

vroeg

Interview Chantal Kemner

"Developing
brain, true
treasure trove"

- Assistance for the youngest after a calamity
- **Puppet supports language stimulation effectively**
- Alone you go faster, together you go further

Puppetry Effectively Supports Language Stimulation

Promoting language development in young children is crucial for their communicative skills and cognitive growth. An effective and enjoyable way to achieve this is through the use of a hand puppet. A puppet is not just a familiar and approachable friend, but can also play a significant role in the child's development. With a puppet, the child is more at ease practicing language and is less afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, it serves as an ideal tool for stimulating language use.

Helen Meurs

To stimulate children's language development, a hand puppet is needed that acts as an active learning partner. The puppet must

be genuinely curious about language, motivated to use language to better understand the world, and employ language when interacting with children. Therefore, give the puppet intrinsic motivation to learn language and a reason why it has devised various games and activities to practice. This is contagious for the child; the child perceives the hand puppet as a friend and is eager to participate in the language games the puppet introduces.

Frummel

It helps to give your hand puppet a name. For example, I work a lot with Frummel. Here's an example to illustrate my approach:

Frummel comes by. He is curious about

'A hand puppet makes learning new words for children fun and playful'

new words and enjoys listening to stories. He is an enthusiastic puppet and loves chatting with children more than anything. He does this, for instance, in the form of interactive conversations:

- I have Frummel ask the child questions like, "*What did you eat today?*" or "*What did you play with today?*" This encourages the child to actively participate in the conversation.
- If I am dealing with children who have a limited vocabulary, Frummel phrases his question like this: "*What did you play with today? With dolls, blocks, clay, a puzzle, etc.?*"

Added Value

In this way, you list a number

of possibilities to help children who may not yet actively use these terms but passively know them. The puppet can use pictures to support the learning process. This makes the learning environment more interactive and lowers the threshold for the child to participate and speak. The puppet encourages them to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. But a puppet can also engage in dialogues, ask questions, and actively listen to what the child has to say. This not only enhances language skills but also social interaction and the child's self-confidence, especially when the puppet takes into account the child's level.

Give the child ample time and space to respond, and assist if needed in finding



handle it all.

An example illustrates how you can put this into practice with a hand puppet:

Frummel encounters new words every day that he collects. He wants to know what they mean and often wants to pronounce them. He decides that he wants to make cards for all the words he learns. He hangs these in plain view to practice more easily. Frummel also uses them to play games.

"Do you remember what this one is called?" is one such game, as is "Jumping and Stomping on New Words." In this way, a hand puppet makes learning new words fun and playful. This aids children in consolidating their vocabulary and forming concepts.

Stories and Role-Playing

A curious and language-focused hand puppet provides opportunities for interactive stories and role-playing. This helps children develop their imagination and language skills. For example, the puppet can be a character in stories that children invent and can take on different roles in role-playing. In this way, children are encouraged to use their creativity and strengthen their language skills. A hand puppet can experience all sorts of adventures that include language, words, concepts, rhymes, and songs. The child is actively involved in these stories and role-plays, thereby getting the chance to practice language in a meaningful and enjoyable way. Allow the child room for their own input while playing interactive stories and role-playing. For instance, let them add ideas, twists, and solutions to the story through the puppet. This promotes engagement and enhances the child's sense of ownership, further boosting their language skills and imagination.

the words. A hand puppet doesn't fuss about mistakes and is non-judgmental, although it does recognize that some words are trickier than others. The puppet is primarily there to support the child. By providing positive feedback, self-confidence is reinforced, and the motivation to actively participate in conversations and language-stimulating activities is increased.

Vocabulary Expansion

What does this play mean for vocabulary expansion and concept

formation? A curious, language-focused puppet can easily introduce new words, concepts, and sentence structures to the child. A puppet that plays, talks, explores, sings, rhymes, and discovers new words is a puppet that exposes children to a broad range of vocabulary and encourages them to use these words in different contexts. Whether it's about vocabulary expansion or concept formation, such as naming objects, introducing opposites, and exploring concepts like colors, shapes, and emotions, the hand puppet can





'The hand puppet can serve as a bridge between the school environment and home.'

Continuity

Of course, it's fantastic when children are happily practicing language with you, but it's even more wonderful when parents want to continue this upward trend at home. The puppet can serve as a bridge between the school or childcare environment and home. All that's needed for this is a sock, which can be easily transformed into a sock puppet with a few simple adjustments, and good examples. By collaborating with parents, you help promote continuity in language stimulation, thereby certainly enhancing the child's language development.

However, do help parents along the way with practical tips and suggestions for language-stimulating activities using their own hand puppet. These can be activities such as naming objects during daily routines, playing language games, or singing songs together. Parents can integrate these activities into their daily interactions with the child. Additionally, organize parent meetings where

parents can receive more information on using the hand puppet for language stimulation at home. These meetings can serve as a platform for exchanging experiences and sharing success stories. In this way, parents can also inspire and support each other in enhancing their children's language development. It's a wonderful way to involve parents in the activities you're doing and help them expand their skills.

Conclusion

Using a hand puppet for language stimulation offers significant added

value for children's language development.. As a trusted friend who is curious about language and motivated to use it, the hand puppet engages the child in an active learning attitude. The puppet can invent all kinds of different games, such as naming objects, guessing sounds, making rhymes, playing with sounds, and practicing word associations. It can work on vocabulary expansion and concept formation. The puppet can also initiate interactive stories and role-playing games. Through these playful and interactive activities, children's language skills are naturally and engagingly enhanced.

Additionally, by using a puppet, you can collaborate with parents to stimulate children's language skills and help them grow in their language and understanding of the world around them. You can do it without a puppet, of course, but believe me, with a puppet, it's a lot more fun and easier! ●

Helen Meurs (www.helenmeurs.com) is a former teacher who has been working with hand puppets for 30 years. She wrote the book "The Hand Puppet as an Educational Tool. Helen also developed the PuppetCoachApproach, a relationship-focused approach in which the puppet playfully invites the child to learn, practice, and talk.

