Fun with Literacy

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Introduction

The stage is set. A student's eyes light up as she sees two 'characters' peek their heads through the curtain. Then, without missing a beat, one of the characters begins 'talking' to the other. "Hey, Freddy. Want to hear a story?" One of these characters has various colors of stripes going left to right across its body, with a green cotton ball on the top of its head for hair, and two little buttons (one purple, one blue) for eyes. As the character opens it's 'mouth,' the students notice a red button that seems to be the tongue of the character. The other 'character' looks different. It is all white except for the hair which seems to be a yellow koosh ball, with two little buttons (one green, one blue) for the eyes, and where the 'mouth' should be, an orange button.

The realm of reality seems to disappear from the classroom as the puppets tell their own stories of their journeys and adventures. The puppets talk about the dragons they have fought, the princesses they have saved, how the wolf tried to blow their house down, how kings and queens lived happily ever after, and how Little Red Riding Hood made it to grandmother's house safely.   The play ends, and suddenly, students are brought back in to the world of reality. They are excited, and want to create their own puppet that 'talks' and tells stories.

Within the classroom element, teachers are mandated to follow a specific pacing guide and schedule throughout their day. Although this idea may have its advantages (staying on task, engagement of students, and moving ahead within the curriculum), there are also disadvantages. Children in the current generation do not utilize their imagination as previous generations. The world of internet, texting, and video games has taken over. Students are not able to tell you what is happening within the state in which they live in, or their own city, but they can tell you the newest acronyms for talking on a cell phone, the hottest new video game, or where to find the most expensive sneakers.

Within this curriculum, I intend to bring out the child that we have within our classrooms.   A pacing guide and a schedule are good to have, but they are, after all just a guide.   I am going to show through my lessons how a teacher will be able to stay on schedule by pacing with their specific grade curriculum, and to have fun while doing so.

Teachers whom feel the need to be strict and never smile or have fun with their students need to get down on their children's level. Teachers need to learn to play with their children: dress up, wear funny glasses, wear strange looking shoes.   The more a teacher becomes a 'student' within their own class, the more fun he or she will have teaching.

The unit will be presented in 5 stages. Stage 1: The teacher will begin to read stories using a puppet. Stage 2: The teacher will begin discussing, modeling, and demonstrating the various elements of literature through various children's books. Stage 3. The teacher will explain the character roles and their importance within a play or story.   Stage 4. Puppets will be created for the play, bringing a sock to 'life' by adding buttons, colored cotton balls, and a mouth. Stage 5. The teacher begins explaining, modeling, and demonstrating how to have a performance based on the play or book that was read.

Background

I teach 2nd grade in a very diverse school; our students come mainly from Mexico; some are refugees from other countries. Our school is also a partial Magnet school with a Learning Immersion and TD scholars.   Students that choose to go to our school do not necessarily live in the nearby neighborhood.   Due to the lottery of the magnet program, students are often bussed in from further away. We also have a high population of English as a Second Language (ESL) with their native language being either Hmong or Spanish.

However, my specific classroom consists of ELL students, African American students, EC students, ADD students, ADHD students, and speech students.   For this reason, this curriculum unit will be focused on getting all students engaged and participating no matter their reading level or learning disabilities. Implementing Readers Theater and puppets into literacy will allow all students to have 'fun with literacy' and learn too.

Rationale

Being a 'child at heart,' when someone walks into my classroom they are greeted with an abundance of stuffed animals.   I have what you would call a 'kid friendly classroom.' I allow my students to work with the stuffed animals during class, sit with them during class discussions, and even take them home for sleepovers. How many educators would actually trust our new generation with personal items? Not many. However, I believe that all students need to feel comfortable in a classroom, and if that means holding onto a stuffed animal to gain the confidence to speak up in class, so be it.

Allowing children to play is important for several reasons. Play allows children to learn the skills necessary to effectively participate in their world, provides children with natural opportunities to engage in concrete and meaningful activities that enhance physical, language, social, and cognitive development, and it increases their knowledge and understanding of self, others, and the physical world around them.

Let's discuss physical development for a moment. Play allows them to investigate and manipulate the objects around them for a better confidence. Children that may come into the classroom with little or no confidence will begin to increase their confidence through the implementation of puppets. Puppets allow scholars to 'talk' and discuss topics that they may be too afraid to talk about. Students will respond to the puppets

because it's not them 'talking' but the puppet.

