

Framework: Play

Children develop language through interaction with others. They interact with caregivers and are introduced to basic cognitive, language and communication skills. These skills can be developed and expanded as they interact with other children and adults in play activities.

Pretense, Dramatic Play, Perspective, Dialogue, Creativity:

- In these play activities a child begins to develop the ability for pretense. Toys can begin to represent real objects. They can then be used in play routines taken from real occurrences. The child may imitate an activity that they have experienced or act out an activity that a parent or caregiver is known to do.
- The child may pretend to be himself with the pretend object in the pretend routine or take on the role of someone else. The actions are most often accompanied by the appropriate speech. When two children begin to play together the routine is acted out with the communication that is needed for the interaction.
- This dramatic play develops and enriches a child's understanding of the roles that are played in these interactions. As a child pretends to be different actors in a routine a richer perspective grows for the parts different people play.
- Children begin to understand how dialogue is connected to the actors and the sequence of activities in the routine. They become more adept at listening to and comprehending dialogue in stories and books.
- As children become more adept at dramatic play they become increasingly creative generating novel dialogue and story elements.

Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Children can have toys to manipulate that correspond with things in their life.
- A caregiver can include a young child in a variety of daily routines and talk about what is happening.
- Provide a child with play time and a variety of toys and props to encourage pretend activity.
- Provide a child with play time with other children and a variety of toys and props to encourage pretend activity.
- Review the sequence and dialogue of routines that can be dramatized.
- Encourage dramatization of familiar fairytales and fables and have props and costumes available as well as an audience.
- Video dramatizations and then review.

A person with autism or other developmental delay might:

- become preoccupied with an object in nonpurposeful repetitive activity.

- struggle to make the leap to pretense. This requires holding two ideas in focus at once. One is the real item or action and the other is a pretense or imagined thing.
- struggle to derive meaning from the speech in dialogue.
- struggle to recall the sequence of events in a play routine.
- struggle to process what another child is saying and respond in a timely fashion.
- lack a sufficient repertoire of stories to recall.
- struggle to understand feelings and emotions named or inferred in a routine.
- be preoccupied with sensory sensitivities.
- lack assumed skill levels in related areas.

User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Engage the child in play with objects in specific purposeful actions and routines.
- Manipulate objects and visuals that depict sequences that can be dramatized.
- Engage the child in routines using pretend objects.
- Engage the child in puppet dramas with prompts for dialogue.
- Encourage dramatization of familiar fairytales and fables and have props and costumes available. The story or dialogue can be read by an instructor and acted out by a child if need be.
- Video dramatizations and then review portions. Video of other children's dramatizations can be viewed as well.
- Name and emphasize any emotion and feeling that may be present.
- Peers can be chosen that are accommodating and understanding of the help that might be needed.
- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.
- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.

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