Unleash Their Play by Tapping into Children's Home Cultures

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Children are more likely to engage in high levels of play when they are immersed in an engaging environment. What better way to engage children in play than to recreate aspects of their home cultures and home life in the dramatic play area? Join me as we explore ways to do just that.

Objectives

• Reflect on current teaching practices and students’ home languages and cultures
• Work together to plan a culturally relevant dramatic play area
• Share thoughts and ideas with the whole group

1. List several dramatic play center themes that you have used or plan to use.

2. How many of your students’ speak the same home language(s) as you?
3. Consider children in your room with different physical abilities. Note here any considerations to keep in mind as you plan dramatic play areas.

4. How many of your students share the same socio-economic background as you?

   Describe the socio-economic backgrounds represented in your classroom. Think about who the typical family members are that live together, type of home(s) children live in, sleeping arrangements, ratio of bathrooms to family members, neighborhoods, modes of transportation used by families, etc.

5. Brainstorm additional dramatic play center themes.
As a group, discuss the topics below and be prepared to share.

Choose a dramatic play center theme.

Phase 1: Initial Set Up
List at least 4 dramatic play props/materials that reflect your students’ home cultures and home environments. Consider equipment used by people with disabilities, realia from home cultures, print materials in other languages.

Phase 2: Props/Materials Added
After collecting assessment data including the observation of children’s play, conversations and language use, what additional props/materials might you add?

Phase 3: Props deliberately added to enhance interest and imagination

This chart is adapted from Supporting Language: Culturally Rich Dramatic Play Teaching Young Children. NAEYC. December/January 2018

Additional Resources

A. Ajmera, Maya and Ivanko, John D. To Be A Kid. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2000
B. Hofmann-Manivar, Ariane. That’s NOT How You Do It! Child’s Play Jungle, 2017
D. Supporting Language: Culturally Rich Dramatic Play Teaching Young Children. NAEYC. December/January 2018
E. Connecting Culture and Play: Practical Strategies for Educators Teaching Young Children NAEYC. February/March 2019
F. Paired Learning: Strategies for Enhancing Social Competence in Dual Language Classrooms Teaching Young Children. NAEYC. May 2019