

On Your Marks!!

Encouraging mark making- developing writing

Children and
Learning



Mark making and role-play 2: Setting up an exciting and effective role-play area

Role-play and mark making

Mark making will only happen in the role play area if we plan the area well, provide the right materials, if we model appropriate behaviours, and if we plan to spend quality time with the children there. But most importantly the area will only work if it is meaningful for the children. An added ingredient for success is the *children's input* into planning, designing, creating and maintaining the area!

Planning for role-play

If a role-play area is meaningful to children it will be used. Choose a theme that you know the children already know something about: either from direct experience or stories. Some great ideas are:

A bookshop; A café; A farm shop; The vet; The doctors' surgery; A shoe shop; A garden centre; The library; A Post Office; A builders' site; The airport; Mr Gumpy's Outing (boats and parties); A garage; A 'pound shop' (a bit limited re: money, but really fantastic fun!); Santa's workshop; A Party Shop; A trip to the seaside; A bus; Exploring a jungle; Camping; A birthday party; A trip to the moon; A pet shop; A museum; A teddy bear shop; A baby clinic; The school office (I'm not kidding: these are very exciting places!)

Sometimes what we want to involve children in can be outside their experience, or we want to have a close look at what might be involved. A company that provides excellent resources for stimulating role-play is *Early Vision Ltd*. Visit www.earlyvision.co.uk for more details.

Involving children

While adults will need to have a vision for how they want the area to look, including size and basic structure, some of the best areas have been created by the children and the adults *together*. Sometimes the area may begin by being very basic, and then evolves as the children think of more ideas and find resources: possibly borrowed from home. It is vital to plan with the children where the resources will be stored. This helps them to take ownership of keeping everything in order. The whole process of planning a role-play area helps develop children's language, as well as the play that takes place there. Sometimes the smallest things can make an area really 'swing': in our post office, for example, the children wanted a pair of glasses so that the person wearing the glasses would be 'in charge'.

Planning for adult involvement: time and quality interaction

These are the two most important ingredients for role-play. Adults need to plan time to take part in role-play, and they also need to be aware of, and plan, for various types of interaction.