

*Washington State Training & Registry System (STARS)*

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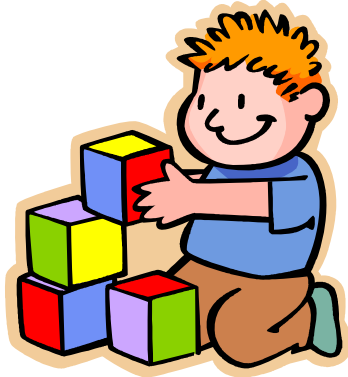
**Study Guide & Workbook for:  
STARS 10 Hour Course  
Prop Box Activities**

**This is an Internet class please go to the website:**

**[www.starsclasses.com](http://www.starsclasses.com)**

**Click on “Enter your Classroom” and choose your class. All course assignments are listed there for you to complete. For any questions, assistance, or to submit your assignments please use the e-mail address below:**

**[propbox@starstab.com](mailto:propbox@starstab.com)**



### Information

- Read this workbook and use it as a resource. All class assignments are sent in by e-mail. Do not submit this workbook, it is yours to keep for future reference.
- All assignments for this course can be found at the class website: **www.starsclasses.com** once you are at the site click on “**Enter your Classroom**”. Choose the class; “**Prop Box Activities**”.
- Please be sure to check out all the sites set up for this class at the “Study Links” page. You may want to bookmark these as favorites on your own computer for future use.
- When each assignment is ready to submit please e-mail it to: **propbox@starstab.com** be sure to put your name and STARS ID number on every assignment. As you finish one assignment go directly on to the next one. You will receive an automatic notice for each assignment that you submit.
- Remember: “**No News is Good News**” as you will only be notified if your work is incorrect or incomplete. Continue on at your own pace until you have finished. You will be notified by e-mail when all assignments have been turned in.

## Prop Box Activities

Research is abundant when it comes to play and its positive effect on the development of children. Play is enjoyable for all but often underestimated for its unique way of positively influencing physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development. Children especially can become consumed in their own imaginary world of play. This world of play offers children vast opportunities to learn about themselves, others, and the environment in which they live. Benefits of play in the classroom include:

- Physical: increase in strength, overall fitness, motor skill development, health
- Cognitive: increase in skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, planning, organizing, language, and overall academic success
- Social and Emotional: enhanced development of cooperation, sharing, turn taking, less egocentrism, increase in social values and self esteem, practice of appropriate social roles

Smilansky (1968) pioneered the idea of a positive correlation between children's dramatic play and their success in school. Her study was one of the first that began to tutor low socioeconomic children to play in hopes that they would make academic progress. She found children who were unsuccessful with dramatic play tended to have parents with little or no formal education. These children came from environments where play was discouraged as being unrealistic. Her research concludes that adults should value play by providing a context where the play can be supported.

"Prop boxes" are groups of dramatic play materials that are organized around specific themes. Those themes range from simple subjects like *the beach* or *the farm* to the more complex *bank*, *dentist*, or *science lab*. The boxes often are placed in a dramatic play center to spark students' imagination and promote role-playing and exploration.

The materials in the box should encourage children to adopt different roles (i.e., chef, server, customer, cashier), children not only have opportunities to try on different roles themselves but also to practice taking someone else's perspective and responding appropriately.

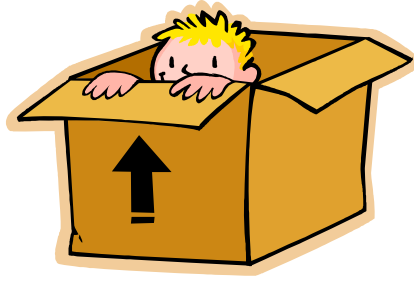
Prop boxes are used as an organization tool for materials in dramatic play areas. Prop boxes render the means to ensure that teachers have a readily available supply of ideas and material for the thematic centers. A prop box contains materials and equipment that encourage children to explore various roles.



### **Tips on creating a Prop Box**

- Choose a theme you know your students will find interesting, and begin collecting materials associated with that theme. Your attic, basement or closet -- or your friends' and relatives' attics, basements and closets -- are great places to find props. Thrift stores and garage sales are equally wonderful. Put the materials in a labeled box and add items to it as you stumble across them.
- Include clothing because clothes help children "step into a role." Including props that both boys and girls will find appealing also is important. Some themes, like the flower shop or gas station/garage, might be more attractive to one gender or the other. In that case, you'll need to make a conscious effort to include materials that will appeal to the opposite gender as well.