Language development through play will also be increased. They will begin to take the role of the puppet or character, thus falling into the world of fantasy. The more children play with stories, the more sophisticated their language will become. Vocabulary that may be at a minimum at the start of an academic year, will be ten times that by the end of the year.

Social development of 'play' allows for children to learn the importance of getting along with one another, and how to be friends. Children learn how to share, manners, how to be kind, how to express their feelings, and how to resolve conflicts safely.

Objectives to be used

Recently, common core standards have been passed and now all educators must work with these new standards instead of the old standards. The advantage of the common core is that the standards are simplified, more direct, and less wordy for both educators and students. The common core standards focus on preparing students for college and their readiness in reading. The common core focuses on the following aspects: key ideas & details, craft & structure, integrating knowledge & ideas, and leveled reading for all scholars so that they are able to participate within class discussions.

The disadvantage of the common core, at least when literacy is involved, is the vagueness. With the 'old' standards, there were specific objectives for the reading skills, and there were specific objectives for the reading strategies. However, the new standards do not 'tell' or even suggest which standard to utilize within your lesson.

Along with the new common core state standards (CCSS) to be implemented into lessons, educators also need to prepare students for their 21st century skills. 21st century skills for students and educators are focused on the following 5 topics: *Core Subjects, Learning Skills, 21st Century Tools, 21st Century Context, New Assessments that Measure 21st Century Skills.*

Core Subjects are identified by No Child Left Behind but challenge schools and policymakers to expand their focus beyond "basic competency" to understanding the core academic content at much higher levels. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

Learning Skills - "To cope with the demands of the 21st century," the report states, "students need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills-by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, and making decisions." (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

 21st Century Tools - Recognizing that "technology is, and will continue to be, a driving force in workplaces, communities, and personal lives in the 21st century," *Learning for the 21st Century* emphasizes the importance of incorporating information

and communication technologies into education from the elementary grades up. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

21st Century Context - Experiences that are relevant to students' lives, connected with the world beyond the classroom, and based on authentic projects are central to the sort of education the Partnership for 21st Century Skills defines as the appropriate context for learning in the information age. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

21st Century Content - The report's authors believe that certain content essential for preparing students to live and work in a 21st century world is missing from many state and local standards. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

New Assessments that Measure 21st Century Skills - "As pervasive as assessment seems to be today," the report says, "it remains an emerging and challenging field that demands further study and innovation." Recommendations include moving beyond standardized testing as the sole measure of student learning; balancing traditional tests with classroom assessments to measure the full range of students' skills; and using technology-based assessments to deliver immediate feedback. (www.21stcenturyskills.org)

This unit is intended for a 2nd grade class with a teacher that is not afraid to step 'outside of the box' with his / her students. This unit will work with immersion classes, talent development classes, class with a high population of ELL scholars or EC students, and with students that may have specific learning disabilities (OHI, speech, ADD, ADHD). With the implementation of puppets, read aloud theater, and performances, any child will be able and wanting to participate.

The materials for this unit are simple and easy to get a hold of. Each child will need a tube sock, two different size buttons, yarn, and colored cotton balls; all can be found at your local dollar store. To make the sock puppet, first have students to choose a 'puppet' hand. Have them to put the sock on, and with a marker, place a dot where the two eyes will go, where the 'hair' will go, and a dot for the tongue. If you are an educator that has high parent volunteers, ask them to sew two buttons onto the sock (where the child placed the two dots). If you do not have parents who can volunteer, and you do not want to take the time to sew on all the buttons, craft glue works just as well. Take time out of your busy schedule to have students either choose colored yarn or cotton balls to create the hair.

The length of this particular unit depends on 3 factors. 1) if the teacher is willing to step out of his/her box and allow the students to respond to stories through the utilization of sock puppets, 2) how often you implement your own puppet into your lessons, and 3) how well the students 'buy into' the idea of responding and playing to literature through puppets. As I have said several times before, this unit is meant for any classroom, and any type of student; both with and without learning disabilities.

Are you willing to step outside of your comfort zone?

