



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ **Foster curiosity and development through play**
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

Dramatic Play Supports Children's Development

Dramatic play, sometimes called symbolic, pretend, make-believe, fantasy, or imaginative play is an important component of early child care programs. Dramatic play allows children to:

- make choices and decisions
- solve problems
- interact with others
- experience learning as fun
- build language and literacy skills
- be a scientist
- make sense of his/her world

Have you ever noticed a one-year-old child, who is barely able to walk, make a big show of clomping around in an adult's over-sized shoes or rubber slippers? Or have you discovered a child holding a block up to his/her ear; pretending to "call" someone? These are examples of children using dramatic play to understand the world. From a very early age, children have an amazing ability to use their imagination to create a place where they can "try on" different roles to understand how the world works.

In this newsletter, we will share research which describes the:

- benefits of dramatic play,
- components of dramatic play, and
- strategies for facilitating dramatic play.

An additional insert, from the *Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, is included; which breaks down eight skills children use in dramatic play, and shows examples of what each skill would look like from a beginning to an advanced level.



Benefits of Dramatic Play

According to The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos (2011), *“Children, younger than age 3 have trouble understanding and maintaining the distinction between a symbol and what it represents.”* Before they can use symbols such as letters, numbers and pictures to learn, they need to understand that symbols represent other things. This is a form of abstract reasoning that gets its start somewhere around 18 months of age. Dramatic play contributes to children’s development of abstract thinking and imagination and supports:

- memory,
- language and
- self-regulation abilities, specifically social-emotional skills.

These skills help children:

- make friends,
- learn to play cooperatively,
- express their own needs and ideas, and
- gain practice in understanding adult roles.



Components of Dramatic Play

When dramatic play involves more than one child playing together, or a child playing with an adult, it is called socio-dramatic play. As their language and cognitive skills improve, children use more involved play themes and story lines. In addition, as children act out their roles, they arrive at a shared understanding of the rules for behavior.

Researcher Sara Smilansky identifies the following components of socio-dramatic play:

- **Role play** – pretending to be someone else
- **Props** – use of real or imaginary objects
- **Make-believe** – enacting events
- **Interaction** – agreeing on roles for two or more children and relating to one another from the perspective of their roles
- **Verbal communication** – interacting verbally about the play situation and roles
- **Time** – remaining at play for a sustained period.

Strategies for Facilitating Children's Dramatic Play

Children act out everyday scenarios when realistic props are available and tend to engage in more fantasy roles when unrealistic props are offered. Children's ability to engage in dramatic play is also influenced by culture, language, abilities, and disabilities. Here are strategies to facilitate children's dramatic play:

- Schedule adequate time for play to take place indoors and outdoors.
- Offer both highly realistic and less realistic props to accommodate the range of developmental levels.
- Match play props to family backgrounds and developmental characteristics of the children.
- Provide familiar household items for children to use, e.g., a child-size broom and empty boxes of the foods the children eat at home.

- Model pretend play, e.g. pretend to take a bite of a plastic apple, or rock a baby doll to sleep.
- Provide multipurpose, open-ended props that can represent many things, e.g., blocks and boxes.
- Ask open-ended questions to extend children's imaginative play and expressive language.
- Extend children's pretend play by interacting with them. Imitate what they are doing; comment and ask questions; or take a role, using a play voice and gestures.
- Show children common objects and encourage them to think of how to use them to represent something else.

For additional information on what to look for in observing children's dramatic play, see the enclosed resources, "Levels of Dramatic Play" and "Dramatic Play: Let's think beyond the housekeeping corner!"





Citations:

Dodge, D.T. (2011). *The creative curriculum for infants, toddlers, and twos*. Teaching Strategies, L.L.C. Bethesda, MD.

Heroman, C, Burts, D., Berke, K. Bickart, T. (2010). *The creative curriculum for preschool. Volume 5. Objectives for Development and Learning*. Teaching Strategies, L.L.C. Bethesda, MD.

Penn State Cooperative Extension (2013). Available on-line <http://http://bkc-od-media.vhosts.psu.edu/documents/Activities1602.pdf>

Training Certificates, Book Awards, Technical Support

- **Certificates.** Providers who return reflection sheets will receive a certificate for one hour of professional development completed. These certificates will be aligned with the Attitudes, Skills, & Knowledge (ASK) Core Areas, which are recognized by the Hawaii State Department of Human Services to support improvement of quality in early childhood programs. There is no specific due date required to earn this certificate but please note: **the reflection sheet must be completed in full and you must thoughtfully answer question # 5 on the reflection sheet in order to earn the certificate.**
- **Free books.** Free children's books will continue to be given for reflection sheets returned by the posted due date. However, if there are any additional books left over, they will be given to the providers who submit the reflection sheets past the due date. These books will be awarded on a first come, first served basis until the supply runs out.
- **Free technical assistance and support** related to child care issues can be requested by answering question #8 on the reflection sheet.



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