



MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY PRESENTER NOTES

This guide walks you through presenting the **Make-Believe Play** in-service suite. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials. The main PowerPoint presentation and optional slides were developed for all professional audiences (teachers, home visitors, family child care providers). Additionally, separate PowerPoint slides were developed for home visitors. Learning activities, tip sheets, and activity sheets are labeled for their intended audiences.

MATERIALS:

- Presenter powerpoint slides
- Introductory video (found on the ECLKC website)—play at the start of your training, if internet connection is available
- Projector and audio equipment
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- This presentation helps participants understand and support make-believe play in children ages birth to five.
- In the presentation, you will define make-believe play, then learn to provide engaging environments, nurturing, responsive, effective interactions, and intentional learning experiences.
- The presentation includes video clips that illustrate teachers supporting children's make-believe play skills and thinking. Although most of the videos are teacher examples, home visitors can watch and use them for their own professional development and encourage families to replicate.
- Adaptation boxes individualize this training for your specific training group.

LIST OF AVAILABLE CONTENT

HANDOUTS

- Make-Believe Play Stretches Across the ELOF Domains
- Activities for Families: Make-Believe Play Ideas
- Tips for Education Staff: Role Speech
- Tips for Home Visitors: Role Speech
- Tips for Education Staff: Engaging Families
- Tips for Home Visitors: Engaging Families
- Tips for Families: Engaging in Make-Believe Play
- Tips for Education Staff: Supporting Make-Believe Play
- Tips for Home Visitors: Supporting Make-Believe Play
- Tips for Education Staff: Supporting Children Who Are Dual Language Learners
- Tools for Supervisors: Planning for Make-Believe Play
- Helpful Resources

OPTIONAL SLIDES

- Optional Slide 1: HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
- Optional Slide 2: HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
- Optional Slide 3: Building Background Knowledge
- Optional Slide 4: Brainstorm Theme
- Optional Slide 5: Build Props and Create Make-Believe Play Areas
- Optional Slide 6: High-Level Make-Believe Play

OPTIONAL HANDOUTS

- Head Start Program Performance Standards Support Make-Believe Play

OPTIONAL SLIDES FOR HOME-BASED CARE (HOME VISITORS) ONLY

- HV Optional Slide 1: HV Title Slide
- HV Optional Slide 2: HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
- HV Optional Slide 3: HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
- HV Optional Slide 4: Center-Based and Family Child Care Practices
- HV Optional Slide 5: Home Visitor Practices
- HV Optional Slide 6: What's Different for a Home Visitor?
- HV Optional Slide 7: Theory of Change for Home-Based
- HV Optional Slide 8: Creating an Environment to Support Social Play
- HV Optional Slide 9: Play Themes
- HV Optional Slide 10: Play Themes Inspired by Everyday Activities

SLIDE	HANDOUTS NEEDED	HOME VISITOR POWERPOINT ADAPTATION	HOME VISITOR HANDOUTS	OPTIONAL SLIDES	OPTIONAL HANDOUTS
1. Make-Believe Play Introduction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace with HV Optional Slide 1 			
2. Make-Believe Play Stretches Across ELOF Domains					
3. Make-Believe Play Stretches Across ELOF Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make-Believe Play Stretches Across the ELOF Domains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert HV Optional Slides 2-3 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional Slide 1 Optional Slide 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
4. House Framework for Effective Practice					
5. House Framework for Effective Practice: Foundation					
6. House Framework for Effective Practice: 1st Pillar					
7. Session Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert HV Optional Slides 4-7 after Objectives 			
8. Foundations of Play					
9. Foundations of Play					
10. Benefits of Infant and Toddler Play					
11. Make-Believe Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities for Families: Make-Believe Play Ideas (F) 				
12. The Path to Make-Believe Play					
13. Requirements for Make-Believe Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role Speech (ES) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role Speech (HV) 		
14. Turn and Talk					
15. Benefits of Make-Believe Play					