Each educator has their own box that they feel comfortable in because it's safe. In this unit, educators need to come out of there safe box and try something new and different. Instead of being over your students, get down to their level, use your own imagination, and have fun with your students. We, as educators, get more and more mandates every year, take time out to become a child again, build a personal relationship with your students, act out plays, and just have fun. Are you sticking to the pacing guide? Yes. Are you still teaching the core standards? Yes. Are you presenting the material in a boring and routine way? No!

Are you willing to use a puppet?

The more you implement your own puppet that you created within your lessons, the more you students are going to buy into the whole idea. If you introduce the strategy of using puppets within the classroom, but only use yours once or twice, your students aren't going to want to use one themselves. The idea of using a sock puppet will become childish, boring, and may end up doing more harm than good within your class.

Do you want your students to build confidence?

As I have mentioned before, the utilization of puppets will help your quiet students to speak up within your class, and participate in class or group discussions. This will be a great vocabulary boost for your special education and ELL students.

So what do you do if you have a student that thinks sock puppets are for babies or they are too old to play with puppets? You will most likely get this reaction from the boys in your room, as they will relate sock puppets to dolls, and boys don't play with dolls; they are too rough and tough for that.   This is when you give your boys the option to make flannel board characters or stick characters.

With a flannel board character, you will need a few extra items (a little more costly but worth it.) You will need flannel of various colors and sizes, a piece of poster board to make the stage, and little people die cuts of various sizes. Allow the boys to create clothing for their characters, and glue them to the little people die cut.   Then have the boys to create the stage through using left over flannel board, or make it easy and buy green for grass, and blue for a sky, and if you choose, brown to create a tree. With the flannel board 'stage' and characters completed, have the boys to tell their own stories and journeys on the board.

With stick characters, again, you will need some extra materials (die cut little people, construction paper, and popsicle sticks). Allow the boys to create clothing for their characters in one of two ways, either color the clothing right on the little people die cuts, or have them to use construction paper. Crayons will be cleaner; however, construction paper will be more creative. Again, you may want to create the 'stage' on poster board; adding a sky, grass, and maybe a tree. With the stick characters and the 'stage' completed, have the boys to tell their own stories and journeys on the board.

Stage 1 - the teacher will begin to read stories using a puppet.

There is no better way to get students excited and engaged to want to learn than to 'act like a child' yourself.   Choose your favorite childhood book, practice reading the story with your own puppet that you have created, then have the puppet tell the story to the students without the book.   If you really want to 'play' with your students, change your voice to match the character in the book. For some, this idea may be to far out of your own comfort zone, however, your students will really enjoy this 'new' side of you.

Stage 2: Discussing, modeling, and demonstrating the various elements of literature through various children's books.

Working with puppets within class is one thing, however, on the End of Grade assessments; there will not be questions on how long it took to create a puppet or how much practice to make the puppet 'talk.'   Therefore, we as educators need to model through various works of children's literature the elements that make up a story. Elements may include: fairytales, folktales, characters, setting, plot, different points of view, conflict and resolution.

   Fairytales - stories that begin with once upon a time, long ago, or in a far away land. Fairy tales also have knights, a princess, knight, queen, a dragon, and a quest. They always end with 'happily ever after.'

   Folktales - stories that have been passed down and changed from generation to generation. Objects or things 'talk' that normally do not, and there is always a lesson or a moral to learn in the end.

   Characters - these are the people or things that 'act' or have a part within the story, fairytale, folktale, or play.

   Setting - where the story takes place. The setting could be outside, inside, in the mountains, or another country.

   Plot - what the story is about and how the characters will respond to the various events.

   Different points of view - is the story being told from 3rd person (they, them, often a name is used) or 1st person (I, we, us).

   Conflict and resolution - was there a problem in the story and if so, how did the character solve the problem?

Stage3: Explaining the character roles and their importance within a play, or story.

There are several character roles within a play: the narrator, the main character, secondary characters, and the minor role characters. The *narrator* is the one who gives the background of the play, and tells the audience what the characters are thinking. The characters are the people in the play who perform. Within the role of characters, there are three smaller roles: main characters, secondary and small role characters. *Main characters*, also known as the protagonist or hero, has the lead part. There may also be a villain, or bad guy, called the antagonist. *Secondary characters* are ones that are necessary to populate the story and make it believable. They play a supporting role rather than a central role in the story. *Minor role* characters are the ones that have maybe one or two lines, but wouldn't make a difference to the play if they were taken out of left in.

