

Finding Your Voice

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Let Your Voices Be Heard: Using Puppets to Bring Stories to Life

Objective/Goal:

This is a main experience designed for teachers, for learning to modify the voice to enhance storytelling and reinforce literacy skills.

Educational Impact:

- ✓ Prosody
- ✓ Fluency
- ✓ Inflection

Procedure and Process:

Most young children do not use altered (or “puppet”) voices when playing with puppets. This is fine. You should encourage children to speak audibly when using a puppet during the storytelling process, but should not expect them to create character voices, although some may do so naturally. However, it is critical that, throughout the entire storytelling process, you create and use a distinct voice for the puppet you are manipulating.

It is vital to do so in order to establish the puppet as a separate entity, to infuse the character of the puppet with life and believability, and to keep the story engaging for the children. An additional benefit is that this provides an opportunity for the children to see you as a creative individual with a willingness to play with them.

This experience is just for you. It is designed to help you, the teacher, develop skills that will enable you to create voices for the puppets you use with your children.

Give Your Puppet a Voice!

Giving your puppet a distinct voice is the most important aspect of bringing it to life. The razzle-dazzle of color, texture, and size will fade if the puppet does not have a voice and personality uniquely its own. To find a voice for your puppet, begin by choosing a personality that you think will suit your character. Here is a sample of personality traits to get you started:

Clever	Mysterious	Happy
Tricky	Serious	Cranky
Dull	Smart	Bossy
Snobbish	Brave	Shy
Lazy	Nervous	Scared
Generous	Confused	Funny
Wild	Quiet	Silly

Next, pick a voice that seems appropriate for the personality and appearance of the puppet. Keep in mind the following components of the voice to help you make choices:

Pitch: High or low

Speed: Fast or slow

Dynamics: Loud or soft

Tone: The specific quality of the voice (nasal, musical, guttural)

Emotion: Feelings indicated by the voice

Inflection: Subtle nuances that can affect the meaning of your words; for instance, we all use inflection to indicate questions or exclamatory statements.

Accent: Speech particular to a specific nation or region. Play with this, especially if you are very familiar with another language or regional dialect, while taking care to be sensitive to the culture and avoid stereotypes.

Rhythm: The pattern of pauses and tempo is very obvious in most nursery rhymes; children feel very comfortable with a familiar cadence.