

The WONDER CABINET WISDOM

Dramatic Play – The Dress-up Area

“When I confront the character I am going to play, I must ask myself, who am I?”

Uta Hagen, actor



What are children learning in The Dress-up Area?

It is hard to imagine how a “tea party” or pretending to be an animal could be related to intellectual and academic learning later in life, yet all child development research, including the development of the brain, points to the crucial role of dramatic play in early learning.

Consider these links between learning and dramatic play:

- When creating a story, children practice using language they have heard but may not have had an opportunity to use. Language is the foundation of literacy.
- In playing someone’s role, children have an opportunity to consider a new point of view. This flexibility of thinking is a cornerstone of problem solving in science, engineering and arts.
- When a group of children designs the plot, chooses the roles they will play, creates the setting, invites viewers, and performs--children discover teamwork, reciprocity and responsibility.

What can I do to support my child’s dramatic play?

- Play along with your child in pretend situations
- Provide props or help with dress-up clothes to inspire dramatic play
- Connect play to stories from your child’s favorite books
- Use mirrors and follow-the-leader to encourage using movement to tell stories

More resources:

Mister Rogers’ homepage:
www.pbskids.org/rogers/

PBS Teachersource Pre-K drama lessons:
www.pbs.org/teachersource/arts_lit/prek-dramadramatics.html

Community Playthings resource articles:
www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/dramaticplayearlychildhood.htm

A child’s work: The importance of fantasy play,
by Vivian Gussin, University of Chicago Press, 2004.

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