    - *Topic:* Subject like Mathematics Centre
    - *Theme:* Specific experience such as Tailor Shop
    - *Activity:* Example is Block Play
  - **SELF-DIRECTED ACTIVITIES:** The teacher only introduces the learning centre and provides occasional guidance. Children then engage in activities with the materials using their own understanding and ideas
    - The teacher should NOT have to direct children after the initial introduction
  - **Learn, practice, or develop their abilities:** Children may learn (e.g., something new) but more frequently practice (e.g., practice counting) and/or engage in activities that develop holistic skills (e.g., physical and social development)

## Symbolic Play

- **Symbolic Play:** Use of an object, action, or idea to represent another object, action, or idea
  - Symbolic play can happen anywhere (classroom, outdoors, home, market, etc.) with any materials

## Symbolic Play Materials

- “Loose Parts”: Open-ended materials that can be used and manipulated in many ways
  - Rocks
  - Seeds, Leaves, Sticks, Flowers and other Plant materials
  - Boxes
  - Bottle Caps
  - Beads
  - Buttons
  - Straws
  - Match boxes
  - Fabric pieces
  - Small plastic containers
  - Cutlery
  - Cotton
  - Etc.

## Symbolic Play with Loose Parts

- **Literacy:** Make letters
- **Maths:** Count, compare quantities, add/subtract, make shapes, make patterns, measure
- **Science:** Make careful observations of natural materials
- **Engineering:** Design structures
- **Art:** Design pictures
- Also develops:
  - Fine motor skills
  - Creativity/Imagination
  - Social skills
  - Oral language

## Symbolic Play: Uses in Early Childhood Education

- Can have a symbolic play learning centre
- Available during play time
- Promotes abstract thinking
- Useful as materials for learning activities in various subjects

## Symbolic Play: Teacher's Role

- Collect materials for children to play with ("loose parts")
- Suggest imaginative uses for objects
- Model symbolic play
- Discuss children's symbolic play with question-and-answer
- NOTE: Symbolic play rarely needs an introduction. Instead, allow children to freely explore and manipulate the loose parts
- Teachers can introduce specific learning activities with loose parts, such as making letters out of loose parts

## Dramatic Play Centre

- **Dramatic Play Centre:** Learning Centre where children can take on different roles and act them out
- There are two types of Dramatic Play Centres
  - General Dramatic Play
  - Themed Dramatic Play
- Uses in Early Childhood Education
  - Promotes all types of academic skills
  - One choice for children during open-ended play time
  - Beneficial learning activity for children who arrive early and stay late at school
  - Beneficial learning activity for children who have completed their work
  - Promotes holistic development

## General Dramatic Play Centre Materials

- Clothes
- Wrappers
- Accessories (e.g., jewelry, hats, wigs, sunglasses)
- Bags
- Mirror
- Household accessories (e.g., bouquets of flowers, pictures)
- Dolls and accessories (small pieces of fabric)

## Dramatic Play Centre Themes

- Market
- Office
- Car Park
- Hospital
- Food-Is-Ready
- Village
- Fix-It Centre
- Farm
- Airplane
- Train
- Fishing
- Movie set
- Outer space
- Radio station
- Election
- Play Kitchen
- Play Living Room
- Cultural Play
- Many others...

## Dramatic Play Centre: Teacher's Role

- **Before Dramatic Play**
  - Plan the Dramatic Play Centre
    - Determine the theme of the Dramatic Play Centre.
      - Try to relate it to topics currently being covered in other subjects
      - Select a theme that is appropriate for the children and context
    - Gather relevant materials and organize them attractively in the Dramatic Play Centre
  - Introduce the Dramatic Play Centre
    - Attract children's interest
    - Activate prior knowledge
    - Give children ideas for activities to engage in at the learning centre

## Introducing Dramatic Play

- Present the theme
  - **Ask questions** that activate children's background knowledge
- Introduce Vocabulary
  - Only introduce 2 to 3 vocabulary words per day
- Explain the materials in the Centre and what can be done with them
  - **Use question-and-answer** to get children to identify and explain the materials
- Explain the roles that children can play in the centre
  - **Use question-and-answer** to build on children's background knowledge of people related to the dramatic play theme
- Suggest activities that children can participate in during the centre
  - **Use question-and-answer** to build on children's background knowledge of activities related to the dramatic play theme

### Dramatic Play Centre: Teacher's Role

- **During Dramatic Play:** As children are participating in self-directed activities in the learning centre
  - Be available to answer questions
  - Observe children's play to guide them to more in-depth play
  - Model dramatic play
  - Ask children to describe what they are doing (nurtures oral language)
  - Ask questions to deepen children's understanding of important concepts or vocabulary words
  - Observe children's play to evaluate whether the materials are effective

### Dramatic Play Centre: Teacher's Role

- Use children's dramatic play as a foundation for discussion to deepen children's understanding
  - Outside of learning centre time, explain to the children what you observed in dramatic play and important related academic concepts or vocabulary words
- Allow sufficient time for children to get involved in the centre (at least 30 minutes)
- Rotate materials and/or themes every few weeks