SLIDE	HANDOUTS NEEDED	HOME VISITOR POWERPOINT ADAPTATION	HOME VISITOR HANDOUTS	OPTIONAL SLIDES	OPTIONAL HANDOUTS
16. Supporting Make-Believe Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging Families (ES) Engaging in Make-Believe Play (F) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging Families (HV) Engaging in Make-Believe Play (F) 		
17. Creating an Environment to Support Social Play		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert HV Optional Slide 8 			
18. Play Themes vs. Curriculum Units		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert HV Optional Slide 9 			
19. Play Themes Inspired by Units		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert HV Optional Slide 10 			
20. Cycle of Supporting Make-Believe Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Make-Believe Play (ES) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Make-Believe Play (HV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insert Optional Slides 3-6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools for Supervisors
21. Supporting All Children in Make-Believe Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Children Who Are Dual Language Learners (ES) 				
22. Make-Believe Play: Video					
23. Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpful Resources Tools for Supervisors 				

ES: Indicates tips/activity sheet for education staff

HV: Indicates tips/activity sheet for home visitors

F: Indicates tips/activity sheet for families



SLIDE 1:

Welcome and Introductions

- Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

Think back on some of your favorite make-believe play scenarios. What did you play? Talk about the fun and satisfaction of make-believe play for you and for children!

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Insert HV Optional Slide 1

Make-Believe Play Stretches Across ELOF Domains

15-Minute
In-Service Suites

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication Literacy	Mathematics Development Scientific Reasoning	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

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SLIDE 2:

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) helps teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors understand child development and what children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. The ELOF outlines effective program and teaching practices that promote strong outcomes for all children, including children with disabilities or suspected delays and children who are dual or tribal language learners.

Make-believe play can be found in multiple ELOF goals within the Approaches to Learning, Cognition, and Social and Emotional Development domains for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Make-Believe Play Stretches Across ELOF Domains



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- Approaches to Learning
 - Creativity (Infant/Toddler & Preschool)
- Social and Emotional Development
 - Relationships with Other Children (Preschool)
- Language and Literacy
 - Emergent Literacy (Infant/Toddler)
 - Communicating and Speaking (Preschool)
- Cognition
 - Imitation and Symbolic Representation & Play (Infant/Toddler)

SLIDE 3:

FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Children's creativity in play—using familiar objects in new ways and showing imagination—is primarily found in the **Approaches to Learning** domain under the sub-domain Creativity.
- When infants and toddlers begin to engage in reciprocal play (passing a ball back and forth), imitating peers or adults, or using one object to stand for another object (using a block to represent a phone), they are demonstrating skills in the **Cognition** domain, sub-domain Imitation and Symbolic Representation and Play.

FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- Children use their growing language and literacy skills in make-believe play as they hold and maintain conversations with their peers. For example, they might “read” from a menu while playing in a pretend restaurant. These skills are in the **Language and Literacy** domain.
- When children engage in positive interactions and cooperative play, they demonstrate skills in the **Social and Emotional Development** domain, sub-domain Relationships with Other Children. As children's play becomes more complex, they will begin to create goals, plan, and assign roles for the make-believe play scenario.

Encouraging children to use their home language during make-believe play is an important part of connecting make-believe play with family, culture, and developmental goals. For example, you can support children's sense of identity and belonging (**Social and Emotional Development**) by incorporating key words or phrases in the child's home language to help them make connections between play and their home language. You can further support children who are dual language learners or children who are learning a tribal language by talking with families about acceptable make-believe themes, dress-up attire, or behaviors that can help you meet children's needs while being considerate of cultural practices.



