

# Branching Out

Resource Updates to Support the Growth and Goals of Educators



Dramatic play is an essential part of early childhood education development. Not only is dramatic play fun for children, but it also supports a number of skills needed for adult life such as social and emotional skills, language, empathy, and more. Featured below are a few of the many resources the ECCDC offers to bring Dramatic Play to life within your early learning environment.



## Provocation for Learning Kits for Borrowing



### Cheetah Hand Puppet

The ECCDC offers a number of hand puppets that are a terrific addition to your dramatic play space!

**\*Puppets will be available soon for borrowing as COVID-19 restrictions lessen.**



### Imaginative and Pretend Play: Children Explore the Farm Through Dramatic Play

Children will enjoy this hands-on dramatic play experience at the farm as they construct and create with the loose parts in this resource and additional materials such as the farm animals and farmers!



### Everyday Places and the People We Know: Community Places - At the Café

Check out this wonderful resource that can be used to create your very own café in your early learning environment. Coffee mugs, teacups, desserts, tea bags, and more - this resource is sure to delight the children with the experience of running their very own café!



## Contacting the Lending Library & Workroom for Dramatic/Imaginative Play Resources

Please note that due to COVID-19 a few of our resources on Dramatic/Imaginative Play will not be available for borrowing. If you have any questions or need suggestion for alternate provocation for learning kits on Imaginative/Dramatic Play, please contact us at:



905.646.7311



Click [here](#) to email the lending library

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**Connor's Corner**  
Connor Walsh, Student Intern, ECCDC

## Ways to Implement Imaginative & Pretend Play

Giving children ample space to play offers more opportunities and possibilities for imagination.

Encourage children's play but be careful not to control it. If the parent/educator intervenes or participates too much, the child will play less imaginatively. If they need help, the parent/educator can build on the themes of the play. Non-specific suggestions can be made in the form of questions. For example, "Do you think the dinosaur wants to run around or nap while his sister finds food?" The parent/educator can also talk to the child and ask what the emotions/thoughts of the characters are. This encourages more creative thinking.

When pretend play is most beneficial, the child spends even more time planning and structuring than playing. Roles can be assigned, and the behaviour of each role is established. Children may play more than one role at a time. The imaginary play scene may be finished in one session or may be broken up into sessions when the play can be stopped and restarted again.

Realistic materials and materials with open-ended possibilities should be provided to act out many situations. Some materials could be trucks, dolls, tea sets, dress-up cloths, house, farm, garage, airport, blocks, cardboard cylinders, paper bags, and sand.

It is encouraged that parents/educator give the children many opportunities in life to do realistic activities with adults, and opportunities to watch adults' actions. This can pass on effective social knowledge to children that they can incorporate into their play.



## Developmental Benefits of Dramatic Play for Kids:

**Brain building:** Engages brain and memory. They can remember how their role models behave when acting a certain situation out.

**Vocabulary building:** The child tries to think of what their own character would say. They can improve their internal dictionary by using a word they may have seen in an observation or seen in a story.

**Problem Solving:** Imaginative play encourages children to consider different solutions using their own insight. If working together, children discuss their roles and choose props to fulfill the role, encouraging cooperation also.

**Socialization skills:** Children have the opportunity to practice cooperation, taking turns, patience, and sharing.

**Empathy:** Acting in another role allows the child to see other people's perspectives. It helps them understand the actual work people put in to help them. Example: doctor and patient. Through imitation, they may understand the thoughts and feelings people have in certain situations.

**Emotional development:** Children may introduce new emotions in imaginative play. It helps them practice appropriate emotional responses. There can be scary situations in life and children will often process their fears through play.

**Fine & Gross Motor skills:** By putting on clothes, buttoning, zipping, jumping, etc.

**Gender Expression:** Explore different gender identities, through different types of roleplaying play breaking stereotypes and encouraging self-expression



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## Farr Out Findings

Emily Farr, Student Intern, ECCDC

### Material Alternatives for Dramatic/Imaginative Play During COVID-19

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought many changes, and along with it, challenges including what we determine as safe and unsafe in terms of materials for children in early learning programs. More specifically, in our dramatic/imaginative play spaces, we've had to remove costumes, plush toys, puppets, and many more, because they cannot easily be sanitized. Early learning professionals have had to take on the role of finding safe alternatives to continue to support such a formative, developmentally beneficial type of play for children. Listed below are a few ideas to get you started:

- Sunglasses
- Jewelry - such as beaded necklaces
- Camera
- Magnifying Glass
- Loose Parts (Dominos, Large Buttons, Pebbles, Plastic Hair Rollers, etc.)
- Steel Kitchenware (mixing bowls, strainer, muffin tins, cups, ladle)
- Plastic Pretend Food
- Grocery Cart
- Baby Dolls
- Pacifiers
- Baby Bottle
- Telephone
- Plastic Toy Animals

All the materials listed above can easily be sanitized and thus are safe for children to use when engaging in dramatic/imaginative play in their early learning programs. To further spark children's engagement, play along with them and probe conversations with open-ended questions about what they are doing, to build off their interests!



For further information about customized training opportunities on this topic, [click here](#). To register for other Professional Development opportunities offered through the ECCDC please [click here](#).