



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VI, No. 4

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ **Provide a language-rich environment**
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Provide a Language-Rich Environment

The Wonder of Puppets

Children all over the world have long been fascinated with puppets! From well-known puppets, like *Kermit the Frog* and *Bert and Ernie*, to furry animal hand puppets – and even simple puppets made out of a paper bag or a sock – puppets have a magical way of capturing young children's interest and attention.

This natural appeal makes puppets highly effective in supporting young children's growth in many developmental areas, in the following ways:

- **Language and Literacy.** Children are naturally motivated to speak *to* and *with* puppets, helping them gain verbal and communication/conversational skills (such as speaking, listening, turn-taking, questioning), as well as helping to broaden their vocabulary. In addition, puppets used with stories, poems and songs increase children's interest in reading-related activities (for example, retelling stories), which provides a valuable foundation for reading.
- **Cognitive Development.** When a child plays with a puppet, she can make the puppet say and do anything she wants. By engaging in pretend play and trying on different roles, children experience an increase in thinking and other cognitive skills such as creativity and imagination.
- **Social/Emotional Development.** Puppets provide a sense of security that makes it easier for children to express their thoughts and feelings. Studies have shown that children who are often reluctant to talk to an adult, will more readily talk to a puppet. In addition, as children take on different roles through puppet play, they learn to empathize and respect the feelings and perspectives of others. These social emotional skills play a key role in helping children grow up to be happy, healthy, well-adjusted adults.

In this newsletter, we will discuss specific ways puppets promote children's growth and development at each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and present tips and ideas for using puppets with each of these age groups.



Infants

Puppets can be used to entertain and engage even the youngest infant during everyday routines, while on the go, and when singing songs and reading stories. During infancy, babies experience growth in visual abilities. This is when a baby learns to focus her eyes, and coordinate their movement to track an object. She also learns how to use the visual information the eyes send to her brain in order to understand the world around her. Puppets, especially brightly colored puppets that she can track with her eyes, stimulate her developing visual system.

Here are additional ideas you can use:

- While holding a puppet, make eye contact with baby, then gently touch her with the puppet while talking. For example say, *"I see Lily! Lily has pretty brown eyes and a cute little nose."* Wait for her to respond with a smile, gurgle, or other sound, then continue the back-and-forth interaction.
- Make up a simple story and act it out with the puppet. For example, using a dog puppet say, *"One day, the dog was looking for his bone and could not find it. Where is his bone? Is it **under** baby's chin? (using the puppet, touch beneath her chin) No. Is it **on top of** baby's head? (touch the top of her head) No. Where could it be? Is it **under** baby's blanket? Yes! There it is! (pull out a toy bone or a piece of paper twisted to look like a bone).*



Toddlers

During the toddler years, children experience growth in language skills. Using puppets during play or while reading stories to your child is an excellent way to support toddlers' growth in this area. In addition, puppets provide valuable opportunities to help them learn to *talk* about their feelings, and begin experimenting with role playing and imaginative play.

Here are additional ideas you can use:

- Use familiar stories, such as *"Old McDonald Had a Farm"* as a springboard for puppet play ideas.
- Use glove puppets to act out counting finger plays, such as *"5 Little Monkeys"* or *"5 Little Ducks"*.
- Perform a puppet show to reenact an emotional outburst, such as a tantrum. For example, as one puppet acts out a tantrum, have another puppet calmly approach her and ask her why she is angry. Have the first puppet stop the tantrum and explain the reason (for example, *"I wanted a turn to bathe the doll."*) Have the second puppet acknowledge her feelings (e.g., *"You are mad that you didn't have a turn with the dolls."*) and provide suggestions of things she can do instead of acting out through a tantrum (for example, ask and wait for a turn, take a deep breath to calm down, etc.)

Preschoolers

With an increased ability to think in more complex ways, you may notice that preschoolers become more sophisticated in their pretend play. Puppets provide the ideal opportunity to increase their cognitive and imaginative skills, especially when they are prompted to act out more elaborate scenarios, such as an experience that might be new or scary like visiting the dentist for the first time.

During these early years it is also important that children learn to love reading. Including a puppet while reading to children brings an added dimension and level of excitement to a story, creates more interaction, and is a great way to nurture literacy skills and promote reading readiness. After reading a story, try having the preschooler use a puppet to retell the story, or create a different ending to the story.

Here are additional ideas you can use:

- When interacting with a puppet that a child has on her hand, speak in complete sentences and use interesting and more complex vocabulary. For example, instead of saying *"I'd like to order a cupcake please,"* say, *"May I please order your delicious unicorn rainbow cupcake with creamy vanilla frosting?"*
- Construct a puppet theatre with tri-fold cardboard (or simply drape a blanket over a bench or a table) to increase children's engagement in pretend play with puppets.
- Use puppets to help a preschooler learn about perspective taking. Give her two puppets to role-play a disagreement that needs to be resolved. By role-playing the perspective of both puppets, the preschooler will be able to imagine what each puppet may be feeling and thinking from each point of view.

Featured Activity: Sock Puppet



Materials:

- An old pair of socks
- Washable markers

What to do:

1. Slip a sock onto your hand and use markers to draw eyes near the toe end. Do the same with the other sock.
2. Let your child name the puppets.
3. Show your child how to put the sock on her hand and move her thumb and other fingers to make the puppet "talk."
4. Put on your puppet and start up a conversation between the two puppets.
5. Have the puppets do other activities like pick up objects, tickle one another, or pinch little noses!



Citations:

Bauer, Caroline Feller. (1997). *Leading Kids to Books through Puppets*. United States: Caroline Feller Bauer.

Hunt, Tamara, and Renfro, Nancy. (1982). *Puppetry in Early Childhood Education*. Austin, Tex.: Nancy Renfro Studios.

Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Primary providers and adult members who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelope is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



Join us on Facebook!
University of Hawaii Learning to Grow
www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii/

Learning to Grow Quality Child Care for Registered Home-Based Providers is a project of University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services ★ 808-462-4700 ★ www.learningtogrowhawaii.org