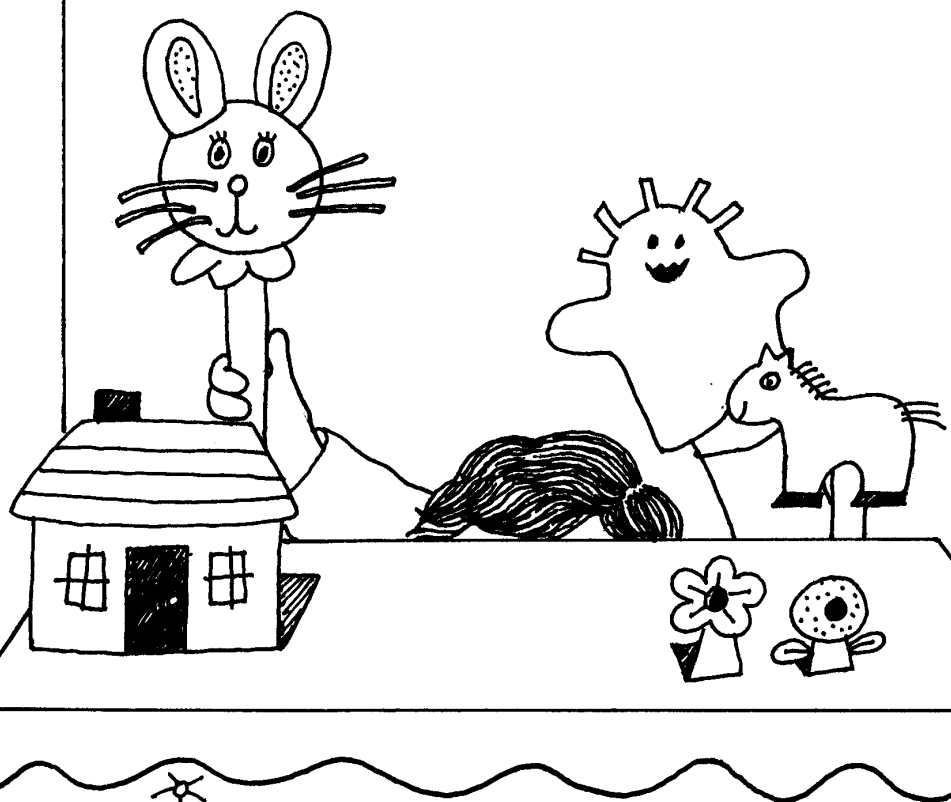
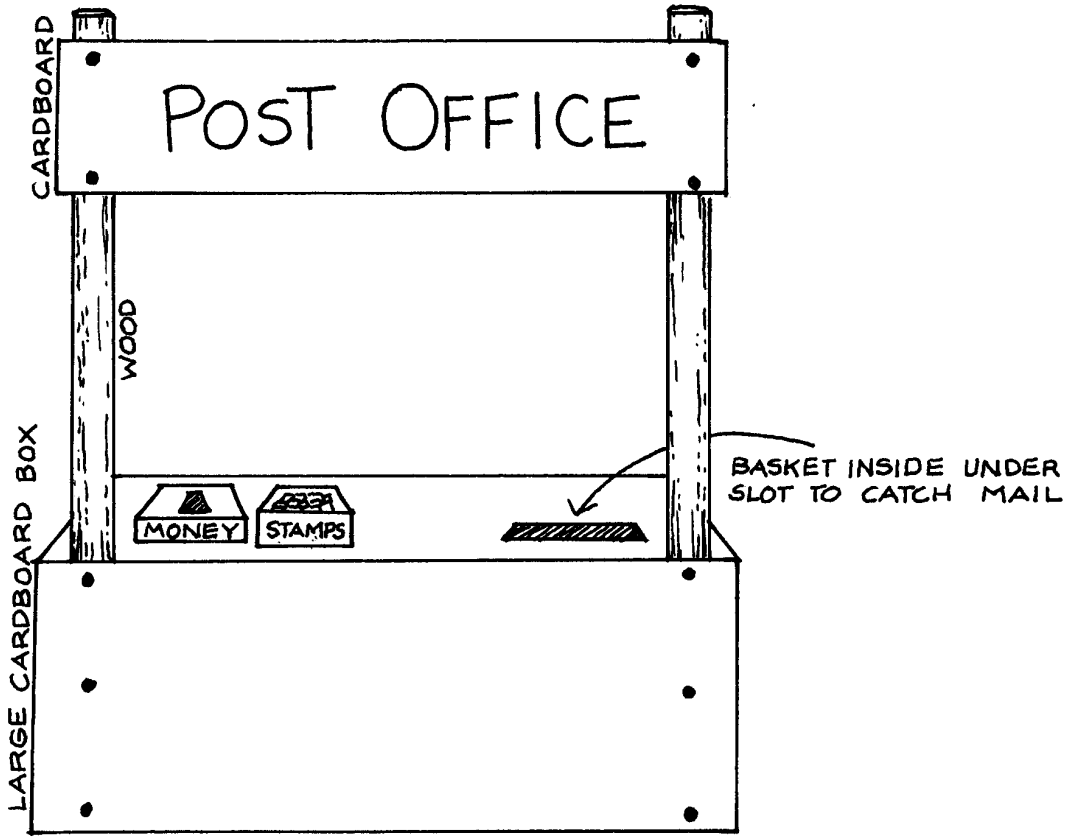
DRAMATIC PLAY