MATERIALS NEEDED

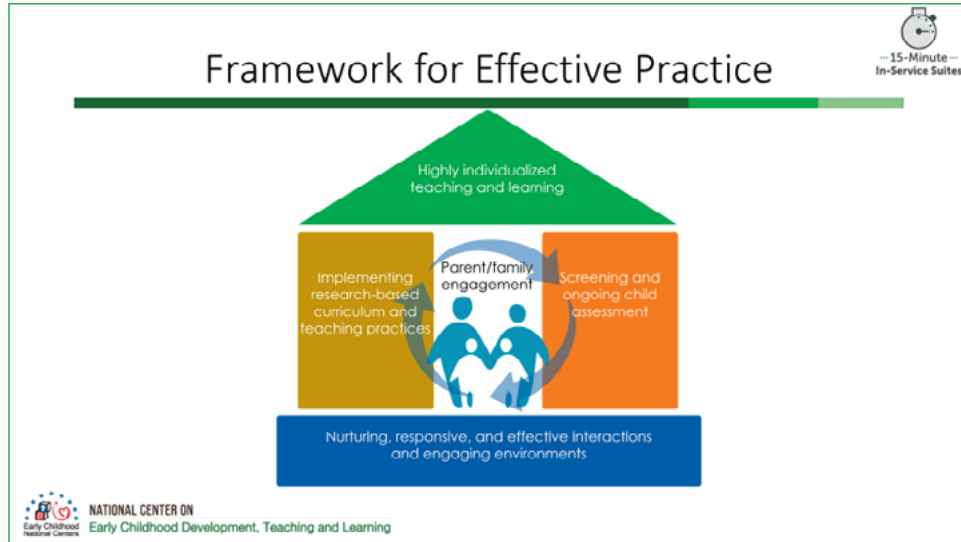
- Handout: Make-Believe Play Stretches Across the ELOF Domains

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Insert HV Optional Slides 2-3

FOR EHS/HS

- Handout: HSPPS Support Make-Believe Play
- Insert Optional Slides 1-2



SLIDE 4:

The Framework for Effective Practice is known as the House. The House represents five integral components of quality teaching and learning:

- The foundation: Providing nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments for children
- The first pillar: Implementing research-based curricula and teaching practices
- The second pillar: Screening and ongoing child assessment
- The roof: Highly individualizing teaching and learning
- The center: Parent and family engagement

When connected with one another, they form a single structure—the House Framework—that surrounds the family in the center. As we implement each component of the house—in partnership with parents and families, we foster children’s learning and development.

Framework for Effective Practice







SLIDE 5:

Make-believe play is an essential part of the foundation, since it needs to take place in a highly engaging environment with nurturing and responsive interactions.



SLIDE 6:

Make-believe play is also an essential part of the research-based curriculum and the teaching and home visiting practices that you use every day.

Session Objectives



- **Identify** the unique key components of make-believe play
- **Describe** what make-believe play looks like
- **Implement** practical ways to support make-believe play in your early learning setting

SLIDE 7:

- By the end of this presentation you should be able to: (Read the objectives.)
- Does anyone have anything else that they would like to be able to do by the end of this session?

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Insert HV Optional Slides 4-7 to provide a foundation for home visiting practices



Foundations of Play

Infants & Toddlers

SLIDE 8:

- This presentation primarily focuses on make-believe play, which we'll discuss in detail a little later. While we don't expect infants and young toddlers to engage in make-believe play, the way they play now lays the foundation for make-believe play in the later years.
- You probably won't see children under 16-18 months play make-believe. Make-believe is a type of pretend play that involves social interactions between peers and typically happens during the preschool years. Instead, infants and toddlers engage in pretend behaviors that lead to make-believe play. For example, they might imitate caregivers or peers or pretend to "talk" on a toy cell phone.
- Let's briefly review some of the key social play behaviors in young children that lay the foundation for high-level or complex make-believe play.

Foundations of Play

---15-Minute---
In-Service Suites



- Play begins with exploration
 - Infants explore new objects to discover what they are and what they do
 - Exploration looks different, depending on a child's understanding of an object or situation
- Exploratory play includes more and more social play (and even the beginnings of pretend play)

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SLIDE 9:

For the youngest children, play begins with exploration. Examples of infant and toddler exploratory play includes:

- Rolling back and forth on the floor
- Banging objects together
- Pouring water
- Running around in circles

Exploratory play also includes increasing amounts of social interactions, first with adults and then with other children, leading to *social play* (play that involves interactions with another person).

