
Responsive Play Interactions

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article and videos, “Responsive Play Interactions,” from Evidence-Based Instructional Practices for Young Children with Autism & Other Disabilities. 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 engage children in symbolic play while remaining responsive to children’s individual needs and preferences.
- ◆ Reflect on your current practices and determine strategies to engage in responsive play interactions with all children.
- ◆ Design an action plan to promote imitation and symbolic representation through responsive play interactions with children.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children in their play to promote imagination.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to promote imitation and symbolic representation through responsive play interactions

When children pretend, they’re using their imaginations to move beyond the bounds of reality.

Fred Rogers

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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



- ◆ This article and videos highlight the importance of being responsive to children's individual needs as they engage in pretend play. Children with disabilities often need additional support to actively engage in pretend play experiences. Thus, it's important for educators to intentionally engage with children during pretend play and provide individualized support as needed.
 - What are some ways children are engaging in pretend play throughout the day in your learning environment?
 - Are some of the children using similar skills when they are playing?
 - How are the children playing differently?
 - How are you engaging with the children during pretend play and staying responsive to their individual needs?
 - What strategies do you use to meet the individual needs of children during pretend play?
 - Reflect on your interactions with children during pretend play. In what ways are you promoting imitation and symbolic representation?



- ◆ In the video, the educator displays ways to follow a child's lead during pretend play to continue the play and promote imitation and symbolic representation. Reflect on your approach to supporting children's pretend play experiences.
 - How can you join in to promote engagement while allowing children to lead play experiences?
 - What strategies might you implement to promote imitation and symbolic representation?



- ◆ Develop an action plan to promote imitation and symbolic representation as you engage in responsive play interactions with all children. The article offers several strategies to engage in play, while remaining responsive to the children.
 - Considering the abilities of children in your classroom, how will you use each of the strategies mentioned in the article?
 - Imitation of Language
 - Expand Language
 - Imitate Play
 - Expand Play
 - Follow a Child's Lead
 - How can you modify your routines to ensure that you use these strategies consistently across all pretend play opportunities?
 - How can you track the gains that the children are making based on your approach?
 - Adjust the strategies as needed to accommodate each child.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting children's imitation and symbolic representation skills:

- ◆ **Source:** Young Exceptional Children
- ◆ **Article:** Teaching Pretend Play to Young Children with Autism
- ◆ **Link:** <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/education-2272-fall-2014-mwilliam/wp-content/uploads/sites/88/2014/11/Young-Exceptional-Children-2012-Barton-5-17.pdf>
- ◆ **Description:** Children learn critical social and communication skills through play, this article provides ways the importance of pretend play as well as prompts that educators can use to bring in and keep children in pretend play



- ◆ **Source:** Paths to Literacy
- ◆ **Article:** Object Symbols for Preschool Student
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/object-symbols-preschool-student/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article offers practical suggestions for using objects to symbolize activities throughout the day