



Persona Dolls / *Muñecos que representan personajes*

Summary

Persona dolls are realistic-looking dolls introduced to the class as though they are a ‘real’ child. The doll becomes a member of the group. The doll is not a plaything, but is brought to the class circle, or small group, by the teacher to share stories about its life, family experiences, special interests, or perhaps to ask the class for advice about how to handle the social bumps and conflicts young children face. The Persona doll is used in interactive storytelling sessions to create a community of young children who are empathetic towards others, feel safe in sharing their own lives and feelings, and gain deeper understandings of the world. They involve children in practicing pro-social skills, problem-solving, cooperating, dealing with emotions, and expressing their feelings and concerns. The dolls can also humanize differences, and gently correct incorrect beliefs or stereotypes children may have picked up.

Persona dolls can be used to:

- build a sense of community in the classroom
- develop effective empathy for others, across differences
- create safe spaces for exploring differences
- support children as they practice skills of standing up to teasing, bullying and bias – on their own behalf and on behalf of others
- make space for children to deal with the effects of trauma, separation and loss when those occur in their lives
- reduce classroom conflict

Implementation

1. Choose a doll and create the doll’s “persona”, their story. You want a doll that mirrors some experiences/identities of children in the program who are likely to NOT see themselves represented often in books and in the majority. And, you want to create a “story” for that doll that both gives the children in the class some sense of commonality, and some sense of difference. In creating the “persona”, its identity and personality, you are defining the doll’s characteristics, its ethnic/cultural background, family (who it lives with), living situation, favorite things, etc.
2. Introduce the doll to the class, with basic aspects of the doll’s persona and a situation (a “story”) that is the basis for the conversation with the class. Explain that this is the doll’s first day and ask the children to help make their new friend feel welcome. The doll sits on the teacher’s lap, the teacher listens to the doll and tells the children what the doll has said.
3. For the second “story”, tell the children a bit more about the doll, and have it share an exciting experience or special object that relates to the thematic unit.
4. Continue sharing the doll’s “stories” or experiences with the class that are similar to the experiences that many children have had (e.g., new sibling, moving, being excluded from a game, fight with a friend,). Ask the class if this has ever happened to them. Invite them to share their stories and how THEY felt.

You can also have the doll present a “problem” for which the doll would love some advice, empathy and help from the class. Be sure to introduce the emotional vocabulary you want children to learn to use (e.g., disappointment, frustration, loneliness, fear, anticipation). This is a deeper story that deals with or introduces some aspect of bias or need for empathy and learning about someone different from themselves. Invite the class to ask questions.

Tips

- Bring the doll out regularly. Remember, you are building a relationship between the children and the doll.
- Handle the doll lovingly and respectfully.
- The doll is not a puppet, don't try to make it look like they are talking – you are telling their story. The idea is to make the doll seem real and alive to the children.
- Have a variety of stories. Do not use the doll solely for behavior management issues.
- Have a special place where the dolls live.

Notes on Strategy

Worksheet for Planning a Persona Doll Identity

Doll's Name	
Culture/ethnicity/ Nationality	
Language	
Family <i>(who they live with, their family situation, family members)</i>	
Housing situation	
Religion	
Favorite activities	
Favorite Toys	
Key personality traits and other significant details	

Worksheet for Planning a Persona Doll “Story” Conversation

Doll’s Name	
Purpose for Conversation	
Set up (intro)	
Identify the Feelings (list any key vocabulary you want to introduce)	
Discussion/Problem-Solving (list questions you can ask to help children think about the issue)	
Closing/Resolution (Use children’s ideas, but also list things you would like to include)	

After conversation notes *(children’s reactions, things to follow up, new details about the doll’s life/experiences that you made up on the spot and don’t want to forget for next time)*

Persona Doll English Letter to Families

Dear families,

We have a new learning tool in our classroom. It's called a persona doll. Ours is named _____. Persona dolls are a great tool for helping children develop their social skills—how to get along with each other, work out conflicts, and make new friends. They can also help us learn to be comfortable with all kinds of difference. If the children are coping with something difficult or a stressful life transition, we might say that _____ is coping with something similar and would like help from our class, so that students have a chance to give advice or help out without singling anyone out.

To do this, we'll be treating the doll as though she (he) is a real child who wants to get to know your children and is eager to get their advice about all kinds of age-appropriate problems, from what to do instead of hitting to how to handle it if they see someone else being left out. The doll will also tell the children about her (his) family and culture and invite your children to share about their own lives. In this way, we can explore the diversity of the world around us in a way your children can easily identify with and understand.

The doll we are introducing is _____. We've told the children a few things about her (him), including:

Insert a paragraph describing your doll. For example: "The doll we are introducing right now is Sylvia. We will tell the children many things about Sylvia, including that she lives with her parents, her sister and brothers, and her grandma and grandpa, that she is a little shy, speaks Spanish and English, loves to build with blocks, and that she is really doesn't like having to say goodbye to her mother in the morning. We expect that very soon, Sylvia will want to ask your children what she should do if someone takes a toy she is playing with. Is there something she could do besides hitting them?"

We expect that your children will be excited about the doll and quite willing to regard it as a new friend. Don't be surprised if they want to introduce you to their new friend or ask your advice about how to help the doll with a particularly difficult question.

As we learn about our new doll, we may come to you for suggestions or topics for our doll's stories that will be meaningful and helpful to your child.

Feel free to ask us about _____. We're excited about this new project and eager to share it with all of you.

