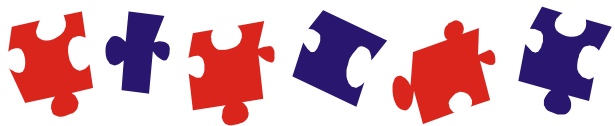


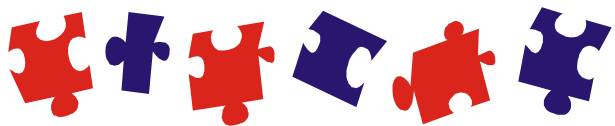
WHAT IS MY PRESCHOOLER LEARNING IN THE DRESS-UP AREA?



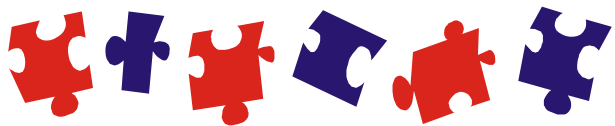
When children put on dress-up clothes and pretend to be grown up, they are discovering more than how it feels to stumble in adult-sized shoes. "Pretend play" helps children to understand how other people think and feel. It gives children the opportunity to discover new experiences or new places they can see only in their imagination. This is called symbolic thinking, and it is an important, complex skill necessary for many tasks in life, including language and communication, social skills, and even algebra and geometry.

When we watch children playing in dress-up clothes, we notice they often use problem-solving skills they see adults use. Negotiation and shared responsibility become easier when children are pretending to be adults. They are gaining a sense of adult rules and expectations.

Sometimes children may find the dress-up area a place to confront fears and work through stressful situations. By pretending to be a doctor or a monster, a child gains a sense of power over the unknown. By acting out a traumatic event and talking about it, it becomes less scary to the child.



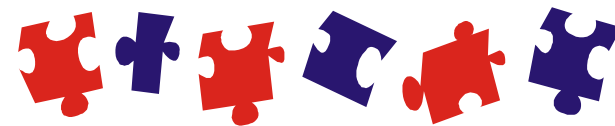
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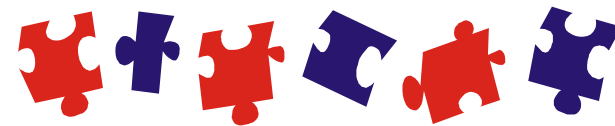
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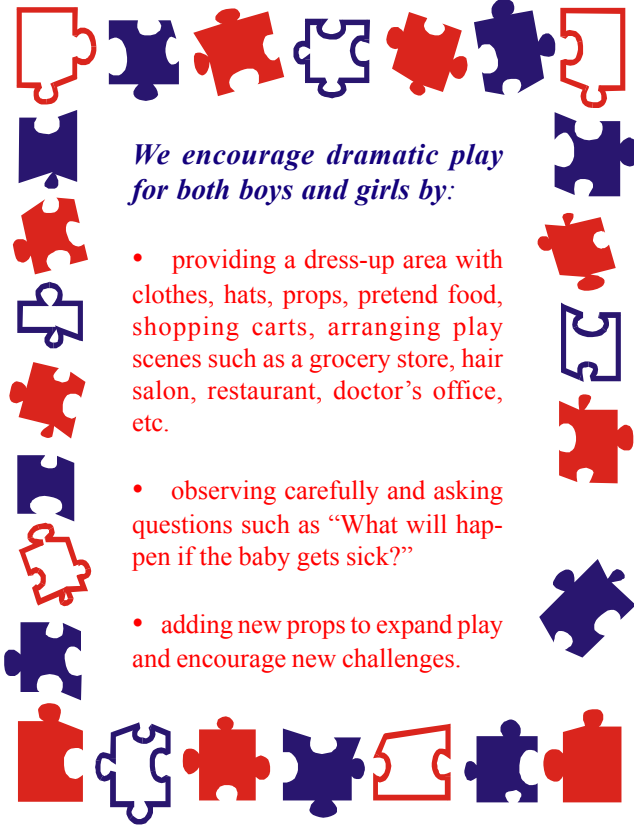
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Often boys will wear dresses or girls might put on a necktie. These are learning experiences that help children explore what it means to be a boy or girl, and that our gender does not change simply because of what we are wearing.



We encourage dramatic play for both boys and girls by:

- providing a dress-up area with clothes, hats, props, pretend food, shopping carts, arranging play scenes such as a grocery store, hair salon, restaurant, doctor's office, etc.
- observing carefully and asking questions such as "What will happen if the baby gets sick?"
- adding new props to expand play and encourage new challenges.

Released by Don Bower,
Extension Human Development Specialist
Developed under contract by Linda J. Grant

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Leaflet CHFD-E 25-01

July, 1999

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, The University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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