- Examples of infant and toddler social play
(https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/checklists/all_checklists.pdf):

BIRTH – 9 MONTHS

- Imitates facial expressions and sound heard, babbles with expression
- Smiles, coos in response or to engage caregiver
- Takes turns while making sounds, plays peek-a-boo

8 – 18 MONTHS

- Imitates sounds or actions in order to get attention
- Hands toys to others to engage in play, plays games such as pat-a-cake

18 - 36 MONTHS

- Imitates others, especially adults and older children (e.g., pretend reading)
- Plays mainly beside other children, but begins to include other children
- Plays simple pretend games (e.g., acting out animal characteristics), and takes turns in games
- Engages in simple role play to practice or understand familiar routines (e.g., carries a bag on arm and waves goodbye, puts blankets on babies and pats their back)
- Uses toys to symbolize pretend objects (e.g., uses a block for a phone)

Observe children with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities and offer activities, toys, and materials that are appropriate. Play with the child to promote their learning and to challenge them when appropriate.

TURN AND TALK

- **How do the children you work with play throughout the day? What are some of their favorite things to do? Why do you think that is?**

Benefits of Infant and Toddler Play

- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, play:
 - Supports healthy brain development
 - Is one way infants and toddlers interact with their environment
 - Allows children to safely explore their fears and practice adult roles and familiar routines (at home or in the learning environment)
 - Builds relationships between children and their peers and caregivers



SLIDE 10:

- We know that play is important for young children. Aside from just being fun, it has many other benefits (read the notes on the slide).
- When children play, they begin taking turns and talking with peers and caregivers. These interactions help children learn the rules of language, increase their vocabulary, and practice self-regulation—all important skills to promote school readiness

Helpful Resource: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/news-you-can-use-play>



Make-Believe Play

Overview & Development

SLIDE 11:

- Now we are going to focus on a particular kind of pretend play—make-believe play. You may hear the term dramatic play—which is children’s ability to act out behaviors that they have previously seen and can do by themselves. However, in this suite we will discuss make-believe play, which involves more than one person and is typically demonstrated by preschool-aged children.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Activities for Families: Make-Believe Play Ideas



SLIDE 12:

As children move from exploratory play to make-believe, they follow this developmental path:

■ Object-Oriented Sensorimotor Actions

- From birth – 1, children use their senses to explore the physical properties of objects with adult support.
 - For example, dad models what can be done with a rattle. He shakes the rattle and it makes a noise. He places the rattle in the baby’s hands and encourages the baby to shake it. This father-child interaction becomes the blueprint for interacting with rattles and other objects.
- Object-oriented sensorimotor actions are different from exploratory play, explained earlier, since it only has to do with objects. Exploratory play can include toys but doesn’t necessarily need objects (such as spinning around in a circle or rolling over).

■ Object-Oriented or Instrumental Play

- From about ages 1 – 3, toddlers engage in object-oriented and instrumental activities that eventually lead to play.
- Children explore the physical properties of objects and learn to use them.
 - For example, they may stack blocks or scoop sand with a shovel. They may also play with several objects together like rolling balls down a cardboard ramp or plastic tube.
- In this stage, children don’t use pretend language yet.

■ Beginnings of Make-Believe Play

- In this stage, toddlers begin to use everyday objects in imaginary situations. This is when we see make-believe play emerge.
 - For example, a child picks up a spoon and pretends to eat or pretends to feed their bear.
- When adults encourage children to label what they are pretending this moves them from just playing with toys to playing make-believe with toys.
 - For example, when the adult asks the child, “Will you feed your bear?” she helps the toddler who has just picked up the spoon transition to make-believe play.

- In make-believe play, the child can pretend to be somebody else or use an object in a symbolic way.
 - To qualify as make-believe, play must include *symbolic representation*. Symbolic Representation is when children start to use objects in ways different from their intended purpose. For example, a young child might use a block shaped like a rectangular prism as a bottle for their baby, or empty paper towel tubes as binoculars!
- In this stage, children may play alongside a friend, but their play is not yet cooperative.
 - For example, multiple children may be playing “house,” but roles haven’t been assigned and children may just be imitating routine household chores such as washing dishes and stirring pots, not really interacting. Interactions between children are secondary.
- Make-Believe Play
 - Play is much more socially oriented (e.g., playing house, washing the dishes provides a context for the intricate social roles the children are enacting), and play doesn’t focus on objects.
 - Children negotiate and enact roles
 - Play occurs over time
 - Typical in 4 – 6-year-old children

For children who are shy, do not engage in social play, are dual language learners, or have limited speech, adults may need to encourage them, help them come up with play themes, and find children to play with. Observe children’s interests and abilities and use observations to plan daily activities. Also, encourage children to use their home language during make-believe play, as this will help them feel comfortable speaking. Provide vocabulary to children with limited speech and encourage them to use gestures, pictures or icons, and signs or body language for communication.

