Day 81 · Meet my tiny character

Tiny goal: Make a tiny character with a job.

Flexible suggested 25-minute start: split, shorten, extend or stop for this group. No measured lesson duration or child outcome is supplied.

Welcome and set up · suggested 3 min

Place large plain paper, thick drawing tools and one teacher-made folded-paper puppet on an uncluttered table. Offer a ready plain shape, a familiar approved puppet or a character made with the child's usual communication. No cutting, sticks or bought kit is needed. Check materials and placement for this group.

Say: “Make a tiny character with a job. You can choose, ask for help or pass.”

Model or preserve the fresh attempt · suggested 4 min

Show your own folded-paper character: “This is Pip. Pip delivers pretend pancakes.” Move it to a pretend door and let it offer a pancake. “The paper is my puppet. Pip is the character. I am moving Pip.” Keep this one short action; do not supply the child's character.

Choose a way in · suggested 5 min

1. Folded visitor. Choose a large folded shape and give it a visiting job. Animate it arriving at your pretend door. The outcome is a character doing a small action, with the operator named.

2. Object becomes someone. With the owner's agreement, use a familiar approved large object as a pretend character. Choose what it wants to do and show one moment. The object's real function need not determine the invented job.

3. My character, your hands. Tell or show a willing helper which plain puppet to use and what your character does. Change one instruction if the result is different from your idea. Keep your direction separate from the helper's animation.

Make, try and respond · suggested 7 min

Let children invent a useful or wonderfully silly job, then try a moment in which their puppet does that job. Return the puppet to its owner between turns. Ask whether the action fits the job; the child can keep it or change it. Make a simple name/job tag only if useful.

Ask: “Who is yours? What can they do in our play?”

If the child needs a next move: If the child makes only a shape, welcome it and ask for one job, without offering a menu of assumed emotions. If the child assigns a job but a helper constructs the puppet, record the child's dramatic choice and the helper's construction separately. A mark or selection may establish an idea without being a performance.

Notice what happened · suggested 4 min

“What is one thing your character did?” Record the child's own answer and any actual attempt. A puppet left unanimated is a made object, not evidence of performed puppetry.

Keep and finish · suggested 2 min

Keep the puppet or the character idea somewhere the child chooses, ready for another scene.

Next teaching move: Next time give this character a place where something happens. If a child has not yet chosen a dramatic job, offer a fresh playful purpose before asking for a longer scene.

Teacher evidence note: Record actual actor/action/support, the child's own idea, any source units encountered and any actual willing maker/audience. Label plan, helper action, source reasoning, rehearsal and unavailable evidence. A paper plan is not performed puppetry. Direction is a child contribution; name the actual operator separately. Do not infer emotion or understanding from gaze, pose, silence or an intended effect.

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