Stage 4 - Creating the puppets for the play, being able to bring a sock to "life" by adding buttons, colored cotton balls, and a mouth.

During the literacy block or workshop time, allow students to choose a tube sock to begin thinking about how they would like to create their puppet. Provide a wide variety of different color and size buttons, several different colors and textures of yarn, numerous cotton balls of color and size, markers, and most importantly, imagination. Students may choose either one or two buttons as eyes, and either yarn or cotton balls for hair. Students may choose to have their puppet represent one of the characters in the actual story or play they will be reading today, or may choose to make the puppet look like themselves. Either way, encourage your students to be expressive and not to rush through to complete their puppet.

Stage 5- Explaining, modeling, and demonstrating how to have a performance, based on the play or book that was read.

This is probably the most difficult and most important stage of the unit. Before you allow your students to start practicing reading and putting on plays with sock puppets, students must understand how to make their own hands talk. Have your students practice saying simple words, phrases, and sentences using only their hand, and trying to time their own hand movements with the words. This is not as easy as it sounds. From experience, one of three things normally occur: 1) students will begin talking, and forget to move their hands, 2) students begin talking, and their hands move too fast, or 3) students begin talking, and their hands have a delayed reaction. Take time to model how to use your hand to talk, and time words correctly. For example: if you want to demonstrate how to say apple, then say the first syllable (ap) and open your hand; then say the second syllable (ple) and close your hand.   With two syllable words, the puppets mouth will open on the first syllable and close on the second. With three syllable words, the puppets mouth will move much more: in the word *together,* the puppets mouth will open on the first (to), close on the second (get) and open on the last (her).

Strategies

How many times have you read the same literacy story?   The answer is every year unless

there was a new curriculum adoption or you changed grade levels. You read the story everyday during your literacy block, discuss it, and interact with the selection by answering questions or completing graphic organizers. How much fun is that really for you and your scholars?

Here are some classroom strategies to break up the monotony within your everyday lessons: *Puppets, Readers theater, Performances, Videos, Mark West to visit (he is a know puppeteer), How to put on a play.*

Puppets - there are a variety of puppets that can be used: hand, finger, popsicle, paper bag. Using puppets allow students to leave the realm of reality and dive head first into fantasy and imagination. As with any stage performer, the puppet should generally face the audience; but may turn to one side or the other. There are times when a puppet does turn its back to an audience just like an actor, however, remind your students that you want their puppets to 'talk' to their peers, and not turn away.

Readers Theater - this is great to assign specific roles for students, allows all students to participate, and to use the puppets that were created for the specific play. This is also a great strategy to implement for practice with fluency and expression when reading. Drama, as I am beginning to discover within my own classroom, is not only fun and natural for children, it also encourages emotional growth, motivation, and engagement. And one form of drama, known as Reader's Theater, has been found to be particularly effective in building fluency for strugglers. Reader's theater is also a great way to discuss problems or concerns within your classroom. One of the hottest topics to use reader's theater with is bullying. More often than not, your students will, as mine do, respond to a character talking to them about the importance of why bullying is bad, rather than an educator or guidance counselor.

Performances - creating a stage within a classroom can be as easy as putting two desks together with a sheet over so you cannot see the 'actors' behind with their puppets and script.   If you want a more 'realistic' stage, use a chart stand with a sheet and separate the middle to make curtains.

Videos - www.discoveryeducation.com   is a great site to show what plays look like when they are performed. There are short and long plays on this site, along with the realization that boys / men sometimes had to play the role of a girl / woman because females were not aloud to partake in plays.

Mark West to visit (he is a known puppeteer) - To get students really excited about using puppets within the classroom, I would ask Mark to come and put on a small performance for your students. However, as Mark teaches classes at UNCC, you will need to email him and ask when and if he is available to come into your class.

How to put on a play - This would be something that you, as the teacher, would need to do for your scholars. You would need to explain, model, and demonstrate how to make the puppets 'come alive' through timing the mouth movements of the puppet with

the words in the story. Timing mouth movements on a sock puppet to the words in a story will take some practice.

