

Dramatic Play Centres

Pembroke's Friday Freebie

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Journey to Literacy: No Worksheets Required



**Drama
&
Play**

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Transforming the Home Centre into Other Dramatic Play Settings

The Home/Dramatic Play centre facilitates the development of many listening, reading, writing, and oral language skills. All the learning at the Home centre can be enriched, supported, and extended by transforming the centre into various different settings, including familiar places. Changing the home to a store, a veterinarian's office, or a travel agency, for example, can provide many opportunities for children to acquire and use new vocabulary, enact new roles, and gain exposure to print in meaningful ways.

Below a number of possible literacy experiences are outlined. Not all would be implemented in one school year, but all have proven to be extremely successful in Kindergarten classrooms. In transforming the Home centre, we sometimes found it necessary to remove some pieces of the furniture, while at other times, it was enough simply to cover some furniture with pieces of cloth. For example, a campsite would not require any furniture, while a vet's office could make good use of a refrigerator.

In order to support literacy development, you will need to visit the centre, interact with the children, and observe them carefully. Be sure to note when interest in a different dramatic setting is waning — we often re-established the Home centre when that occurred. Re-establishing the Home centre will provide the children with additional time to role-play and clarify their personal role in the family. As always, follow the lead and interests of your students.

Fairy-tale extensions

After hearing a favorite story such as “Three Billy Goats Gruff” at a large-group time, the children often spontaneously transformed the Home centre into a setting where they could act out portions of the story. They might negotiate use of the big blocks or tables to change the shape of the centre, later returning the blocks to the closed Construction centre at the end of the activity period. In addition to the props we suggested (e.g., blocks or planks for the bridge, large pieces of fabric to represent the meadow, and drums to represent the hooves of the goats on the bridge), children typically brought props from home. In our experience, every time the children use props at this centre, they improvise, creating unique versions of old and familiar stories.

Other stories and related props that motivate dramatic play include these:

- “Little Red Riding Hood” (red cape, wolf costume, picnic basket)
- “Little Red Hen” (animal hats, burlap for flour)
- “The Three Little Pigs” (pig noses, wolf costume, bricks, sticks, straw)
- “Cinderella” (plastic slipper, dresses, aprons, broom, crowns, wand)

Storytelling activities can also be effectively done on a felt board. When selecting stories, we looked for a simple plot line, a limited number of characters, and to make our task easier, the availability of commercial felt cut-outs. Felt cut-outs encourage the children to use language from the story to retell the events at the beginning, middle, and end.

Be sure to provide various versions of these stories at the centre for the children to discuss, compare, retell, and enjoy (see the box below). Including books that continue the traditional fairy tale or that present a fractured version of the plot will help extend the story experience. For example, *A Chair for Baby Bear* by Kaye Umansky is a delightful story that explains what happens after Goldilocks runs away.

Familiar Stories: Alternative Versions

For "The Three Little Pigs"

The Three Little Pigs by Paul Galdone
The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka (illustrated by Lane Smith)
The Three Little Pigs: An Architectural Tale by Steve Guarnaccia
Ziggy Piggy and the Three Little Pigs by Frank Asch

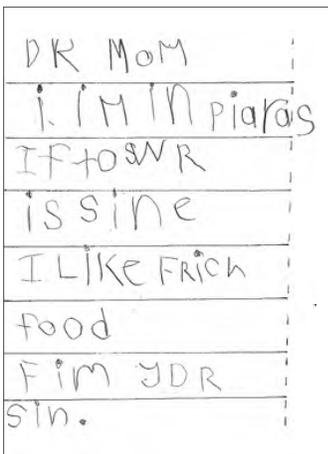
For "Goldilocks and the Three Bears"

Goldilocks and the Three Bears by James Marshall
Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Caralyn Buehner (illustrated by Mark Buehner)
Tackylocks and The Three Bears by Helen Lester
A Chair for Baby Bear by Kaye Umansky
Baby Bear's Chairs by Jane Yolen (illustrated by Melissa Sweet)
Somebody and the Three Blairs by Marilyn Tolhurst (illustrated by Simone Abel)

For "Cinderella"

Cinderella by Marcia Brown (a traditional version to be read first)
Cinder-Elly by Frances Minters (illustrated by G. Brian Karas)
Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China by Ai-Ling Louie
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale by John Steptoe
The Korean Cinderella by Shirley Climo (illustrated by Ruth Heller)
The Egyptian Cinderella by Shirley Climo (illustrated by Ruth Heller)
Prince Cinders by Babette Cole

You may want to have the children vote orally, in pictorial form or print, about which story version they liked the best. (Appendix A: Ways to Record Ideas provides instructions on how to make a voting sheet.)