It is also important to note that these stages may overlap. For example, a toddler may demonstrate both object-oriented play with toy cars and make-believe play when two toddlers pretend to use blocks as cars on a road and saying that they are stopping for gas.



Requirements for Make-Believe Play

Children engage in high-quality make-believe play when they:



Create an imaginary situation



Take on and act out roles



Follow a set of rules determined by roles



SLIDE 13:

- There are 3 key requirements for *make-believe* play (Leong, Bodrova, Germeroth, Day-Hess, in press):
 1. Children create an imaginary situation. Play includes a pretend scenario that children act out. Their language, actions, and interactions focus on the pretend scenario.
 - For example, children may act out a scenario in which someone takes their sick puppy to the veterinarian's office.
 2. Children take on and act out roles. Children take on roles that “fit” with the imaginary situation in which they are engaging. Their language, actions, interactions, gestures, and body language “fit” their character, which is relevant to the pretend scenario.
 - For example, when acting out the veterinarian's office scenario, each child may take on one of multiple appropriate roles, using the speech, gestures, or the actions of that character. One child may be the pet owner, another the veterinarian, and another child could pretend to be the pet!
 - Children may also use role speech, saying and doing the things their role may say and do in different scenarios. For example, a doctor may ask her patient, “Where does it hurt?” and bandage the pretend wound. A waiter may ask his customers “What would you like to order?” and write it down in a small notebook.
 3. Children follow a set of rules determined by roles. Children follow the rules associated with the role they are playing, and the scenario they are enacting.
 - For example, when acting out the veterinarian scenario above, the veterinarian has certain things she does and does not do, and the same for the pet owner. The veterinarian may take the pet's temperature and examine the pet but will not take the pet home after the appointment. Likewise, the pet owner brings the pet to the veterinarian and takes him home and tells the veterinarian what's going on but does not take the pet's temperature or use the tools in the veterinarian's office.
 - This requirement is mostly found in 4 – 5-year-old children as they play make-believe. Rules are not as rigid with younger children who are acting out a pretend scenario—they may play multiple roles or act out behaviors that are not common to their roles.

The adult's role in children's make-believe play is to support the children's ideas. The rules and requirements of make-believe play naturally solidify as children grow older and their make-believe play becomes more complex. Adults do not correct children's make-believe play and imagination, but to help support children's ideas, provide the necessary environment and materials, and extend children's learning by modeling make-believe behaviors or brainstorming new ideas!

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff: Role Speech

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Handout: Tips for Home Visitors: Role Speech

Turn and Talk



Think of instances in your own learning environments when you've seen **make-believe play** contribute to children's learning and development, and share with your partner.



SLIDE 14:


- Read the question on the screen, then give participants 2-3 minutes to discuss their ideas. If time permits, have them share out with the entire group. You can then reference their specific examples of make-believe play throughout the remainder of the presentation.



Benefits of Make-Believe Play



- Make-believe play provides opportunities to practice many skills:
 - Symbolic thinking
 - Self-regulation
 - Oral language
 - Social and emotional skills
 - Literacy, math, and science skills

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SLIDE 15:

- Research shows that play and child outcomes are related.
- Children who actively participate in make-believe play during preschool and early elementary years show better language and social skills. For example, the frequency and quality of their play in the classroom or home environment may lead to improvements in children's vocabulary size and syntax development (e.g., Bergen, 2002; Christie & Roskos, 2006; Lyytinen, Laakso, Poikkeus, & Rita, 1999; McCune, 1995; Neuman & Roskos, 1992; Roskos & Neuman, 1998).
- Children who do not have spoken language (i.e., deaf) or who have delays become better language learners through pretend play. Adults' gestures, pictures/icons, facial expressions, body language, and sign language (when possible) reinforces children's communication skills.
- Theory of mind (ToM), or understanding of other's mental states, is also influenced by play behaviors. Children who have learned ToM are more likely to see and understand another person's point of view. In other words, make-believe play promotes empathy (Lindsey & Colwell, 2003, 2013; Colwell & Lindsey, 2005).
- We also know that make-believe play creates an environment that allows children to practice other skills, such as symbolic thinking (using one object for a reason other than its intended purpose, such as pretending that a block is a telephone) and self-regulation. This is related to school readiness because children will use symbolic representation skills to understand that writing stands for something else—like a word or a sentence or that the written numeral 5 can also stand for 5 objects.
- Children can even practice important literacy, math, and science skills during make-believe play.