Classroom Activities

The more classroom activities you have hiding up your sleeve, the more your students will respond not only to you as a teacher, but to the story in which you are reading. Every educator knows that school is supposed to be about learning and gaining the knowledge you will need for the future, but that can be done with implementing 'fun' things as well. These activities can be substituted for a literacy block or placed within your independent work time (workshop) block.

Here are some activities that I have implemented within my classroom and my students love to do: *puppets, Readers Theater, and game show*.

> * the use of puppets (finger puppets, stick puppets)
> * Readers Theater (turn the story you are reading into a small play or skit with parts for your students.   You wouldn't believe how well they remember the story on test day)
> * Game show (my students love this. Turn your room into a game show. You are the host, and your students become the people in the audience talking and debating about the selection you have read)

Classroom activity 1 - Inventing the Puppet

Obj: RF2.3(apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
      RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: create puppets to create a character in a story.

Materials needed: paper bag / tube sock (one for each student), buttons, yarn, colored cotton balls, glue / crayons

Explanation of activity:

During the literacy block or workshop time, allow students to choose either the paper bag or a tube sock to begin thinking about how they would like to create their puppet. Students may also choose either one or two buttons as eyes, and either yarn or cotton balls for hair.

     Students who choose the paper bag as their puppet already have a 'mouth' to work with, however, those scholars that choose the tube sock with need to be inventive to form a mouth.

     Students may choose to have their puppet represent one of the characters in the actual story or play they will be reading today, or may choose to make the puppet look

like themselves. Either way, encourage your scholars to be expressive with their puppets and not to rush through to complete their puppet.

Depending on the 'make up' of your classroom, you may have early finishers that are ready to begin reading a story or play, and begin working with the character's mouth to mimic the words that are being read. Early finishers should have several Readers' Theater plays to choose from to not only practice work with their newly made puppet, but to practice their fluency as well.

Classroom activity 2 - Inventing the flannel board puppets

Obj: RF2.3(apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
        RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: create flannel board puppets for a character in a story.

Materials needed: flannel of various colors and sizes, craft glue, die cut little people, scissors

Explanation of activity:

Have your students to choose a little people die cut, and a piece of flannel for the clothing. Have the student to create the clothing for their flannel person. You may want to cut the clothes for them, or have pants and shirts already drawn out on the flannel pieces. This will save time and wasting flannel due to mistakes. Once the students have their clothing for their flannel person, have them to glue the clothing onto their little die cut person and let it dry.

Students may choose to have their flannel puppet/character to represent one of the characters in the actual story or play they will be reading that day, or may choose to make the puppet look like themselves. Either way, encourage your scholars to be expressive with their puppets and not to rush to finish.

Depending on the 'make up' of your classroom, you may have early finishers that are ready to begin reading a story or play, and begin working with the character's mouth to mimic the words that are being read. Early finishers should have several reader's theater plays to choose from to not only practice work with their newly made puppet, but to practice their fluency as well.

Classroom activity 3 - inventing the stick puppets

Obj: RF2.3(apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
        RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: create stick puppets to represent a character in a story.

Materials needed: Popsicle sticks, die cut little people, glue, crayons, construction paper of various sizes, scissors

Explanation of activity:

Have your students choose a little people die cut, and either crayons or construction paper to create the clothing. If your students choose crayons, then have them to simply color the clothing onto their little die cut person. If your students choose construction paper, again, you may want to save time and frustration by already have clothing drawn out for them. Students that choose the construction paper, have them cut out the clothing and glue onto the little person. Then have your students to get one popsicle stick and glue the stick to the back of the little person die cut.

Students may choose to have their stick puppet o represent one of the characters in the actual story or play they will be reading that day, or may choose to make the puppet look like themselves. Either way, encourage your scholars to be expressive with their puppets and not to rush to finish.

Depending on the 'make up' of your classroom, you may have early finishers that are ready to begin reading a story or play, and begin working with the character's mouth to mimic the words that are being read. Early finishers should have several readers' theater plays to choose from to not only practice work with their newly made puppet, but to practice their fluency as well.

Classroom Activity 4 - foundation for Performing a reader's theater play

Obj: RF2.3 (apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
       RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: see how a 'stage' for a reader's theater is created, and how an actual play is performed.

