

Utilizing Puppets in the classroom!

Puppets can be used for anything! Whether it is reinforcing classroom rules, math, English, history, music, even as a reward system for good behavior, and as a saving grace for when you realize nothing will get done that day. Obviously, you will not use them all the time, but you could easily make it a regular part of class.

1) Rules for using Puppets- I think it would be a good idea to establish rules for any puppetry that might take place in your class. I always have some general things that I say before the student uses any of the puppets (to troubleshoot any future issues that might arise with them). Such as...

- Make sure the puppets have good manners (any puppet that bites or hits will be in time-out, aka back in the container where the puppet is kept.

- Puppets, especially Finger puppets, have a habit of hiding in children's pockets...make sure that they stay in their spot! (From experience...haha)

- Make sure the puppets use their inside voices.

2) Know your puppet. I look at each puppet and assign it a personality...I know that is weird, but giving it a voice, a story, and a specific use makes things a lot easier! For instance, my elephant is a great book smart guy. If we are trying to bridge the gap between classes by assessing whether or not your little guys retained last classes concept, that might be the way to do it. With a proper British accent, Jonathan (or just John) the elephant remembers everything (elephants have a great memory in the wild, and good opportunities for cross-curricular teachable moments). If no one is getting it, you can have John remind everyone. If someone remembers, you can have the students use it to remind everyone else. Since your kiddos are at such a young age, you might have them believe that your puppets are real if you get practice with them! If you give the tool a personality, it moves from something fun to an effective teaching tool.

3) Reinforcing good behavior- I used puppets as a great reward system for reinforcing good behavior. When my little's last year had a good day in class, meaning they followed the rules and what not, I left 5 minutes at the end of class for a sort of 'lullaby' time in which they got to tuck the puppets back into their containers. We sat in a circle and sang Twinkle Little Star and ABC's if necessary. As we sang, we passed the puppets we used that day and everyone got to hug the puppet and tuck him into his bed, aka the bag. It is also a great way to calm the little ones down right before class ends! Getting those little ones to mind and stay focused is like

herding cats...impossible! In addition, I have a mouse that comes out if things get too loud to remind everyone that things are too loud and he cannot sleep. He is pocket sized.

4) In the actual subjects-

- A) English-

- If you have trouble with anyone reading, it might be advantageous to have the upper levels pick a beginner book, adapt, and then stage the book for the younger kids. The older kids benefit from that experience, and the young ones do as well. Even the non-readers can learn without feeling the humiliation until their skills catch up.

- Create centers with different puppets representing different things. Either animals, or people such as a firefighter, police officer, soldier, businessperson, shy person, new kid at school, its endless! Have the students interact with the puppets and then have them explore roles alternate to their own through the puppets. Have them describe differences between characters in writing assignments.

- Make puppets exemplify the parts of speech. Make up a list of sentences with the puppet parts of speech in them. Have the students read the sentences using puppets and show how the parts of speech have to work together. If they don't, communication becomes chaos. I'd use human ones for this.

B) Math-

-Have a puppet that is always backwards/wrong...he adds instead of subtracts...he multiplies instead of divides...he even counts backwards...have the kids point out his errors and correct them. Kids love to show him his errors.

-Have a gram tell about his family...how much bigger his father and mother and grandparents are than he...then show much smaller his little brother and sister are...their names? Kilo, Hecta, Deca, Deci, Centi and Mili of course. Have the kids draw pictures of their families.

-Let the puppet tell a story which leads to a dilemma math can solve. Ask for the children's assistance in solving the puppet's problem (such as finding the number of cookies each guest will need for a party). Write out any necessary equations on the blackboard with chalk, while the puppet interjects and expresses its gratitude.

-Tell the class the puppet has a favorite number. Whenever the answer to a math equation involves that number, have the puppet laugh, dance and holler for the class. The puppets favorite number can change every day!

- <http://www.songsforteaching.com/index.html> this site has EVERYTHING you need. You can teach any subject using songs with this. I would look at the lyrics, listen to the song and just learn it (I would be too stingy to buy the mp3 of it if you could stream it for free...Maybe even just use the website to play it!) Print out the lyrics, have the kids listen to it, read along, and sing along. Create audio-visual manipulative for the songs! For example, five little snowmen/frogs, make 5 little frogs and act it out! You can reinforce subtraction and other mathematical issues between verses. You could act it out, and then have the kids act it out by

printing out 5 frogs for each kid. Make them do the subtractions as the song goes on, and you have 100% participation, as well as an easy form of informal group assessment!

5) Cheap puppets- the cheapest puppets require some barbarism...

A) Turning anything into puppets...

Step 1: go to any thrift store, dollar store, or anywhere and buy a stuffed animal.

Step 2: take animal home!

Step 3: take a knife, and cut him up in the middle.

Step 4: push the stuffing aside, and you have a really cheap puppet. You can manipulate the arms and the head! It is dirty, but it seems to work!

Step 5: you might staple fabric in the inside if it seems like the stuffing will pour out.

B) Finger puppets-

Step 1: take small stuffed animals and cut a hole on their underside. Crude, but effective for a quick fix.

C) Other cheap puppets-

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/crafts-by-type/animal-bug-crafts/animal-themed-crafts/animal-crafts/talking-heads-710796/5/> ← How to make sock puppets!!!!

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/crafts-by-type/animal-bug-crafts/animal-themed-crafts/animal-crafts/talking-heads-710796/5/> ← How to make Shadow Puppets, REALLY cheap!

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/crafts-by-type/animal-bug-crafts/animal-themed-crafts/animal-crafts/talking-heads-710796/3/> ← how to make finger puppets!

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/crafts-by-type/animal-bug-crafts/animal-themed-crafts/animal-crafts/talking-heads-710796/7/> ← paper plate puppets! I love the frog...