TURN AND TALK

- Look at this picture of the boy with the veterinarian's coat. Take a few minutes and talk with the person next to you about some of the ways children may be able to practice literacy, math, science, and social-emotional skills in this scenario.
 - Possible examples:
 - Literacy: The pet owner may need to fill out an intake form when they get to the vet's office, or the vet may need to fill out the patient form as they hear the pet's symptoms.
 - Math: The vet tech may need to count out treats or medicine for the sick dog or measure the length of a pet.



- Science: Children can learn and practice various science and health terms as the vet or vet tech, measure liquid medicine or food for the pets, weigh the pets, etc. The vet may need to propose and test some hypotheses for why the dog may feel sick. “Maybe he feels bad because there is something stuck in his paw. We should look at his foot and find out!”
- Social-emotional: As the pet owners, children may be able to practice different emotions (e.g., if their pet is sick, they may act sad or nervous, or happy when they finally feel better.). Children also practice important social and emotional skills as they interact with their peers, like taking turns acting out the more desirable role, the pet owner may need to sit quietly and patiently in the waiting room until the vet tech calls them back to the exam room (self-regulation), etc.





Supporting Make-Believe Play

Practical Tips and Tools

SLIDE 16:

- This section focuses on some key things you can do to support children's make-believe play in center-based or family child care settings.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff: Engaging Families
- Handout: Tips for Families: Engaging in Make-Believe Play

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Handout: Tips for Home Visitors: Engaging Families
- Handout: Tips for Families: Engaging in Make-Believe Play

Creating an Environment to Support Social Play

15-Minute
In-Service Suites

- Provide open-ended cooperative-use toys and materials that increase opportunities for social interaction
- Create a physical space that encourages children to share space with other children



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SLIDE 17:

Here are some quick and easy things you can do to help support make-believe play:

- Provide cooperative toys and materials to increase the opportunities for social interaction. Model social interactions for very young children.
 - Cooperative toys naturally lend themselves to two or more children playing together.
 - Examples: balls, puppets, wagons, two telephones, pretend play materials, rocking boats, blocks, large floor puzzles
- Provide opportunities to play with other children in a variety of settings. Make sure there is space for the children to use materials within the same area.
- Encourage families to bring in materials from children's home cultures.
- Think about room organization and which learning areas are next to one another—often large building blocks encourage make-believe play as preschoolers build structures.

TURN AND TALK

- What has the teacher in this picture done to support social play?
- What else do you do in the environment or with children to support social play?

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Replace with HV Optional Slide 8

Play Themes vs. Curriculum Unit

15-Minute
In-Service Suites

- A **unit**, or study, is often dictated by a curriculum, and focuses on a concept or general event
- A **play theme** involves the creation of pretend scenarios, pretend roles, and relationships between roles



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SLIDE 18:

- Play themes often get confused with curriculum units.
 - A **unit** is usually dictated by a curriculum. It may focus on a concept (such as transportation) or a general event (the harvest) and describes the content and skills children will learn.
 - A **play theme** involves pretend scenarios, pretend roles, and the relationships between roles.
 - Play themes can be inspired by a curriculum unit (e.g., the curriculum unit is about things that grow, and the possible inspired play theme could be the farmer's market).

Make sure play themes are grounded in the children's real-life experiences and build on their interests. Take advantage of what's occurring in the environment, such as construction outside the window, a bird nesting nearby, or a family expecting a new baby. Try bringing a few items into the learning environment and see how children respond. Lastly, enthusiasm is contagious! If an adult in the classroom is interested and enthusiastic, children will be interested and enthusiastic too.

