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Let's Give a Hand to Puppets!

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A *puppet* is an object that a person controls through finger/hand movements, sticks, or strings. Puppets usually represent human or animal figures. Many people look at puppets only as toys or playthings. However, puppets can actually provide numerous learning experiences! Puppets encourage children to use creativity and their imaginations. As well, puppets get their attention and hold their interest, all while supporting deeper, multi-sensory learning. So, with your children, try your hand at puppetry and have fun while learning!

Puppets do not have to be expensive or complex. You can even make them yourself. They can be made out of just about anything, such as socks, tongue depressors, sticks, straws, paper bags, foam, or felt. Also, if you have a large cardboard

box, you can make a simple puppet theater. Having a designated area for puppet shows is a great way to inspire creative play. Children benefit from having a special area where they can go to let their imaginative play take place. A puppet theater is a fun and functional item to include in their play area.



A Puppet's Possibilities

Children who have regular opportunities for pretend play have a rich environment that stimulates and reinforces language development. Below are some fun ways to incorporate puppets into language learning.

Puppets and Books! Puppets are wonderful teaching tools, especially when they help bring books to life! Many characters in children's books are animals. You may find puppets in a store that represent the characters in books. Use these puppets as you read the story to your children or simply as fun props that your



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children can hold on to as they listen to the story. Another fun way to use puppets with books is to have your children make their own puppets to represent the characters they just learned about in the story. They can use these personalized puppets the next time you read the story!

Puppets and Talking! Puppets can be great tools for speech and language development. Many children can be hesitant to talk in speech/language therapy. Giving children their own special puppets that they can use to talk and answer questions with can make them more comfortable. Using puppets in stuttering (fluency) and voice therapy may help children increase their easy speech or demonstrate improved vocal quality, as they may feel more comfortable talking through the puppets. In articulation or apraxia therapy, puppets can help show children correct tongue placement to make their sounds.



Puppets and Social Skills! Puppets can be useful in helping children improve their social skills. You can use puppets to help teach appropriate behaviors, such as good manners and turn-taking. Children can work on maintaining conversations and role-playing different social situations between puppets. You can also explain different emotions with puppets. As well, it can be more motivating for them to talk if they feel like they are talking to a friendly puppet, instead of a person who may "judge" them.



Puppets and Game Play! Puppets can be motivating for children to help them complete tasks and play games. For example, children can "feed" game cards to a puppet after completion of a task. In addition, puppets can be an incentive for children to participate if they get to use the puppet's mouth to roll the dice, spin the spinner, or move their gameboard pieces.



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