

Supporting Inclusion Outside with Puppets

A Tip Sheet for Educators

Puppets can be used to support inclusion in outdoor environments by engaging with children as a path for connection and learning. Educators can use puppets to facilitate positive interactions with children, and to provide opportunities to practice social skills, express their emotions, and communicate their needs while playing outside.

Use Puppets Outside to Support Inclusion Through

Storytelling



Role modeling



Giving a Voice



Empathizing



Listening



Encouraging



Empathy Building and Perspective-Taking

Puppets can support children in learning the important skills of perspective-taking and building empathy for others.¹

The Development of Problem-Solving Skills

With puppets, educators can help children identify their feelings, practice responding to situations from different perspectives, and develop problem-solving skills.²

Co-Regulation

Puppets can provide opportunities for children to practice co-regulation techniques with educators and puppets.²

Social and Emotional Learning

Puppets can support educators in guiding a child's social-emotional growth and learning, by modeling and role-playing how to take turns, share their feelings, and ask for help.³ Puppets can create a safe place where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings.¹

Language and Communication Skills

Puppetry encourages children's active engagement in storytelling, role-playing, and question-and-answer activities, which playfully strengthens verbal and literacy skills.⁴



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Tips for Practical Implementation



Consistency

Puppets can be used during unstructured or structured parts of the day, such as free play or group time. You can use puppets at any time to offer comfort, constructive feedback, or compliments. The puppets can be used to remind the children of expectations, although they should not be seen only as a rule-monitoring authority. Diversify the conversation to include positive feedback and casual discussions with the children.

Introductions

Introduce your puppets to the group. Name them, talk about their personalities, and connect them to something you are working on as a group. Ex. This is Hoppy. Hoppy is a frog who loves to explore outside. Hoppy is learning to stay close to their friends and not leave the play area. They know that staying together keeps us safe!

Regularly Present

Make your puppets a regular presence in your program, and use them consistently as a teaching team. The children will become familiar with their presence and feel comfortable engaging with them.

Keeping Them Close

Moments of interaction are often spontaneous and happen very quickly. In order to engage fully with the children in these spontaneous interactions, it is a good idea to keep the puppet easily accessible, e.g. in your pocket.

Thank you to the educators and students who helped inform and develop this resource!



Learn More!

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www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/spout-able-modules-and-resources/



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Click the images or links to learn more! ➡

Footnotes:



1. Puppetry Activities in Early Childhood Programmes
Luen, L. C. (2021). Puppetry activities in early childhood programmes. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal*, 10, 89-96.
<https://doi.org/10.37134/saecj.vol10.sp.8.2021>



2. Inclusion Happens with a Puppet
Karaolis, O. (2020). Inclusion happens with a puppet: puppets for inclusive practice in early childhood settings. *NJ Drama Australia Journal*, 44(1), 29-42.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14452294.2020.1871506>



3. Using Puppets with Young Children
Department of Education, Government of Nunavut. (2019). *Algaujaut atuqhugit nukaqhiinut: Using puppets with young children*.
https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2025-04/Using_Puppets_in_the_Classroom_IK_IQ_EN_.pdf



4. The Role of Storytelling Methods Using Hand Puppets
Mujahidah, N., Damayanti, E., & Afiif, A. (2021). The role of storytelling methods using hand puppets in early children's language development. *Child Education Journal*, 3(2), 78-91.
<https://doi.org/10.33086/cej.v3i2.2129>

Additional Resource:



Helen Meurs

Meurs, H. (2025). *Helping You Reach the Children Who Seem Out of Reach*. Helen Meurs.
www.helenmeurs.com



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