A Visit to the Post Office

4 to 6



Purpose: There are many ways to nurture dramatic play. This activity uses a visit to the local post office as a good starting point for activities that foster both imagination and thinking. The visit demonstrates how math, social studies, science, and language are integrated into the workplace. The children see adults using skills in the professional world that they practice in the classroom, like sorting, counting, and using numbers. The experience involves the children in preparation for the visit and encourages both girls and boys to dramatize the roles seen on the visit.

HOME CONNECTION

Send a note home informing parents about the post office project. Ask for volunteers to accompany the class on the trip. Let the parents know that they will be receiving letters from their children. They should talk with the children about the post office trip and later let them know when the children's letters arrive.

Materials:

- crayons
- paper
- each child's address
- spools, buttons, or empty film canisters
- markers
- envelopes (one per child)
- enough coins per child to purchase a stamp

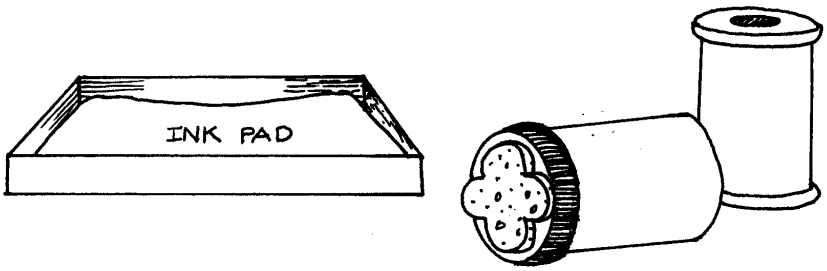
Preparation:

1. Teachers should make an appointment to see the person in charge of the post office to arrange for a visit. Ask that person if each child can have an opportunity to purchase a stamp, place it on his letter, and deposit it in the mail slot or box for outgoing mail. Also ask if it would be possible for the children to see how the mail is sorted and to hear how it gets delivered. Establish the date. Teachers should send a note home telling the parents of the planned visit.

2. Ask the children to make drawings or designs to send home to their parents.

Activity: This activity is divided into two parts—preparations before the trip and after the trip. Before the trip, teachers can tell the class that a trip to the post office has been arranged. In small groups, ask the children to each make a drawing or design (their "letters") that they will mail to their parents. (Or the teacher could write down messages or stories that the children would like to send home.) Help them fold their letters and put each one in an envelope. In the small groups, the teacher should show how she addresses each envelope with their addresses.

After the trip, be sure to have props available so that children can imaginatively play post office. Use spools, buttons, or empty film canisters from the art center to design their own stamps. Have children also make their own make-believe money so that they can buy or sell stamps, deposit money, and count the change. Encourage the assignment of roles as seen on the visit.



