Basic Puppetry Techniques

Excerpted from "Outside Your Door" workshop
By Wolf Trap Master Teaching Artist Penny Russell

Introduction:
Open/Close

- Open and close body parts: feet, legs, eyes, mouth, hands, fingers, etc.
- Chant "open/close" three times with each body part
- Ask the children for suggestions
- Demonstrate moving mouth manipulation by squeezing your fingers together and opening and closing your thumb

Eyes
Give puppet eye instructions:

- Choose a pair of eyes from the box and pass the box down
- Find your tallest finger
- Put the eyes under your tallest finger
- Squeeze your fingers together so the eyes don't fall off
- Open and close
- Demonstrate
- Pass the puppet eyes around the circle, singing the directions:

  Take some eyes from the box and pass the box down
  Take some eyes from the box and pass the box down
  Pass the box down, pass the box down
  Take some eyes from the box and pass the box down

- While you practice, chant "open/close."
- Practice opening the puppet mouth when your mouth opens and closing the puppet mouth when your mouth closes: "Ahhh, Ahhh, Ahhh, Ahhh."
- Sing a song with your puppets, focusing on mouth manipulation.

Main Experience:

- Puppet rules: no fighting, no biting
- Choose a moving mouth puppet from the puppet bin.
- Take the puppet back to your seat and practice open/close.
- Get to know your puppet by asking questions:
  - *What is your puppet's name?*
  - *What is your puppet's age?*
  - *What are some of your puppet's past experiences?*
  - *Where does your puppet live?*

- Talk to the puppets near you. Ask the puppets questions to get to know them better. Practice using your puppet voice.
- Sing a song together, and focus on mouth manipulation.
- Interview some of the puppets.

Closing:
- Say "goodbye" to the puppets. Allow the puppets to say "goodbye" to the class in their puppet voices.
- Non-moving mouth puppets: Teach puppets to wave, nod, clap!
- Explore feelings – how does the puppet look when it feels sad? When it's climbing a ladder? Jumping? Dancing?
- Anything can be a puppet, even a stuffed animal – give it eye focus, movement