Materials: puppets, reader's theater play, a stage (desks/ chart stand), blanket

Explanation of activity:

You would need to explain, model, and demonstrate how to make the puppets 'come alive' through timing the mouth movements of the puppet with the words in the story. Timing mouth movements on a sock puppet to the words in a story will take some practice.

Creating a stage within a classroom can be as easy as putting two desks together with a sheet over so you cannot see the 'actors' behind with their puppets and script. If you want a more 'realistic' stage, use a chart stand with a sheet and separate the middle to make curtains.

After you have performed for your students, set up several desks without the blankets, and allow them to practice their reader's theater play in preparation for performing for their classmates. Remind students that timing the puppets mouth movement with the actual words on paper will take some time.

Classroom Activity 5 - Reader's Theater in Five Easy Steps
http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/popups/rt_5steps.htm

Obj: RF2.3 (apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
    RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: learn and model the strategies for putting on reader's theater

Materials: puppets, stick characters, or flannel board characters, reader's theater play, a stage (desks/ chart stand), blanket

Explanation of activity:

In this activity, teachers and students will go through each step of the process listed below and begin to gain an understanding of how reader's theater actually works.

Choose a script. Choose a prepared script, or have kids choose a book from which to develop a script.   To begin, make a list of all the nursery rhymes, folk tales, and fairy tales the students know on the board. After you have created your list, have your students practice reading in small groups until they know all the words. Once you feel your students are ready, have them to choose a group (or you may want to do this for them) and practice reading the script again.

Adapt the script. If adapting, kids identify speaking parts (including narrators) and break down the story into dialogue. Adaptation of the scripts will need to be done for your 'high flyers' and your EC/ELL students. Your high flyers may need a script that has a more difficult vocabulary.   Your EC/ELL students will most likely need an easier script so they do not become frustrated.

Assign Parts. Kids might try out different parts to get a feel for them, and then choose their roles themselves.   No matter the reading or academic ability, each one of your students should be given a part within the script. The part may be as small as the narrator, or as large as the main character. Your goal is to make all your students enjoy working with their characters, want to perform for their classmates, but most importantly, participate and strengthen their reading ability.

Highlight parts and rehearse. Kids highlight their dialogue, then practice their lines at home and in groups during school.   Depending on the grade level you choose to use this unit with will depend on whether or not your students do their own highlighting of their parts, or if you do.   In my observations, younger students think that highlighters are markers, and have a tendency to color, instead of

simply going over the words. For the first few times, you may want to go ahead and complete the highlighting for your students; this will save time, mistakes, and frustration.

Perform. The cast reads the play aloud for an audience, often made up of parents or younger students. First practice putting on the skit for the rest of the class. Once your students become comfortable with this, have them perform for another class. Gradually make the audience larger until you and your students feel they are ready to perform for parents, guardians, and administration.

Classroom activity 6 -   The exciting world of readers' theater

Obj: RF2.3(apply phonics and word analysis skills to decode words)
        RF2.4b (read on level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression)

TSWBAT: practice, read, and perform their reader's theater skit with confidence.

Materials needed: sock puppets, flannel puppets, stick puppets, stage , and scripts

Explanation of activity:

This activity is a great way to assign specific roles for students, allowing all students to participate, and to use the puppets that were created for the specific play. This is also a great strategy to implement practice with fluency and expression when reading.

Students should be divided into reader's theater groups based on their reading level, how well they cooperate with classmates, and reading readiness. Do not assign students that have trouble with simple site words one of the most difficult plays; this will only frustrate the students. There are several readers' theater plays that are leveled for students:

Lower scholars (EC/ELL):   (Book: <u>25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers</u>) Those that have trouble with site words should be given the easiest readers theater (a story they may already know even).   In some cases, with the lower students, it may be easier to ask them to re-tell the story of: The Three Little Pigs, or Red Riding Hood. Allow these students to become confident with a play they already know and have experience with, and then have them work up to actually 'reading' a script or play.

The book <u>25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers</u>   would be a great resource to utilize, as it reinforces your scholars on: short and long vowel sounds, consonant blends, and consonant digraphs.   It is fairly inexpensive, and adds pictures to go along with the play. Again, implementing this particular set of reader's theater will allow your lower students to build the confidence and skills they need to read more difficult and lengthier texts.