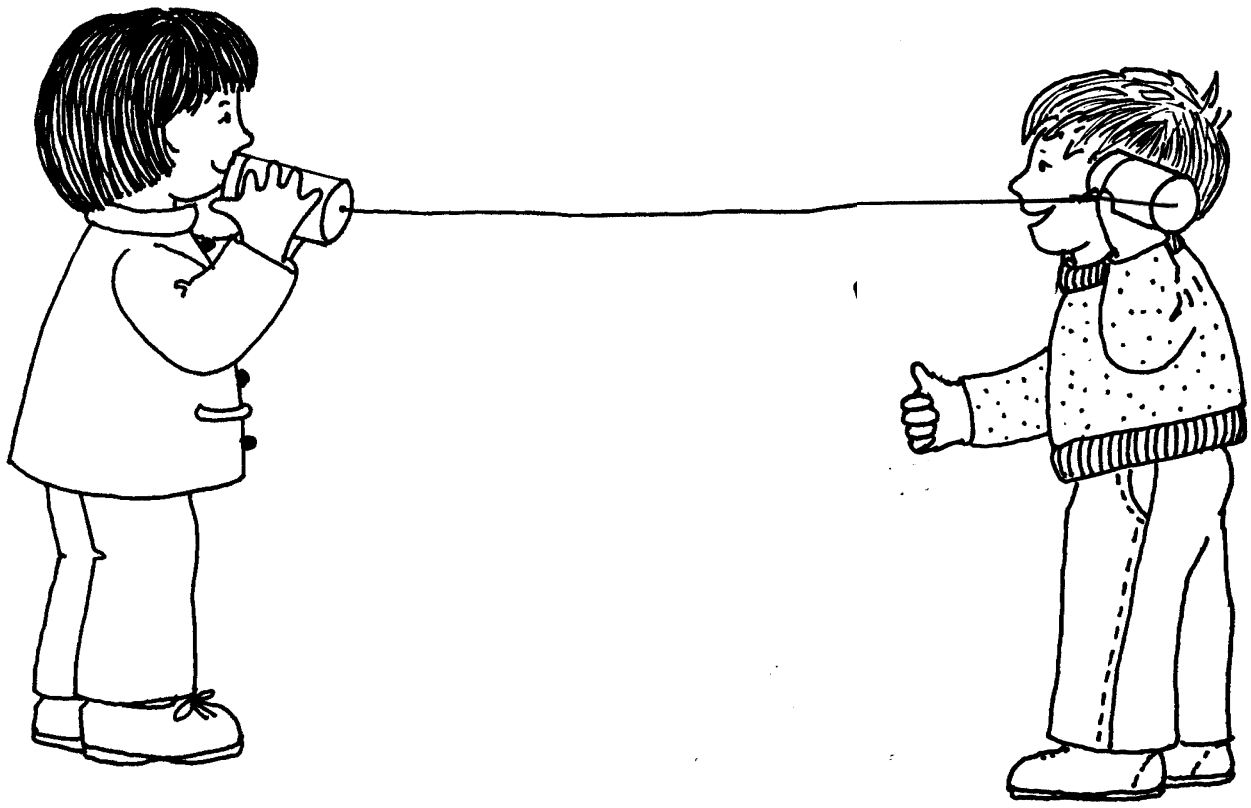
Extensions and variations:

- Arrange visits to a firehouse, a doctor's office, and a construction site.

- Visit a large food store. Notice how foods and other items are classified: dairy products, canned goods, soap products.

Tin-Can Telephones

4 to 6



HOME CONNECTION

Ask parent volunteers to prepare the cans ahead of time (clean them, poke a hole in the bottom of each can). This is a good way for parents who cannot come to school during the day to be involved in an activity. Other parents can come into the classroom and assist with helping to tie and assemble the "telephones." Explain to parents that their role is to help the children make the telephones, not to do it for them.

Purpose: The tin-can telephone really transmits sound. Although the scientific principles involved may be too abstract for the developmental level of young children, the tin-can telephone can enhance and extend children's language and play experiences. Through speaking, listening, and thinking, children express their individuality and creativity. The telephone offers children an element of reality in their play.

