

## **Puppets in School**

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We often hear teachers say that learning should be fun and interesting, that is why I decided to start using puppets in my classroom. Who wouldn't have fun with a puppet? Who wouldn't learn while having fun? The idea is not only to insert the puppet onto your hand and do silly things with it, but to pass on knowledge through the puppets. My goals were to teach my students the skill of puppeteering and for them to gain valuable experience in presenting their dramatic plays/skits. My personal and professional goal was to integrate Music, Art, and Health through the use of puppets.

I found a company that sold puppets and packaged programs that dealt with health, careers, peer pressure and so on. Since it was not in my budget to purchase these puppets I made a proposal for my Home and School association detailing the benefits of using puppets, the cost, and the many uses you can get out of them. I am fortunate enough to work with a very supportive Home and School association who did not hesitate in purchasing the puppets for my school. I ordered five puppets and three sets of programs. Two of them dealt with health issues, and the other dealt with career orientation. By using these puppets, I planned to teach Art (which puppetry is an Art form), Health (via the content), and Music (through the songs sung as part of the program). I had puppets and a program to begin putting together, but I had no stage. I had a light-weight one made with plastic drain pipes.

At last I was set to begin this adventure. Our troop of puppets got the name of "Adventure Bound Theatre" after a "Name the Troop Contest". I began by teaching the students the etiquette of puppeteering. Although puppets are fun, they are not toys. One must handle them with care, and if possible gloves should be used so no dirt or oils shorten the life of a puppet. Students also learned that keeping your arm up while holding and making a puppet talk and move for any length of time can be extremely exhausting. A strong arm is necessary and takes time to develop. Also, students learned how to enter or exit the theatre, how to make a puppet look like it is running or kicking, and they also learned how to make puppets look surprised, upset, and a range of other emotions.

As a group, we decided to practice a health program called "Safety Kids". This program teaches children how to be safe in public places and how to act and what to do in certain situations. For beginners, it is recommended to start with a program that has a sound track. This way the puppeteer only has to worry about holding the puppet and making it talk or move to the sound track. In our case, this is what we did. As students become more comfortable and proficient at handling the puppets they can begin using their own voices.

Once we had perfected it we presented it at different schools. We have also used the puppets for children's story at church, and at our local senior's home. The uses of puppets are endless. Some possibilities are: recruiting, ministering to the sick in hospitals, teaching life lessons to children, and teaching God's love and plan of salvation,

among others. Puppets have a wealth of potential to be mediums to witness in the public setting and set our schools apart. It was a lot of hard work to get the students ready, but it is also a pleasure to see my students learn to handle puppets, something many students may never have exposure to otherwise. Students gain valuable experience performing for others, depending on others, and working as a team to succeed. If puppeteering is something you think you would like to give a try, I assure you, you will be amazed at the world they open up.