

Deconstructed Role Play

Amazing Role Play? Deconstruct it!

abc does February 14, 2011



The Idea

Quite simple really. Traditional role play is very adult directed and over-themed. We might set up a cafe, Goldilock's house or the vet in our role play area. When there is an adult leading the play, using the language, acting out scenarios then the children can easily access the experience – the adult facilitates their play. But when there is no adult the children have to rely on their own life experience to provide them with the tools that they need to be able to play in that particular environment. How many of the children that we work with have ever been in the operating theatre of a vet, or even ordering their lunch in a cafe? As adults we have a lot of experience to draw on when it comes to using our imagination. You could say that you have never been to the moon but you could imagine what it might be like to be there. That is because you have amassed lots of information throughout your life that your brain can use for reference. Not many EYFS children have that!

SO....

So, you create a space that is full of things that can be anything. It is like that old saying about children getting expensive toys for Christmas and then playing with the box! There is good reason for that. A toy is a toy, but a box has a million possibilities (at least)!

How does it work?

Firstly, I have to warn you it doesn't look 'pretty'! It is a pile of boxes, fabric, tubes and crates. The more the children use it the shabbier it will look. But, the level of imagination and language that you will get will be reward enough. The space can change almost by the minute depending on who is playing in it and better

than that you can often have multiple role play scenarios all happening at once based on what the children want to play.

Enhancement

Over time you will create theme or enhancement boxes. These will be boxes full of goodies that are linked to a particular child led interest or theme/topic. When there is an adult leading the play they can use them as a teaching tool. When they leave the play the enhancements are available to the children to either copy the theme of the adult or use in their own non related play.

This is an enhancement basket I set up in a setting after one of the children had a new baby brother. We also added books on the subject once we had read them to the children.



Costumes are an enhancement for me. I always provide lots of fabric for den making and dressing up and add costumes through the enhancement baskets. When I have a tabbard with 'police' written across the front I am a policeman whereas a length of fabric has many, many uses.

Backing paper...

Cream or black with lots of mark making tools. The children LOVE creating their own drawings that are personal to their individual play scenarios. I take photos of the children drawing, then photos of them in play using their drawings to play to. Then when the backing sheet is completely full of doodles, use it as a display of mark making adding the photos next to the drawings with a bit of annotation from you about the development of talk/mark making/fine motor etc.



Case Study - Here is one I made today!

In Blackpool today to put together the beginnings of a deconstructed role play. It will of course develop as the staff and children get used to it!

This is the space before we started.



First we needed to clear the area and then establish where we wanted to have the main den making space. Empowering children with the ability to be able to dress the environment and change it quickly, as their play changes, is essential. So it needs to be quick and easy.

My secret weapon? Camping Washing Line! It is cheap, flexible and does the job brilliantly. There is no need for pegs or knots when den making with this stuff, you just poke the fabric into a twist and it is gripped there until you pull it out! Next job – string up your washing line (at child height as they need to access it most).

We replaced the old kitchen units with open shelves to house our enhancement boxes and stretched the line from the unit to the wall. We strung another line across the back wall (to the right of the picture).

Then we brought in the boxes and let them get creative!



opportunities for mark making



So, early days for this particular setting – but a fantastic start. Claire is doing a little bit of practitioner research and looking at the levels of engagement and use of language before and after this initiative. She has already got some enhancement tubs going. One with phones, one with bags and one with hats she will develop more as the play progress