Materials:

- juice or aluminum cans
- a nail
- long string or fishing line
- masking tape

Preparation:

1. Cover all sharp edges of cans with masking tape.

2. Poke a hole in the center of the bottom of each can with a nail.

3. Thread string through each of the cans. Make a large knot in the string at the bottom of the cans.

Activity: Ask a pair of children how people can talk to each other when they cannot see one another and are far apart. Ask them if they have ever talked on a telephone. To whom did they talk? Show the children the tin-can telephone. Give one end to each child. Let them experiment with the telephone.

If, after trying it out, the children say the phone does not work, ask questions such as, "Are you talking right into the open end of the can?" "Are you listening through the open end of the can?" "Is the can really close to your ear?" "Maybe you are standing too close to each other. Can you try standing farther apart?" Have the other children make their telephones.

Extensions and variations:

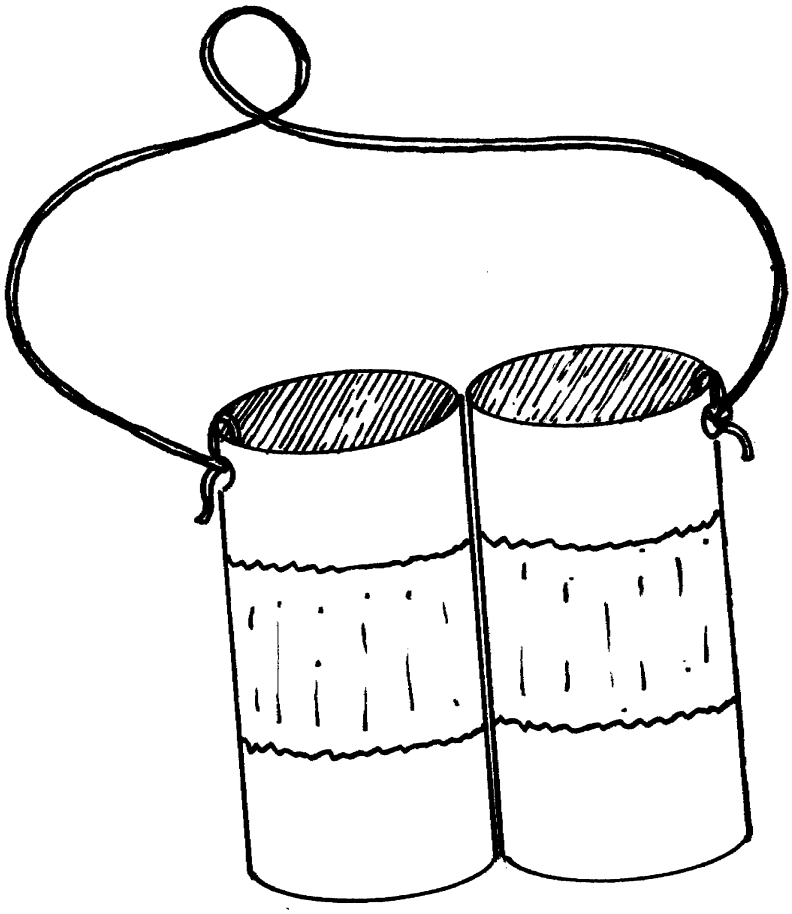
- Once the children can operate the telephones easily, use them in dramatic play situations: "Where can we install our phone? Can we use our telephone to talk between activity areas?"

- Many activities can be planned that include the telephones. For example, use the phones to invite friends to a picnic. (Provide baskets, blanket, make-believe food, etc., for the picnic.) The telephones could also be used in the block corner to play "construction."

Binoculars

4 to 6

Submitted by Hungary



HOME CONNECTION

Attention all parents! Please save cardboard tubes and containers that can be used in our classroom projects. We will have a receptacle in the classroom for you to drop them off. Many thanks!

Purpose: This activity introduces the class to optical instruments that make distant objects appear nearer and larger. It encourages imagination as children recycle materials to create make-believe binoculars. Props such as this are designed to enliven children's play, often sustaining or extending it.

