

Strategies for Using Puppetry in the Classroom

By Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist Penny Russell

Classroom Character

- Create a classroom character with a puppet that the teacher uses exclusively. Give the puppet a name, a voice, and, most importantly, a personality.

Ignorant Observer

- Use the classroom character as an ignorant observer. Bring the character to life after a lesson to assess understanding and stimulate questions. Talking to a puppet can help children develop their ability to recall and retell stories. Answering the puppet's questions can build a child's confidence in their language use. Use the character's ignorance to increase vocabulary development and to encourage the children to express their thoughts in complete sentences. Use the character at the end of the day to help formulate answers to the question: What did you do/learn in class today?

Develop Empathy

- Create a shy classroom character and ask the children to treat the puppet gently, with quiet voices, small body movements, and patience.
- Create a character that has a difficult time remembering the rules. Model kind and encouraging support for the character, letting the children know that they will receive the same kind encouragement when they make mistakes. Encourage the children to help the character remember the rules, and create a kinder classroom. The puppet can model behavior problems that the teacher observes in the classroom.

Transitions

- Use a classroom character to help manage transitions: a puppet that comes out at clean-up time to observe the children; a puppet that flies down the hallway to the cafeteria; a puppet that encourages children to come to the circle. Encourage the children to tell the character when they are ready, what they have put away, or what will happen next.

Extra Focus

- Bring out a puppet anytime the class needs some help focusing on the lesson. This gives the teacher an exciting new friend (literally, a new voice) anytime the class needs it.

Social Skills and Manners

- Use puppetry to practice social skills: looking each other in the eye, saying "please" and "thank you," making introductions and conducting interviews, making apologies, welcoming new friends, and asking questions.

Peepers Puppets by Hobey Ford can be found at www.peeperspuppet.com