



Dramatic Play

ECERS-R Indicator	Why is this important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic play area must be accessible a substantial portion of the day. <p>Definition: Substantial portion of the day – One-third of the program’s daily operating hours. Operating hours begin with the earliest time children are allowed to arrive and continue until the latest time children are allowed to stay in care.</p> <p>Definition: Accessible – Children don’t have to ask the teacher to get/open materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic play is a child’s first opportunity to act out real-life situations and explore different roles. Children need to have access to these materials in order to make sense of the world around them by acting out things they see in daily life. Dramatic play is also the activity in which children practice the most language skills in the classroom and helps develop their social skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Props for at least two different themes should be accessible daily. Theme categories include: Themes about housekeeping, different kinds of work, fantasy, and leisure activities. Dress-up clothes should be included in dramatic play. Both female and male clothes as well as other themed clothes should be available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By offering multiple themes complete with their own materials, equipment, and props, children have more opportunities to pretend in a more complex way. More props allow richer play, with more meaning and a chance to use their imagination. The ability to combine props leads to more meaningful, elaborate play. Because children are developing gender-role identity during the preschool years, they require concrete examples of dress-up clothes that are associated with being men or women. It is important for them to be able to try out different gender and occupation roles with the proper dress-up materials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Props that represent diversity provided. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples include: dolls representing different races/ages/cultures/abilities, different play foods, cooking utensils, or clothing that represent different cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to include diversity in this area because sometimes children aren’t exposed to different races, cultures, ethnicities or traditions. Adding diversity to a classrooms allows children to focus on similarities rather than differences. Children learn that differences among groups exist and can be respected and enjoyed, rather than feared and disliked. In addition, there is a focus on the similarities that bind us together as humans, rather than concentrating on how we differ. The dramatic play area is a great place to introduce different clothing or food that represents different cultures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic play should be offered in another area (either outdoors or a large, uncrowded indoor space such as a gym or multi-purpose room) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic play should be extended to the outdoor play area or gym so that children can carry out more complex dramatic play. That way, children can be very active and noisy without disrupting other activities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dramatic play materials should be rotated for a variety of themes (Ex. Prop boxes for work, fantasy, and leisure themes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Materials should be rotated so that children can take on different roles, find new interests, or use props that they used before, in a new way. Rotating props keeps children from becoming bored with the choices they can make for play and adds new learning opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dramatic play area should be clearly defined, with space to play and organized storage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since preschool children do not understand boundaries unless they are made of real objects they can see, concrete boundaries are required. This can be done with shelves and furniture. Play materials should be grouped by type so children know where to find them and can help to put them away. Children should be able to easily obtain these materials with little or no help from staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pictures, stories, and trips used to enrich dramatic play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By using pictures, books, and field trips related to the dramatic play materials offered, children will take the information they gain and incorporate it as they pretend. Their pretend play becomes richer in context. For specific examples of how this can be done contact a Child Care Aware Coach.

SOURCE: *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)*