Sincerely,

Persona Doll Spanish Letter to Families

Estimadas familias,

Tenemos una herramienta educativa nueva en nuestra clase. Se llama “el/la muñeco/a – personaje.” Él/Ella se llama _____. Los muñecos – personajes ayudan a los estudiantes a desarrollar sus habilidades sociales: como llevarse bien con los demás, resolver conflictos, y hacer amistades. También nos ayudan a sentirnos cómodos con las diferencias que tienen las personas. Si los niños están enfrentando una situación difícil o una transición tensa en su vida, podríamos contar a los estudiantes que _____ está enfrentando algo similar y que quisiera la ayuda de la clase. De esta manera los estudiantes tienen la oportunidad de dar consejos o ayudar sin enfocar atención solo en un individuo.

Para poder hacer esto, estaremos tratando al muñeco o a la muñeca como si fuera un niño o una niña de verdad que quiere conocer a los hijos de ustedes y que tiene ganas de escuchar sus consejos sobre diferentes problemas apropiados para su edad. Esto puede incluir temas como: que hacer en vez de pegarle a otro, o cómo manejar una situación cuando un estudiante está siendo excluido. El/La muñeco/a también compartirá con los estudiantes acerca de su propia familia y cultura, e invitara’ a sus hijos a compartir acerca de sus vidas. Así podemos explorar la diversidad del mundo a nuestro alrededor en una manera que permita a sus hijos identificarse fácilmente con esa diversidad y comprenderla.

El/La muñeco/a que estamos presentando a la clase es _____. Hemos dicho a los niños algunas cosas sobre él/ella, como:

Incluye aquí un párrafo que describe el/la muñeco/a. Por ejemplo: “El/La muñeco/a que estamos introduciendo en este momento es Sylvia. Les decimos a los estudiantes muchas cosas sobre Sylvia: que vive con sus padres, su hermana, y sus hermanos y con su abuelita y su abuelito; que es un poco tímida; que habla inglés y español; que le encanta construir con bloques, y que no le gusta tener que despedirse de su mamá por la mañana. Creemos que muy pronto Sylvia va a querer preguntar a los hijos de ustedes que debe hacer si alguien le quita un juguete cuando ella está jugando. ¿Hay algo que ella pudiera hacer en vez de pegarle?”

Creemos que sus hijos van a estar muy animados con el/la muñeco/a y dispuestos a reconocerlo/la como un/a amigo/a nuevo/a, No se deben de sorprender ustedes si sus hijos quieren presentar su “amigo/a nuevo/a” a ustedes o si les preguntan sobre cómo pueden ellos ayudar al muñeco o a la muñeca con un problema particularmente difícil.

Mientras estamos aprendiendo sobre nuestro/a muñeco/a, posiblemente les pediremos a ustedes, las familias, unas sugerencias o temas para las historias de nuestro/a muñeco/a que tendrían significado para su hijo o su hija o que le servirían de ayuda para él o ella.

Siéntanse ustedes libres de preguntar acerca de _____. Estamos muy entusiasmados con este proyecto nuevo y tenemos muchas ganas de compartirlo con todos ustedes.

Sinceramente,

Persona Doll Vietnamese Letter to Families

Kính thưa các gia đình,

Chúng tôi có một công cụ học tập mới trong lớp được gọi là persona doll, tạm dịch là búp bê có tính cách. Búp bê của chúng tôi được gọi là búp bê _____. Búp bê tính cách là một công cụ tuyệt vời giúp trẻ phát triển các kỹ năng xã giao – làm thế nào để hòa đồng với nhau, giải quyết các xung đột, và làm bạn mới. Chúng cũng có thể giúp chúng ta học cảm thấy thoải mái với tất cả sự khác biệt. Nếu trẻ em đang đối đầu với điều gì khó khăn hoặc một sự chuyển tiếp căng thẳng trong cuộc sống, chúng tôi có thể nói búp bê _____ đang đối đầu với điều tương tự và muốn được lớp giúp đỡ để các học sinh có cơ hội tư vấn hoặc giúp đỡ mà không làm học sinh cảm thấy bị cô lập.

Để làm điều này, chúng tôi sẽ xem búp bê như một đứa trẻ thật sự muốn làm quen với con quý vị và hãy hỏi muốn biết các lời khuyên về các vấn đề phù hợp lứa tuổi, từ những gì phải làm thay vì đánh nhau đến cách quản lý tình huống khi các em thấy ai bị bỏ quên. Búp bê cũng sẽ nói cho trẻ biết về gia đình và văn hóa của búp bê và mời con quý vị chia sẻ về cuộc sống của chính các em. Nhờ cách này, chúng ta có thể thăm dò sự đa dạng của thế giới xung quanh mà con quý vị thấy quen thuộc và có thể hiểu được.

Búp bê chúng tôi muốn giới thiệu là _____. Chúng tôi đã nói với các em một vài điều về búp bê, bao gồm:

Insert a paragraph describing your doll

Chúng tôi mong rằng con quý vị sẽ cảm thấy hứng khởi về búp bê và chịu xem búp bê như là một người bạn mới. Xin đừng ngạc nhiên nếu các em muốn giới thiệu người bạn mới với quý vị và xin lời khuyên của quý vị về cách giúp cho búp bê với một câu hỏi thật khó.

Trong lúc chúng tôi học biết về búp bê mới, chúng tôi có thể nhờ quý vị góp ý hoặc cung cấp các đề tài cho các câu chuyện của búp bê mà sẽ có đầy ý nghĩa và hữu ích cho con quý vị.

Xin đừng ngại hỏi chúng tôi về _____. Chúng tôi rất hứng khởi về dự án mới này và háo hức để chia sẻ điều này với tất cả quý vị.

Trân trọng,