

Incorporating Other Concepts into Blocks



Yes, it is important to create an area specific to block building, with all the needed space and materials. This helps to organize and enhance children's block play and clean up.

But as you work with them, you can expand on their play based on what they are doing, and keep the attention focused on block play. This does not mean going in and changing the focus of their play based on your objectives and what you want them to do, but to follow their lead and expand based on their interest and what they are focusing on in their blocks play.

Below are a just few ideas on how you can incorporate these concepts into block play, but more opportunities will present themselves as you join in children's their play.

Math:

- Shapes: Unit blocks come in so many different shapes, but they are more than just a square, triangle, etc. Teach them the three-dimensional terms because that is what they are using: Cube, cylinder, pyramid, etc.
- Teach children how to use different measuring tools: measuring tapes, rulers, etc. (they can measure specific blocks, their creations, compare to peer's creation)
- Another tool is a leveler – This would help them to make sure their blocks are straight as they build. Who wants a crooked house?

Art:

- Display photos of real buildings, bridges, cities, farms, etc. in the block area (discuss the structure, architectural elements of the buildings, encourage them to try and recreate the building with blocks, etc.)
- Create shapes pictures that are the same size and shape of the blocks in the block area – Display them and children can try to recreate them
- Add blueprints of building structures
- Add picture explanations of how to make some specific things with blocks
- Have children draw what they plan to build – Add clipboard with paper and pencils/markers
- Make homemade blocks with the children – Of course this isn't done with children in the block area, but after they are created, children can also decorate them, then they can be added to the block area to be used for building. (this could be a multiple day project for the children)
- Add some small fabric swatches for added decoration to their creations; they might want to add curtains, a bedspread, etc.

Language:

- Just labeling the blocks and materials with the pictures and words is promoting print awareness
- If you include the paper and pencils, then you have writing material to encourage them to also write the words for what they are planning to build
- Add books about building and construction to the block area
- Add different maps – You can add ones more local to your state/area, and you can even create ones that are simpler and more specific to your local town/city as well
- You can point out the words on accessories (e.g. street signs, building topper blocks, etc.)
- Have those conversations about their constructions and introduce new vocabulary
- Have the children make their own signs for the blocks area to encourage their use of writing (additional street signs they need, work in progress sign, signs for what they built; store, restaurant, hospital, etc.)
- They can build pieces/props to retell a story and role play