

# Outdoor resource box... **construction**

A builder's outdoor resource box enhanced the children's play and learning, reports

*Lyndsey Gardner*

## THEME

Nursery staff had noticed the boys' interest in 'diggers' and mixing sand and water. How to extend this interest became obvious when two boys, wearing hard hats, began digging in the sand, telling staff, 'We're the workies [workmen].'

## CHOICE

The children wanted to include hard hats and a range of construction vehicles in the box. Staff then added a selection of other resources to extend children's learning (see box).

## OBSERVATIONS

The children, especially the boys, responded positively to the box. Nursery staff observed that:

- children who would normally run around and flit from one area to another engaged with the resources and spent long periods focused on their play
- the children engaged with the resources in various ways. While some would dig and fill buckets, others would mix the 'cement' (sand and water). Some would spend all their time trying to build a wall, while others spent time using the construction vehicles to scoop, tip and transport sand
- after they explained and modelled the process of drawing plans of buildings, more boys began mark-making using the clipboards, so giving meaning to their writing



- the children used lots of mathematical language in their play, including number, words relating to shape and size, and positional language such as 'on top of', 'next to', 'behind' and 'underneath'
- the children, especially the boys, preferred using long-handled spades so that they could use their whole body to dig, scoop and lift the sand.

## INDOORS

Children took great pride in talking about what they had made using the builder's box. So, nursery staff:

- shared photographs on the SmartBoard and created displays, with photographs, plans, labels and children's comments, to extend the children's knowledge of construction and to inform families about the children's learning
- shared fiction and non-fiction books about building
- explored on the internet job roles on a building site and safety information.



## MORE INFORMATION

- Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, [www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org.uk](http://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org.uk) and @EvertonNursery on Twitter
- North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, [www.northliverpoolteachingschool.org](http://www.northliverpoolteachingschool.org) and @NorthLivTeach on Twitter



## AVAILABILITY

The box was first introduced in our sand quarry at key-worker time. This provided staff with an opportunity to observe the children's play, to give guidance on how to use the resources, where necessary, and to introduce new vocabulary.

Once the children became confident using the resources, staff began to use the box as part of the outdoor continuous provision. Nursery staff in the 'twos to threes' room found that the children enjoyed accessing the resources, especially the buckets and spades.

## LEARNING

Most of the outcomes from using the box related to the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Children:

- concentrated more for longer periods of time
- were willing to persevere no matter how many times the wall they tried to construct fell down
- showed great pride in achieving what they had set out to do and enjoyed sharing their achievements with other children
- were able to develop their own ideas, especially when trying to construct a wall.

The construction play also helped to develop the children's:

- negotiating skills, by building a wall co-operatively (PSED)
- fine motor skills, by using tools (PD)
- mark-making, by drawing and recording their plans (L)
- understanding of mathematical concepts, by measuring and commenting on the shape and size of what they were building (MD)
- knowledge of people's roles within the construction industry (UW)
- imagination and creativity in developing their designs (EAD). ■

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## ON THE LIST

- High-visibility jackets and builders' outfits
- Hard hats
- Traffic cones
- Construction signs and construction tape
- Buckets in various sizes
- Spades in different sizes
- Trowels
- Tool box
- Tape measure
- Spirit level
- Ruler
- Clipboard and mark-making tools
- Construction books
- Photographs of buildings
- Toy construction vehicles
- Plans of buildings
- Wooden blocks