Be mindful if choosing a theme that children are unfamiliar with. For example, if there are no children in your program with pets or experiences with animals, you might take a field trip to a veterinarian's office or have a veterinarian come to the classroom for a visit before setting up that theme. When children can play out their lived experiences, they use pretend play to clarify and extend their learning.

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Insert HV Optional Slide 9

Play Themes Inspired by Units



- Play themes are often inspired by curriculum units or studies, though it's not a requirement.

Unit/Study Example	Theme Examples Inspired by Unit/Study
Transportation	Airport, train station, car dealership, cruise ship
Animals	Zoo, farm, vet's office, pet store
Health and Nutrition	Restaurant, farmer's market, fitness center <small>(with foods from different cultures represented by children)</small>
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	Garden center, farm, recycling center

- You can also choose your play theme based on children's interests!



SLIDE 19:

- Play themes can be inspired by a unit (this can help children connect curriculum units to everyday scenarios), but it's not a requirement.
 - The play theme can also support your curriculum unit by deepening children's concepts, building their relationships, and practicing their skills.
- Let's take a look at the examples here (on the slide) to illustrate the difference between a play theme and a curriculum unit, and how we can use the unit to develop a theme.

TURN AND TALK

- If the children in your class are interested in dinosaurs, what kind of play theme could you develop that includes the requirements for make-believe play?
 - Possible answers: Science museum, archaeology site
- How does this play theme promote child development?
 - Possible answers: It promotes creativity and curiosity (Approaches to Learning), increases math and science vocabulary (size, measurement, fossils, dinosaur names)

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Insert HV Optional Slide 10





SLIDE 20:

Once you choose your make-believe play theme, it's important to take a few steps to set up an environment that supports high-level make-believe play. With infants and toddlers, this cycle will be more adult directed. The adult will set up the theme and provide props. Adults can talk with young children as they play to build their background knowledge. As children get older, they will enjoy being part of the make-believe play planning process. They'll brainstorm a theme, ideas for props, and engage in more complex make-believe play with designated roles and rules. Let's take a look at each step!

1. **Build Background Knowledge.** Building background knowledge is important so that children have lots of information about the props, roles, and scenarios. The deeper the children's background knowledge, the more they'll engage in play. Start by finding out what the children already know about the topic in the make-believe play area. Then find ways to extend children's background knowledge, such as taking a field trip or virtual field trip (e.g., using your phone/camera to film a scenario to show children later), reading books about the topic, or having a guest come to the program to help children explore the topic. For example, find out from children if they have visited a restaurant. If they have, encourage children to talk about their experiences in restaurants. Talk to children who have not eaten in a restaurant about their experiences eating dinner at home. Add some food and dishes to the make-believe play area and talk about the basic roles of server and customer or how their families serve dinner at home. Perhaps, take a field trip to a nearby restaurant. Give infants and toddlers words for the utensils they are playing with and talk them through pretending to eat a meal together. Ask families about their child's experiences. Perhaps they enjoy picnics on the weekends. Building on children's everyday experiences helps them engage in the make-believe theme.
2. **Brainstorm the Play Theme.** Once you decide on a play theme, brainstorm with children to determine the "what, who, and how" of the make-believe play area. For example, one child may want to be the waiter, another child may want to be the cook, while two other friends might order their food. For infants and toddlers, an adult might take on a role to model make-believe play.

3. **Build Props and Create Make-Believe Play Areas.** Building props to support a theme is important because children’s imaginations are tied to concrete props, especially younger children. The more child-created props in the make-believe play area, the more creative children’s play scenarios will be. Create learning spaces within the classroom, socialization room, and encourage parents to do the same at home. Props can also include labels, signs, or tags that encourage children to work together. For example, having price tags on “produce” at the “farmer’s market” requires children to first make price tags and later read and use them during a play scenario. Again, for infants and toddlers, the adult may provide the necessary props for the make-believe play area. If there is a prop to paint, involve young children to help as they are able.
4. **High-Level Make-Believe Play.** Once you’ve selected a play theme, provided background knowledge and learned from families about their child’s experiences, brainstormed scenarios with children, decided on the roles the children will play, and created props—you are on your way to supporting high-level make-believe play!