A child has imagined visiting France and filled in a simple postcard template. The message home is shown: Dear Mom, I am in Paris. Eiffel Tower is shiny. I like French food. From your son.

Travel agency

The children in our teaching communities come from many different parts of the world and are interested in learning about foreign lands — establishing a travel agency setting is one way to address this. *Gifts* by Jo Ellen Bogart (illustrated by Barbara Reid) is a wonderful introduction to a few countries, as a grandmother travels around the world and gathers souvenir gifts for her granddaughter. *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney is another recommended fiction title. At read-aloud time, also read simple non-fiction books about countries and places to stimulate discussion.

Before a read-aloud session, establish prior knowledge by asking the children to identify where they or their parents were born, perhaps Canada, China, or the Philippines. Make a list of these places with a small or large group. Take the opportunity to point out initial consonants, spacing, and so on during the Shared Writing experience. Use the large chart created to transform the Home centre into a travel agency.

Children working at the Visual Arts centre can contribute to the creation of a travel agency. Challenge some of the children to paint pictures that represent places such as mountains, oceans, and the CN Tower, and post the art in the new travel agency. By visiting a local travel agency, you should be able to collect related literacy items, including travel brochures, airplane tickets, itinerary

sheets, and posters from around the world. Include these at the travel agency.

Provide a template for a passport that children can show as they board the plane for a trip. Children could bring in small photos of themselves from home. Be sure, too, to include paper and pencils to encourage the children to create plane tickets and information about the dates and times of the holidays.

Airplane Ticket

Name CHARLIE

Date JAN, 28, 2011.

Time 3:00.PM.

Destination TAMPA

Seat Number 383

The airplane ticket is an example of an easily prepared template that students can readily use in their dramatic play. The child has clearly communicated his travel intentions.

Airplane: As an extension, several chairs could be arranged in rows with a middle aisle and the travel agency could be changed into an airplane. Each chair could be labelled with a row and seat number, and given an assigned ticket. A small rolling cart could be filled with empty pop cans or bottles, as well as plastic food for the flight attendants to serve to the passengers.

Pizza parlor/Restaurant

Read *Hi! Pizza Man* by Virginia Walter or *Pete's a Pizza* by William Steig to the large group and use the text to create a chart listing various pizza toppings, such as pepperoni, pineapple, cheese, tomatoes, and peppers.

For the centre, use colored felt to cut out topping items and sort them into various labelled baskets; make them available for the children to make their own pizzas. Collect cooking items such as aluminum pizza pans, spatulas, plastic pizza cutters, oven mitts, and paper chef hats. Be sure to label the place for each item with pictures or words to ensure an organized tidy-up. You might cover the table with a red-and-white checkered cloth to give the feel of a real pizzeria — local dollar stores are often good sources for these resources. Have the children paint large pictures of pizzas and cut them out to display on the bulletin boards in the centre. Visit your favorite local pizza take-out restaurant and ask for several unused pizza boxes, menus, and flyers. Obtaining these items will add to the authenticity of the restaurant.

Involve the children in developing the print resources required for a restaurant. During a shared modelled writing experience, create a poster indicating the daily specials and restaurant hours. Be sure to provide pencils and small pads of paper so that the children, in role as waiters, can record customers' orders. These order pads could show a combination of pictures and words, for example, different sizes of wedges to represent different pizza sizes. Plan to develop them with a small group of children in a Shared Writing session. Finally, provide the children

Pizza Order Pad

Large Pizza	pepperoni
Medium Pizza	cheese
Small Pizza	X
Drink	juice milk water
Name	Miguel
Price	\$5.50 \$5.50 \$5.50

A child in role as waiter said, "A large pepperoni and a medium cheese cost lots of money so I made lots of dollars."

small group of children in a Shared Writing session. Finally, provide the children with pieces of blank chart or painting paper, folded in thirds, so that they can create their own pizza recipes and menus.

Have the children brainstorm other kinds of restaurants and alter and use many of these ideas to transform the centre into a different restaurant, such as a traditional Chinese restaurant equipped with chopsticks, rice bowls, and bamboo placemats.