Materials:
2 toilet paper tubes for each child
colored tissue paper
glue
hole puncher
cords

Preparation:

1. Take 2 toilet paper tubes to make 1 pair of binoculars.

2. Cover the tubes with colored tissue paper. Glue them together vertically.

3. Punch a hole in each tube and attach a cord so that the binoculars can be worn around the neck.

4. Use the binoculars to show the children what they will be making.

Activity: Introduce this activity to children when they are engaged in play that is relevant. (In Hungary, the children were working with the theme of ships.) If possible, borrow real binoculars and give children a chance to try them. Explain how, why, and when they are used. Keep the explanations short. Then, invite a group of 4 children at a time to make their own binoculars. Encourage them to choose the color of tissue paper that they prefer to glue onto their binoculars. Help them attach the cords. The binoculars narrow the field of vision sufficiently to accentuate what is being observed.

Extensions and variations:

- Children can look at objects through a magnifying glass. They can easily compare the size of the object in their hands with its magnified self. Give the children many objects to magnify both indoors and outdoors. Try leaves, flowers, snowflakes, a feather. Such experiments help create a sense of wonder in children.

- If a microscope is available, let children look through it. Make the link between the binoculars, the magnifying glass, and the microscope. These are optical instruments. The microscope is used to see objects too small to be seen without special lenses.

Shadow Play

4 to 6

Purpose: Children enjoy playing with their shadows on the playground, creating puppet shadows on the wall, and guessing what an object is from its shadow. In this activity, children learn about the interaction of light, shadows, and distance. Shadow play also encourages creative expression.

HOME CONNECTION

Grandparents, other older relatives, and parents probably all played shadow games when they were children. Playing with shadows is a way for adults to share their childhood experiences with their children. Encourage parents to recognize opportunities for that kind of interaction.

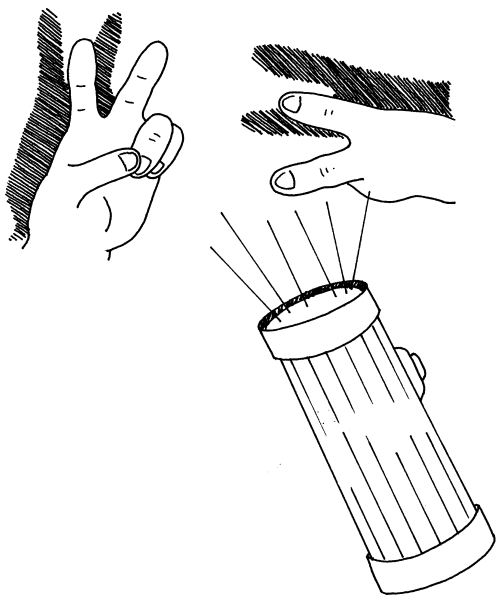
Materials: flashlight or lamp
sheet

Preparation:

1. Hang a sheet in such a way that it hides the object that will create the shadow.

2. Have the flashlight or lamp readily available for shadow play.

Activity: With a small group, an interesting guessing game is to identify the shadows of known objects. From behind a sheet, shine a light on several types of fruits one at a time. Bananas, grapes, apples, and other fruits will puzzle the group as they try to guess the type of fruit and to figure out how they are appearing on the sheet.



Then, again with a small group, shine a flashlight or other light source on a wall in the dramatic play area. Children use their fingers to produce shadow figures. They will enjoy making rabbit ears, a duck, a dog, a monster, or abstract forms. Children can also use puppets and the teacher can add music to allow for rhythmical movement and self-expression. Have the children move their puppets closer and farther from the light source and observe how the shadows change.

In a large group, perhaps outdoors, on a bright day, encourage the children to make silly movements and observe their own shadows. Teachers can introduce a quick "copy cat" (follow-the-leader) game: "Everybody jump! Everybody hop! Now, everybody dance!" This high-energy game will get the children up and moving.

