

Idea Lab Grant Idea- SLP  
From Jill Arnold  
11/5/24

### **Spotlight on and Staging Successful Communication**

#### **Purpose and Inspiration-**

I am staging something exciting and inspiring for my students. Incorporating theater, reader's theater and opportunities for advanced pretend play schematics into speech and language therapy for my kindergarten through 4th graders is highly beneficial for a variety of reasons. One of many studies done, demonstrates the benefits of performing arts and theater work with the ASD population, as seen in the study published in the Journal of Speech Pathology Therapy in 2016 titled *The Use of Theatre to Develop Social and Communication Behaviors for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Preliminary Investigation*. These activities provide children with engaging and enjoyable ways to practice both receptive and expressive language, improving articulation, reading fluency and social communication skills. Role-playing and script reading help students develop problem-solving skills as they work with peers within small groups, building skills of collaboration and teamwork. Theater experience boosts confidence, letting students express themselves creatively and take pride in their performances through speaking roles, the making of props, and costume creation and in developing imagination and creativity along the way. Sharing their work with teachers, parents, and friends motivates them to take ownership of their progress and help them develop stronger self-esteem and continued confidence and advocacy skills. In addition, theater introduces students to a potential hobby they may enjoy or excel in, as they begin to discover new skills. Over the years, integrating activities like reader's theater and creating paper puppets or sets has proven invaluable for my students, including those with significant speech and language challenges who thrive in after-school theater groups outside of their school day. Having supplies on hand would allow for even more meaningful and structured opportunities for these activities within my therapy setting. Some of my fondest memories as an SLP from Pierce over the years were sharing end of year reader's theater productions with my students, teachers and their classmates after they put together a small skit or production for which they felt so much pride. When I first started this theater work, it was with a group of second grade students, reluctant communicators with whom presented with various communication deficits including phonology and articulation challenges, selective mutism and social deficits. At the end of this unit and when it came time to share their work, the kids felt an immense sense of accomplishment. What an incredible and memorable feeling for them and for me! Additionally, pretend play, including incorporating props and theme based objects, will help my students develop communication skills in many ways, including developing and expanding vocabulary knowledge, and learning to interact with the world through experiences and role-play scenarios. Many of my kindergarten and first grade students are practicing these skills during unstructured free choice time play opportunities. Students I support,

often require opportunities for scaffolding their play skills, role-play practice and scripting to support their ability to play with peers including practicing in the smaller group setting. Pretend play is an essential part of language development as it supports a child's ability to relate to their world and the people within it, boost creativity and confidence as they continue to develop receptive, expressive and social language skills. Having the opportunity to practice various communication skills while utilizing a theater like set up which incorporates pretend play scenes such as shopping or store front scenes will be both invaluable and so much fun! I hope to give many more students this love and joy for theater arts and show them how to use these skills to help them build confidence as communicators, express themselves in positive and productive ways as their communication skills continue to grow!

### **What I need/Supplies/Resources:**

1. Portable puppet show/shop for pretend play
2. Puppets- a variety of people and animals
3. A large container to store materials
4. Reader's theater book collections
5. Workshop at Puppet Showplace Theater- making puppets
6. Time outside of school to prep the scripts and help make items the kids would use

### **Items needed:**

- Language Theater Books & Articulation Theater Books-Northern (NSS)- \$178.00 may currently be on sale right now for \$133.00
- Evan Moor Readers Theater, Grade 1- Amazon- \$17.94
- Melissa and Doug Barn Buddies Hand Puppets- Amazon- \$20.99
- Melissa and Doug Safari Buddies Hand Puppets- Amazon- \$26.59
- 8 Hand Puppets For Kids, Multicultural Puppets with Movable Mouth- Amazon- \$44.99
- Shappy 24 Piece Kids Hand Puppets Zoo Animals- Amazon \$35.99
- Learning Resources Farmer's Market Sorting Set- Amazon- \$21.24
- Melissa and Doug Food Groups Set- Amazon- \$15.77
- Labebe Wood Puppet Theater/Reversible Play Store (2 in 1)- \$190.78
- Popoly Large Toy Box With Lid- Amazon- \$19.99
- How To Make Puppets from Nothing: Workshop- Puppet Showplace Theater 11/21- \$80
- Stipend of \$45 per afternoon for 2 afternoons (\$90) in order to help prepare scripts/props

Total: 785.28 plus \$90 (for stipend time outside of work)- **New Total: \$875.28**