

Puppet Inquiry

Puppets come alive when they are shared! I have always used them when teaching, so I thought we could explore them as an inquiry topic. When telling others of my plan, the Librarians from Coutts and my friend Nicole Chatterton expressed interested in being involved: Awesome!



During home visits, Chester the racoon puppet, met the children and told them the story of *The Kissing Hand*. The character Chester is introduced by Audrey Penn in book *The Kissing Hand*. This book helps children identify when they are feeling anxious and need some reassurance from a loved one. Many children found Chester for a hug during the first few days of Junior Kindergarten (JK).



Throughout September we used puppets a lot! Some of our children had puppets at home, but others did not. As we explored the stories: Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs, and Three Billy Goats Gruff, different types of puppets were introduced.



Moreover, we enjoyed visiting Coutts Library where the children selected puppets and used the photo booth.



At our first community circle the children were asked to share something they knew about puppets. Some of the children recalled the puppets they visited with at the photo booth. "I don't have a puppet at my home." "I had an elephant at the library." "I like the moose puppet at the library!"

In class, puppets were also used to represent the letters of the alphabet. In September and October, we met a shy Mabel the Mouse, Menacing Monkey, Black Bear, and Ally the Ant. Additionally, a few people puppets were borrowed from Coutts and they helped the children understand how to behave at group time. The girl puppet Julie/Juliette had a hard time controlling her body, so the other puppets and our young learners gave her advice. As Julie/Juliette learned more about using High 5 (still body, hand on lap, quiet mouth, listening ears, and eyes on the speaker), the children's behavior improved. The children loved the puppet antics! Their enthusiasm was evident when we set the puppets out to draw. Many created several observational drawings of Julie/Juliette. One also created a drawing of the children at circle time and explained to his peers how we sit around the red circle carpet at circle time.



Soon after this, Ms. Chatterton's Grade 5/6 students visited with baskets of puppets and story planning sheets in hand. In small groups they visited and jotted some ideas the JK kids had. A few weeks later we received an invitation to visit them at Garneau Elementary School. The Garneau students had set up three puppet theatres in the library and took turns performing for us. BRAVO!!



After having many common class puppet experiences, we had our very first community circle. At a community circle, an item is passed around and whoever is holding it gets to talk while the others listen. Sharing and listening is hard work! The children were asked to share a story or idea about puppets. Some of their comments included:

Isla: "I got the mushroom puppet with the big kids (the grade 5/6 students)."

Praim: "I got a song about puppets." He sings, "I like penguins and bears and the monkey too!"

Méabh: "I do have a squirrel one [puppet] that Daddy puts on his hands and I talk to it."

Alitheia: "Grandma is going to make puppets with me someday. Nothing in my life can be more fun than a puppet!"

Lorenzo (who speaks Portuguese): Gets up and points to the A on the alphabet, saying, “A - ah.” Ann brings out the ant puppet used to learn the letter A and Lorenzo nods yes.

At another Circle Time the children brainstormed “things we can use to make puppets,” and a web visual organizer is created and hung on the wall by the crafting station. The morning class’ ideas included: toys, straws, paper, ideas, paper bags, sticks, stuffies, fingers, and hands. The afternoon class’ list included: paper rolls, sticks, letters, shells, egg shells, chop sticks, scissors, string, dolls, stuffies, toys, ribbon, flowers, and Popsicle sticks.

The children helped experiment with multiple types of material when constructing our first puppet theatre. Eventually, it was decided streamers would be hung from the ceiling. The children in the afternoon program chose the colours and then trimmed up the streamers to a suitable length. Lauren also suggested we use something purple, “Because I LOVE purple!” Purple material was draped around the back of the theatre.

The children then began making paper bag puppets. The recycled materials the children brought to school in brown bags were also set out.



One of the puppet books set out in our class library showed how to make a sock puppet. Socks were purchased and the next big wave of puppet making involved socks.



We try to use visual organizers as often as possible, and incorporate the children’s photos. Below we asked the children to place their photos under the type of puppet they hoped to make.



Technology was also used to record the children’s ideas and video record puppet shows that were sometimes replayed on the big screen. We also recorded the children’s individual stories, which were made available in the puppet theatres



During music class, Frieda showed the children “The Lonely Goat Herder” a marionette show from the movie “The Sound of Music.” The children loved watching puppet shows on the big screen and began to experiment with marionettes. They made bird marionettes at JK, and some created them at home and brought them in for show and share. The afternoon class also created a backdrop with mountains and hills.



Another theatre was set up to accommodate more puppeteers. This one began as a traditional set up, used with hand and finger puppets. Most puppet shows involved parents and children. Often a mom puppet had a baby puppet! The white sheet, initially used as a back drop, was draped over the arch and a shadow puppet theatre was created: MAGIC! Some boat puppets made at home were used. Then dinosaur toys. Lastly, props and puppets were used together.





Many children also brought in puppets for show and share. Some were store bought, others belonged to parents, and we also enjoyed home-made puppets, too! How delightful!



At our Celebration of Learning, the children shared the puppet theatres with their parents! Then our display went upstairs, proudly displayed in the hall near the Coutts Library. There we hope to inspire adults who are studying to be teachers.



