

Prop Box Learning and Play!

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”
-Fred Rogers

Prop boxes are used by many Preschool and Kindergarten teachers to create imaginative play and *hands-on-learning opportunities* in their classrooms. Prop boxes are essentially a collection of items (or props) that suggest a specific theme and “set the stage” for a child's imagination to engage in both creative and dramatic play (Prop Boxes, 2020).

Parents and teachers can use **prop boxes** to reinforce:

- Literacy and Math experiences
- Language building opportunities
- Decision making and problem solving
- Social and emotional skills
- Gender and cultural inclusiveness

Prop Boxes are important elements of **Dramatic Play**. Dramatic play is pretend or make-believe play where children use objects and roles in imaginative and realistic ways. Group dramatic play is also called **sociodramatic play**. Sociodramatic play is the most sophisticated form of play for young children as it gives children the opportunity to think, speak and act symbolically (Barbour & Desjean-Perrotta, 2002).

Prop boxes and dramatic play support:

Cognitive Development

- Representation of thoughts using symbolism, a prerequisite skill for reading, writing and math.
- Focus attention and concentration
- Hypothesize, test, and revise concepts
- Use divergent thinking
- Problem-solve
- Understanding economics
- Discover Math and Science concepts (classification, seriation, and measurement)

Social & Emotional Development

- Develop friendships
- Take turns, cooperate, and share
- Listen to others
- Communicate appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally
- Collaborate with peers
- Explore and express feelings freely
- Negotiate, renegotiate, and resolve conflicts

Physical Development

- Fine and Gross Motor skills
- Balance
- Coordination
- Eye-hand coordination
- Flexibility
- Spatial and distance awareness
- Physical competence and security

Language & Literacy Development

- Communicate meaning
- Practice conventional speech
- Emergent reading and writing skills
- Increase vocabulary
- Use language for critical thinking and problem-solving
- Act out stories and role plays that enhance story sequence, story sense, and language use
- Utilize environmental print (labels on food containers, menus, grocery store circulars, etc.)

Creativity

- Express originality in thinking
- Add to and change the environment in their own ways
- Respond to stimuli in unique ways
- Explore and play with ideas
- Develop an experimental attitude
- Develop curiosity (want to know and understand)
- Use divergent thinking and convergent thinking
- Explore with new materials

(Barbour & Desjean-Perrotta, 2002).

Prop Box Learning and Play!

Let's Build a Prop Box!

- What will our theme be?
- What type of box will we use?
- Where will we shop for our prop box materials? *Let's write a list.*
- What can we find around the house or classroom to add to our box?

Prop Box Themes:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| • Archeologist | • Circus | • Post Office |
| • Architect | • Dentist/ Doctor | • Picnic |
| • Bakery | • Farm | • Science Laboratory |
| • Birthday Party | • Fruit and Vegetable Stand | • Space Travel |
| • Camping | • Ice Cream Shop | • Supermarket |
| • Construction | • Pet Shop/ Veterinarian | • Zoo |



Architect Prop Box

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--|
| • Blueprints | • Ruler | • Colored pencils |
| • Safety vest | • Level | • Cell phone or walkie talkie |
| • Construction hat | • Tape measure | • Pictures of building styles |
| • Safety goggles | • Clipboard | • Books about construction & buildings |
| • Building blocks | | |

New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards:

Approaches to Learning

- Standard 91: Children demonstrate initiative engagement, and persistence.
- Standard 92: Children show creativity and imagination.
- Standard 93: Children identify and solve problems.
- Standard 94: Children apply what they have learned to new situations.

References:

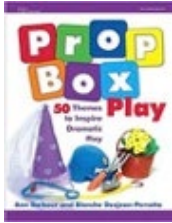
Barbour, A, & Desjean-Perrotta, B. (2002). *Prop Box Play: 50 Themes to Inspire Dramatic Play*. Lewisville, NC: Gryphon House.

Prop Boxes: Creating Imaginative Play Spaces. (2020). Retrieved from Playful Learning:

<https://www.playfullearning.net/resource/prop-boxes-creating-imaginative-play-spaces/>

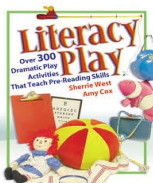
LRC-South related items to borrow that align with this Learn and Create Activity:

Prop Box Play: 50 Themes to Inspire Dramatic Play



Think inside the (prop) box! Encourage more dramatic play with Prop Box Play. Prop boxes contain dramatic play props that offer children the freedom to express themselves and to exercise their imaginations. With 50 themes that inspire hours of dramatic play and creativity, lists of props, easy extensions, related vocabulary, and associated children's literature, Prop Box Play makes it easy for children to bring their imaginations to life! (LRC-S #45403)

Literacy Play: Over 300 Dramatic Play Activities That Teach Pre-Reading Skills



Children love to pretend, and dramatic play is the perfect environment for practicing and applying literacy concepts. Whether they decide to be firefighters, to open a pet store, or to have a tea party, children will increase their vocabulary, communicate with their friends, and learn to recognize environmental print - all important skills for pre-readers. (LRC-S # 45663)

Classroom Mailbox



A great way to boost early printing skills and build community awareness, our tough mailbox has all the authentic features to inspire realistic play—from a working mail door for depositing letters to a flag children can raise when there's mail inside! The mailbox features a sturdy tabletop design with a stable base and rounded edges for super-safe play. (LRC-S #43457)

Transportation Theme Box



Children learn all about transportation...with comprehensive, hands-on lessons that span the curriculum! From vehicle counters and cookie cutters to an engaging puzzle, our theme box is packed with materials that help kids explore cars, boats, trains and more! Plus, you get a guide with tons of involving activities that cover 10 curriculum areas—from math to dramatic play. (LRC-S #37837)

Calculator Cash Register



Kids will love ringing up the fun with this talking cash register. The lights and sounds will engage and entertain. Cash register features interactive games with multiple skill levels that encourage and motivate young learners. (LRC-S #36774)

Dalmatian Vet Set



So many things to do! The Dalmatian Vet Set comes with everything a young veterinarian needs. You can take your puppy's blood pressure, check his reflexes, and even listen to his heart with your very own stethoscope. Also includes a brush, tweezers, syringe, thermometer, dog food, and more. (LRC-S 42415)