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# Facilitating Preschoolers' Pretend Play Experiences

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## INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the video, "The Train Station, A Child-Created, Teacher-Facilitated Dramatic Play Center," from The Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE) at Eastern Connecticut State University. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

## Goals

- ◆ Identify ways to collaborate with families to give preschoolers opportunities to plan and lead dramatic play experiences.
- ◆ Discuss effective strategies for facilitating preschoolers' dramatic play experiences at home and within the learning environment.
- ◆ Plan to partner with families to facilitate opportunities for imitation and symbolic representation through dramatic play at home and within the learning environment.

## Activity

- ◆ Watch the video.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to facilitate interactions during dramatic play experiences at home and within the learning environment.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support imitation and symbolic representation in preschoolers.

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**“One way to enhance children’s pretend play is to get children involved in the planning of the play center and play theme.”**

**Dr. Jefferey Trawick-Smith**

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the video? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

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- ◆ The narrator mentioned enhancing children’s dramatic play experiences by getting them involved in the planning of the dramatic play center by brainstorming ideas and creating props. As shown in the video, this can help preschoolers expand their imitation and symbolic representation skills during play. Reflect on your current practice.

- How do you currently engage preschoolers in the planning of the dramatic play center?
- The educator in the video webbed children’s ideas as they brainstormed dramatic play themes. What strategies do you use to elicit children’s suggestions for dramatic play themes and determine the extent of their background knowledge?
- How can collaborating with families help you better understand children’s background experiences related to specific topics?
- How do you support children who may not have extensive experiences as it relates to dramatic play themes? Do you provide opportunities for virtual field trips or engage children in researching topics?

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- ◆ Inviting children to create and use props during pretend play is another way educators can support children’s symbolic representation skills.

- How do you involve children in creating props for the dramatic play center?
- How can you partner with families to support children in creating props in the dramatic play center for the classroom?
- What are some ways you may collaborate with families to promote opportunities for preschoolers to actively engage in planning dramatic play experiences and creating props at home?

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- ◆ In the video, the educator actively engaged in dramatic play with the children and often used questioning and scaffolding to facilitate children’s understanding of various roles to support imitation and representation.

- What strategies do you use to extend children’s understanding of various roles during pretend play experiences?
- How do you scaffold your interactions with each child to ensure they get just the right amount of support during pretend play?

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- ◆ Consider the unique needs of the preschoolers in your care and identify a child and/or children who may need additional support with imitation and symbolic representation skills. Plan to partner with their families to share effective strategies for supporting imitation and symbolic representation during pretend play.

- What specific steps can you take with families to support the child’s engagement and promote imitation and symbolic representation through dramatic play at home and within the learning environment?
- What resources or support may you or families need? How will you obtain those resources and support?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about facilitating preschoolers' dramatic play experiences:

- ◆ **Source:** Western Governors University
- ◆ **Article:** Dramatic Play; What it is and why it is important.
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/dramatic-play-what-is-why-important2111.html>
- ◆ **Description:** This article explains the importance of dramatic play and outlines practical ways educators and families can encourage dramatic play at home and at school.



- ◆ **Source:** Tulsa World
- ◆ **Video:** The Importance of Pretend Play
- ◆ **Link:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0LDGfwf\\_7c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0LDGfwf_7c)
- ◆ **Description:** This video outlines the importance of pretend play and offers strategies for facilitating children's learning during pretend play experiences.



- ◆ **Source:** Eastern CT State University
- ◆ **Video:** The Bakery - Supporting Children to Succeed in the Dramatic Play Center
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXqyum4YeEc>
- ◆ **Description:** In this video, an early childhood educator describes her intentional use of the classroom's dramatic play center. She begins by learning what children know about a topic and shares how she helps them increase their understanding. This video demonstrates how children use symbolic representation during dramatic play.