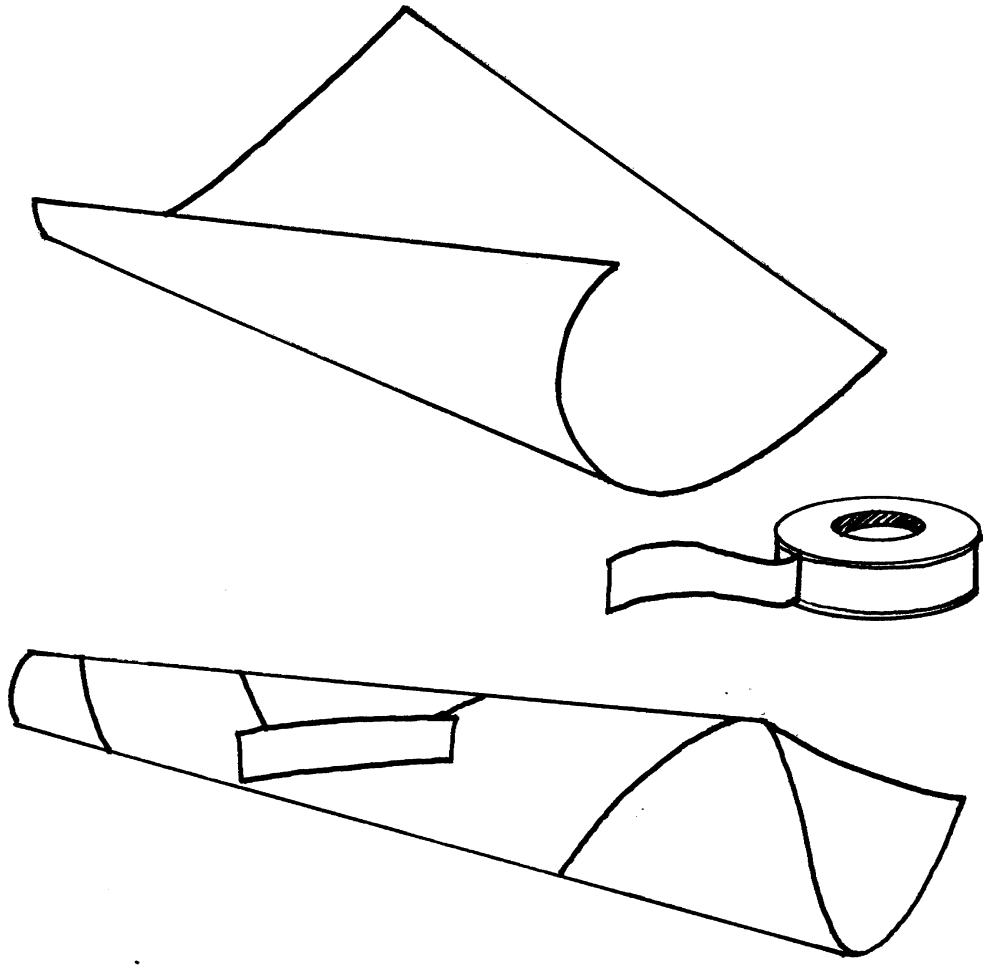
Extensions and variations:

- On the playground, play a shadow touch game. Have the children in the group make one connecting shadow by having their shadows touch each other's. Then, play shadow tag.

- Cut paper shapes. Can children identify the shapes and any other characteristics about the shapes. How many sides does the triangle have? Can the children make the shadow of the shape get larger or smaller? How?

Megaphones

5 to 6



HOME CONNECTION

Children can teach their parents how to make a megaphone at home. Parents can use it to call the children in from outdoors.

Purpose: This activity shows children that sound can be magnified and directed by a megaphone.

Materials: file folders or thick colored paper
tape

Preparation:

1. Lay a file folder flat, cut it in half, and starting at one corner, roll the sheet into a cone. If file folders are not available, use thick colored paper.

2. The small end should be at least approximately 2.5 cm. wide.

3. Tape the cone shape in place. For hygienic purposes, each child should have his own megaphone with his name on it.

4. Show the children how to hold the megaphone close to their lips and speak into it. Make different length megaphones and notice that the longer the cone, the more the voice tone will change by vibration.

Activity: Use the megaphone outdoors so that the children can be as loud as they like! Let the children move freely around the yard and have them take turns calling out a message to the group: "All children go to the sand box." "All children come for a ticket" (have small pieces of paper for tickets). "Everybody meet at the door."

