



SUPPORTING MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY

Intentionally supporting children’s make-believe play is necessary not only to keep the play going, but also to help ensure children are getting the most out of the play experience. Below are some ways parents can support children’s make-believe play.

PARENT SUPPORT	EXAMPLE (RESTAURANT THEME)
Ask parents to identify a scenario. Use books or virtual field trips (e.g., use your phone/camera to film a scenario to show children later). Include children in the brainstorming process!	The restaurant has run out of bowls for the soup.
Ask parents to use props to brainstorm scenarios. Introducing props can help children understand ways to use them in their own play.	Encourage parents to remind children of the props they have at home and share ways to use them. For example, talk about all the food available in the restaurant, look at the menu to see what soups the restaurant has, or look at the cooking utensils. Or, if children are brainstorming different scenarios, think about how they might use props!
Encourage parents to act out the scenario for children, using props and role speech. Have fun with this—kids love seeing their parents in make-believe play. Also, encourage parents to engage in a learning experience that is unique to their culture, too!	If you have another adult in the room, one of you can be the server or chef, and the other can be the customer who’s ordered a bowl of vegetable soup. The server or chef could show the menu to the customer to suggest another soup or use the other ingredients to make a different kind of soup.
Encourage parents to use self-talk to explain what they are doing as they do it. This “narrating” can make speech and actions more salient for children. It also supports language development for children who are non-verbal or have language delays. Also, use children’s home language, to engage them in the play.	If parents are pretending to be the chef or sever, they could talk through their options: “Hmmm... my customer ordered the vegetable soup, but we’re out. I could make a different kind of soup or see if they want the salad on the menu instead.”
Encourage parents to act out the scenario with their child. Have the parents encourage children to repeat the adult’s actions and use role speech in their home language. If a prop is not readily available, remind families that they can pretend they are using the prop—a great way to support symbolic representation! Remember to use gestures or pictures to support children who are non-verbal or have language delays.	Whatever scenario parents decide on, have them act it out with their child. Encourage parents to have their child practice using the role speech, repeating after them: “I’m sorry, but we’re out of vegetable soup today. Would you like a salad instead?” Then they could pretend to show the customer the menu and take their new order!