Adults must be intentional in their planning and support of pretend play. To keep a good play theme and make-believe play area going, be sure to revisit this cycle regularly throughout the theme. The cycle repeats as you add new information to the theme.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff: Supporting Make-Believe Play

ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS

- Handout: Tips for Home Visitors: Supporting Make-Believe Play

OPTIONAL MATERIALS

- Insert Optional Slides 3-6
- Handout: Tools for Supervisors: Tools for Supervisors: Planning for Make-Believe Play

Supporting All Children in Make-Believe Play



With the appropriate supports, make-believe play can be a fun and engaging experience for *all* children.



SLIDE 21:

- With the right supports, make-believe play can be fun and engaging for all children.

For EHS/HS participants: HSPPS 1302.101 (b)(2-3) refers to the coordinated approach that Head Start programs must implement, including full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and children with disabilities and their families in all program aspects and learning experiences.

- Children Who Are Dual Language Learners
 - Encourage children to use their home languages and English during pretend play scenarios, providing vocabulary in both languages whenever possible.
 - Include play themes or scenarios in the classroom, socialization spaces, and home that incorporate children's unique cultures and backgrounds.
 - For example, a particularly successful theme could involve having different restaurants that feature dishes and customs from the children's cultures. You could then have children's family members, or others from the community, visit the classroom or socialization space as a guest speaker. They could teach children about the different foods and terms for the foods in the child's home language!
 - Include recipe cards in children's home languages and English, this includes both language and math learning!
 - For older children, you can also label props or provide key vocabulary words with pictures in English and/or the child's home language.

- Children with Suspected Delays or Diagnosed Disabilities
 - Depending on children’s individual needs, be creative in the themes, scenarios, and roles—choose those that can involve all children.
 - For example, if you have children in your classroom who are non-verbal, consider including roles where children interact with others in the make-believe play area, but don’t necessarily have to use speech to do so. These types of roles can also be good for children with other types of delays who may not be able to communicate confidently or effectively with their peers.
 - Physical accommodations with the props can also support children.
 - You know your children best—don’t be afraid to get creative in the ways you support them so they, too, can engage in this fun and enriching activity!

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff: Supporting Dual Language Learners

Make-Believe Play: Video

---15-Minute---
In-Service Suites



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SLIDE 22:

If time permits, watch the video, and ask participants to pair up to answer and share their responses to the following questions:

- What elements of make-believe play did you see in this clip?
- What did you notice about the complexity of play?
- Based on what we talked about today, what else could you do to help support more complex make-believe play with these children? With older children?
 - Background knowledge?
 - Theme development?
 - Props and set up?
- If children are playing hospital, as we saw here, what are some other scenarios you might introduce to keep the play moving forward and engaging?

Review

---15-Minute---
In-Service Suites



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SLIDE 23:

- Make-believe play is an essential part of the foundation of the House, since make-believe play needs to take place in a highly engaging environment with nurturing and responsive interactions. Make-believe play is an essential part of implementing research-based curriculum and teaching and home visiting practices.
- Infants and toddlers engage in behaviors that lead up to make-believe play, such as imitating caregivers or peers or pretending to talk on a toy cell phone.
- Make-believe play is a type of pretend play that involves social interactions between peers and typically happens during the preschool years. However, it is important to encourage infants and toddlers to engage in exploratory play, as this leads to more social interactions, first with adults and then with other children in *social play*.
- Children engage in high-quality make-believe play when they create an imaginary situation, take on and act out roles, and follow a set of rules determined by the scenario's roles.
- Make-believe play provides opportunities for children to practice many skills, including symbolic thinking, self-regulation, communication, social and emotional, literacy, math, and science.
- The play theme can also support your curriculum unit by deepening children's concepts, building their relationships, and practicing their skills.
- With the right support, make-believe play can be a fun and engaging activity for all children.
- Finally, children love to engage in make-believe play with their favorite adult. Adults have an important role in promoting the development of make-believe play in children, so have fun!

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handout: Tools for Supervisors: Planning for Make-Believe Play
- Handout: Helpful Resources