

Exciting Ideas for Prop Boxes:

Research shows that children who engage in complex forms of socio-dramatic play have greater language skills, better social skills, more empathy, and more imagination. They are also less aggressive and show more self-control and higher levels of thinking. All you have to do is provide the props!

Help children get started or even extend their play by asking questions like, "Which dog swallowed the car keys and which cat is having kittens?" Or pretend to pat an imaginary elephant on the head and ask, "What's wrong with this elephant? Does he have something in his foot or does he have a tummy ache? Oh, no! What do you do about that, doctor?" Or pretend to be a customer at the restaurant and ask, "What kind of tacos do you have?" Always include a storybook, menu, magazine or other form of print in your prop boxes. Exciting Ideas for Prop Boxes!

- **"Once Upon a Time"** - Little Red Riding Hood, The Gingerbread Man, or The Three Bears for example: A simple picture book storybook of The Three Bears, 3 teddy bears in graduated sizes complete with appropriate clothing, 3 bowls in graduated sizes, 3 spoons, 3 baby blankets, etc. The children playing can take on the role of "goldilocks" or the bears or use the stuffed animals like puppets. Encourage them to think outside the box by asking questions like, "What if Goldilocks brought a friend with her?" "What if Goldilocks came at dinner time instead of breakfast time?"
- **Veterinarian's Office or Animal Hospital** - stuffed animals (dogs, cats, iguana, hamster, parrot, turtle, fish), felt bandages with the rough side of velcro on the back, a doctor's kit, pads of paper and pencils or pens, telephone, men's white shirts with D.V.M written on the pocket, small cardboard boxes to use as pet beds, hand towels, etc. Store everything in an old dog carrier or pet crate!
- **Bakery** – a dessert cookbook, aprons, empty metal shakers, plastic mixing bowls and large wooden mixing spoons, an old hand mixer with cord cut off, toy cash register, play dough, cookie cutters, cookie sheets, spatulas, egg turners, rolling pins, colored pipe cleaners, empty baby wipe containers to use as bakery boxes for the cookies.
- **Gardening** – put potting soil in our sensory table and your prop box can contain a seed catalog, silk flowers on stems, children's plastic gardening tools, small watering cans, popcorn kernels, etc. And don't forget gardening gloves! Wearing gloves will make every task in this center more challenging.
- **Merry Music Makers!** – children's musical instruments such as a drum, maracas, a triangle, hand bells, a toy piano, toy xylophone, - and a large bottle of Advil (for you)!
- **Wash the Babies** - a couple of plastic tubs with just an inch of water in them, small plastic baby dolls, a couple of combs and hairbrushes (made for dolls), washcloths, empty baby powder containers, empty baby shampoo bottles with the flip top caps hot glued on but the "flip-top" still operable, and baby blankets and baby bottles.
- **Grocery Store** – cash register, empty food containers (or the labels decouped onto wooden blocks!), play money, a-line aprons, a scale, canvas shopping bags, a cardboard storefront.
- **Office** – file folders, hanging files in a filing crate, index cards, index card boxes, legal pads, note pads, pens, pencils, while you were out pads, paper clips, stapler, phones, computer keyboards, yellow pages phone book, even an old typewriter!
- **Post Office** – junk mail, stickers, washable ink pad and stamps, old computer keyboards (no computer necessary), pencils or pens, paper, small pads of paper, canvas bags, small boxes taped shut as "packages."
- **Beauty Salon** - Curling iron, hair dryer and flat iron (cut off cords), velcro rollers, towels, empty shampoo & conditioner bottles, empty hairspray bottle (can fill with water), clips, barrettes, rollers, combs, brushes, empty fingernail polish bottles, capes, and magazines. (Do a "lice check" first! ☺)
- **Indoor Restaurant or Outdoor Café** – take out menus from real restaurants, play dishes, play food, small trays, pens or pencils and pads of paper, (wet) rags, fabric for "tablecloths"
- **Camping** – pop up tent or sheet to drape over table, fake campfire made of good sized sticks hot glued together and the top painted red/yellow/& orange, sleeping bag, canteen, binoculars, coffeepot, kid's toy fishing poles
- **Show Time!** - scarves, streamers, tutus, tap shoes, ballet shoes, top hats, dancing canes, white gloves, vests, microphones (non-working), flashlights, cloth for curtains, and set chairs for the audience!