Medium-High Scholars: These students have the ability to apply phonics and word

analysis skills to decode words within given texts. As an educator, only you will be able to recognize if your students should begin with the book 25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers or if you would be able to simply go to the internet and pull of reader's theater plays. All students, no matter their ability, can use reader's theater to reinforce fluency practice.

www.teachingheart.net is just one of the many websites for readers theater. These plays are easily accessible, printable, and free! Some plays on this website are longer than others; remember, you will need a copy for each student within the group. Not only does this site give you a wide selection of plays, but resources for you to use within the classroom.

High Flying Scholars - with your 'high flyers' you have a little more 'play' when it comes to reader's theater. Although it would take some time on the teacher's part, the reading curriculum implemented within the classroom could be used as a reader's theater. Teachers would turn in the weekly selection into a play, and have students read that. However, if the selection, words, and vocabulary are too easy, check out the material in third grade.

Third grade teachers have an abundance of resources to use. Just because a teacher has 'high flyers' within a classroom doesn't mean they shouldn't be pushed outside of their comfort level. It will be the responsibility of the educator to find reader's theater material that will 'fit.'

Classroom activity 7   -   Game show (the puppets become the audience)

Obj: SL2.1b (build on others talk and conversation)
         SL2.1 (participate in conversations about grade 2 topics / text with peers and adults)
         SL2   (recount key ideas and details from various forms of text orally)

TSWBAT: have a discussion in the form of a game show to discuss the topic / selection for the week through the implementation of puppets.

Materials needed: pre-made questions about a current reading selection, funny glasses (teacher), puppets the scholars have invented / created

Explanation of activity:

You are the host, and your students become the people in the audience talking and debating about the selection you have read for the week. As educators, we know that some students will not have the confidence needed to participate in this; however, this is where the puppets that students made have made come into play.

Through the utilization of the puppets, students will not be afraid to ask / answer

questions. In my last ten years of teaching, I have noticed that students that are EC / ELL lack the confidence to participate in class discussions. However, by implementing the puppets, it's not the students answering or asking questions, but the puppets 'answering' and 'asking.'

Teacher Resources:

Literature:
1) Catron, C.E. & Parks, B.C.   (1983). *Storytelling Strategies: creative ideas using finger plays, flannel board stories, pocket stories, and puppets with young children.*

2)   Chanko, Pamela. (2009). *25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers.*
Use this resource for all students. Short vowels, long vowels, and fun pictures.

2) Corwell,Cressida. *That Rabbit Belongs to Emily Brown.* (2007)
A book to read to students if they choose to create a puppet that looks like a bunny.

3) Egan, Kieran. *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching*.   (2005)
This resource is good for teachers looking to step outside of their comfort zone and have fun within the classroom.

4) Egan, Kieran. *Teaching and Learning outside the box: inspiring imagination across the curriculum.* (2007)
This resource is good for teachers looking to step outside of their comfort zone and have fun within the classroom.

5) Foley, Diane. *My big box*. (2003)
This resource is good for teachers looking to step outside of their comfort zone and have fun within the classroom.

6) Goldman, Laurence. *Child's Play: Myth, Mimesis, and Make Believe.*
This resource is good for teachers looking to step outside of their comfort zone and have fun within the classroom.

7) Joose, Barbara.   *Sleepover at Grandma's House*.   (2010)
This resource is good for teachers looking to step outside of their comfort zone and have fun within the classroom.

8) Mikkelsen, Nina.   *Powerful Magic: learning from children's response to fantasy literature*.   (2005)
This resource is good to get a child's point of view of play and how their imagination works.

9) Rim, Siyian. *Birdie's Big Girl Shoes*.   (2009)

     Every little girl likes to play dress up. Good resource for imagination.

Websites:

10) www.21stcenturyskills.org

     Good for adding global skills into the classroom.

11) www.discoveryeducation.com

     Great website to show short videos on plays and puppets

12) www.teachingheart.net

     Great resource for reader's theater

13) http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/popups/rt_5steps.htm

     Great place to order reader's theater material, or items to create puppets

14) http://www.readwritethink.org

     Great site to get reader's theater ideas from

15) http://www.timelessteacherstuff.com

     Great place for reader's theater, puppet ideas, and much more.

16) http://www.playbooks.com/schools

     Great place to order reader's theater material, or items to create puppets