

Teacher Tips: Supporting Pretend Play



Today, there is a lot of emphasis on school readiness. School readiness is much more than recognizing letters, numbers and colors. To be successful learners, children need to develop skills in self-control, symbolic thinking, self-expression, and problem solving. Pretend play offers a fun and natural way for children to develop in all those areas.

Through pretend play children learn to:

- Identify and manage emotions
- Use social skills
- Develop language skills
- Problem solve
- Explore ideas that they find scary, confusing, or brand new

Here are some suggestions to refresh your skills so that you can show children that you value their creative play:

- Provide adult-sized dress-up clothes that inspire new pretend play ideas, or that might help children who are coping with changes at home (an ill parent, new baby, or grandparent moving in).
- Help children develop their ideas into stories that have a beginning, middle, and end. Here are some questions that you might use to help children develop and share their story ideas. If more than one child is contributing to the story, make sure each child has a chance to answer the questions.
 - What is the idea of your story? Help me understand.
 - Who or what are you pretending to be?
 - What other dress-up clothes do you need?
Do you need any other toys or things to help everyone understand what's going on?
 - What will happen first in your story?
 - What will happen next?
 - What happens at the end of your story?
 - Is there anything else I can do or get for you to help you tell your story?
- Stand close by and watch as the children carry out their ideas. If conflict arises, ask them to think about ways they might work together to solve the problem.
- If the pretend play idea starts to waver or fall apart, offer verbal reminders about what they'd planned, or move a prop into their vision that prompts the play to get back on track.



(continued)



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- Help them think about how the play will end: "So, what will happen at the end your story? Keep playing so your story has an end."
- At snack, you might start a conversation to help children recall and share their play ideas with the other children at their table.
- During free play, you might suggest that the children draw pictures about their pretend play. Display the drawings to share with family members.
- You might also ask children to tell you the story, and you could write it down for them.



♪ ♪ When you pretend, you can be anything. ♪



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