A megaphone is a versatile prop when children are involved in dramatic play. For example, they can pretend to be firefighters calling people in high buildings, a lifeguard supervising at the beach or pool, the captain of a ship calling to another ship when his radio fails, or a teacher calling children together at a park.

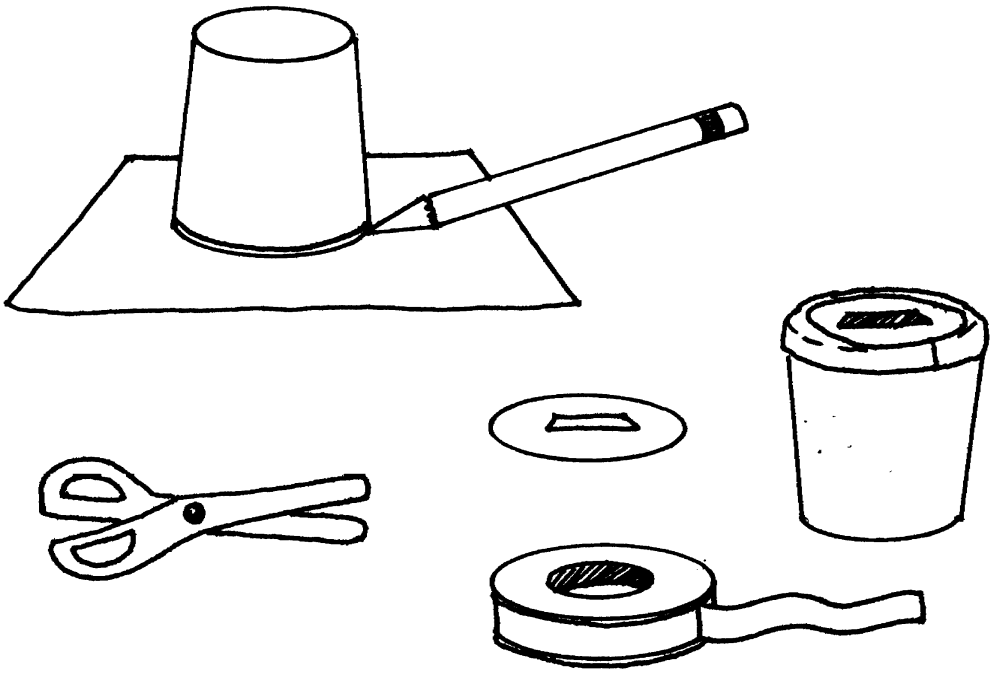
Extensions and variations:

- Children can experiment with singing through their megaphones either as a group or individually.

The Money Box

3 to 6

Submitted by Slovakia



HOME CONNECTION

Call parents' attention to the fact that there is great potential for pretend play in many ordinary household objects. They can encourage their children's creativity by pointing out simple objects (for example, a pot or a wooden spoon) and asking, "What could this be?"

Purpose: Dramatic play develops the creativity, imagination, and social skills of young children. A rich dramatic play environment frees children to express themselves and experiment with both real and fantasy situations. The money box is a prop that can be used by children in a number of different play scenarios, including a store, a post office, or a bank. As children use the money box to dramatize their experiences, they will discover their own uses for it.

Materials:

yogurt cups	tape
colored paper	glue
crayons	scissors

Preparation:

1. Measure and cut paper to fit around a yogurt cup. Let the children draw a picture or design on the paper according to their personal preferences. They can glue the paper in place so it covers the cup.

2. On paper, trace around the circular opening of the yogurt cup. Cut the paper circle and a slit that will accommodate coins or pretend money. Secure this opening on top of the yogurt cup with glue or tape.

Activity: A money box can be casually introduced to a group of children as they are engaged in play. This is most easily done as the teacher enters into the play situation with a comment such as, "You may want to use this money box to hold your make-believe money."

Extensions and variations:

- Place some real coins for the older children in the money box. Ask the children to name them. How much is each coin worth? Are some coins of equal value? Which are worth the most, the least?