- Choose real items that can be used safely, rather than "toys." For example, children can do and learn so much more with a real, but broken, telephone than with a toy telephone.
- Include literacy materials in every prop box, so children can pretend to read and write, even if they're not yet able to really do so, and can associate literacy/numeracy activities with meaningful contexts. A restaurant prop box can have menus, pads and pens for servers to take orders, a money box or cash register, and so on. There are literacy materials associated with every theme.
- Set up a "store." *Store* prop boxes work well because of the different roles associated with stores, the fact that children generally have had experiences shopping, and because it's easy to include literacy materials. Specific *store* themes include *grocery store*, *ice cream stand*, *shoe store*, and *post office*.
- Ask the children what they think should be included. You don't have to do everything yourself! You can ask children what they'll need to set up a shoe store. If they've visited a shoe store, they'll know lots of items to include.
- Let families know what you're doing. They can be wonderful sources for materials. Businesses, too, often are generous in donating materials.



## Prop Box Building

- Prop boxes should be light weight, easy to store, of the same size and clearly labeled.
- Each prop box should contain materials for one role.
- Materials should be non-sexist and multicultural.
- Prop boxes should contain as many real-life things and articles as possible.
- The contents of the boxes can be related to role play ideas, e.g. Doctors, Restaurant etc. or can be linked with stories e.g. The Little Red Riding Hood etc.
- Prop boxes are excellent for sparking creative play and imaginations. To make a prop box, begin with an empty copier or computer paper box with a lid. Cover the box with contact paper and label it with an appropriate title.

It is vital that children be exposed to many opportunities to role play. You can help this along with providing a few basic elements conducive to creative and dramatic play in your home or classroom.



## Prop Box ideas

- **Doctor's box:** doctor's coat, nurse's coat, prescription pad, stethoscope, bandages, pill bottles, tongue depressors, appointment book, cotton ball, thermometer, gauze, and dolls.
- **Restaurant box:** table chairs, table cloths, chef hat, aprons, napkins, silverware, trays, menus, cash register, money, and plastic food.
- **School box:** chalkboard, chalk and erasers, report cards, write and wipe calendar, hand bell, whistle, clock, stickers, teacher's desk or table, notebooks, paper, pencils, crayons, paper clips, text books, self-inking stamps, and desks
- **Post office box:** mail box, envelopes, stamps, paper, pencil, postman's hat, telephone, mail, gift boxes, and mail bags.
- **Grocery store or supermarket box:** Plastic fruits and vegetables, cash register, money, shopping cart, shopping bags, coupons, and receipts.
- **Veterinarian box:** stuffed animals, doctor's coat, nurse's coat, stethoscope, animal cages or boxes, animal dishes, medicine bottles and other usual doctor's paraphernalia.
- **Beach party box:** hats, thongs, sunglasses, blankets, swim suits, beach ball, towels, buckets, suntan lotion (fill baby lotion in empty suntan lotion bottles), plastic fish, beach bags, and umbrella.

After selecting a few titles, notify staff members and parents about the prop box project and ask for donations. Shop at local rummage or garage sales or at thrift stores. You may get some bargains - many people are willing to donate or reduce the cost of items for projects like this! Contact local businesses for any contributions - hair salons might have empty shampoo bottles, old haircut capes, etc. Remember to send a note of thanks to any business donors with pictures of the children using a particular box. Post or publish pictures in the parent's newsletters showing the "results" of the collection project.



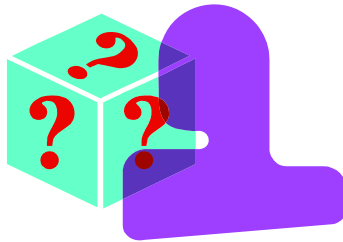
### **To use a Prop Box**

Put only one prop box out at a time. When the children begin to lose interest in a particular prop box, try some mixing and matching. Introduce different items and take cues from the children. Their enthusiasm will give direction for new ideas and collections. If a prop box isn't used or seems boring after a while, store it away for a time. A new theme or classroom project might spark interest and different uses for the same box.



### **Questions to assess your dramatic play area at set-up:**

1. Does the play center incorporate a variety of materials that will encourage dramatic play of young children?
2. Does the play center include materials that will stimulate literacy activities (reading, writing, speaking, listening)?
3. Does the play center include teacher-made as well as commercial materials?
4. Are materials available that promote creativity and flexibility of play?
5. Are the materials developmentally appropriate for young children?
6. Are play props included which are conducive to a thematic unit? Is there a "theme" to your play center?
7. Does the play center reinforce physical, cognitive, & social skills appropriate for the age level?



### **Questions to assess your dramatic play area once in use:**

1. Are children actively involved in play themes?
2. Do projects stem from natural encounters with play materials?
3. Are children engaged in high levels of social play, specifically cooperative play?
4. Does the center area account for various skill differences and individual learning preferences?
5. Are children supporting in problem solving activities?