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From: Carol Sterling
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Re: Promoting Yourself as an Educational Puppeteer or Performer
Original Presentation was at the National Puppetry Festival, University of Connecticut,
August 10, 2014 as part of the Professional Day for Teaching Artists & Therapists
(PDTAT) WORKSHOP HANDOUT

**Promoting Yourself as an Educational
Puppeteer or Performer: One-Minute
Self-Promotion Pitches to Principals
and Potential Employers
Carol Sterling**

Rationale: Successful teaching artists who use puppetry in their work in schools and in therapeutic settings build their visibility and credibility with their target markets by being able to articulate persuasively how their work helps meet educational and/or therapeutic goals. Educational puppeteers and therapists who use puppetry and performers who articulate their work with compelling language that reinforces their professional strengths to potential employers can help to “sell” themselves and their services. It is essential to be clear, concise and enthusiastic in how you explain the effectiveness of your work in schools and therapeutic settings. Additionally, many teaching artists and performers have websites that provide an excellent opportunity for them to summarize their goals and if possible, also include a video of themselves talking directly to their target audience of future employers, whether it be the Principal, PTA officer and/or parent or a staff member of a therapeutic agency or beyond.

So, think of this self-promotional approach as your calling card. First, “what do you love **doing** as a teaching artist in schools or in therapeutic settings or as a performer? “

And then, the second question is, “ What aspects of your work as a teaching artist in schools or in therapeutic settings or as a performer are you **great** at doing? “

Both questions will lead to your calling card. Successful teaching artists and performers use their calling cards to describe what they do with great enthusiasm. The answers to these questions will help you identify the key talking pointing you will make when you want to pitch yourself to a future employer. Often we are caught off guard when there is an opportunity to make the pitch. Sometimes we are in an elevator with a potential employer and may only have one minute to explain what we do while heading to our respective destinations. Or, sometimes we are introduced to a potential employer at a professional conference and are asked, “So,

what is it that you do in schools?” Or you may have a website that is the perfect spot for you to include a one-minute video pitching yourself and your services.

The goal of this workshop is to help you prepare for professional and networking opportunities that present themselves (or that you initiate) to answer that question with persuasive and compelling language and, most important of all, enthusiasm. The result will hopefully help to build and expand your work as a teaching artist and performer. And, in so doing, it will strengthen your confidence the next time someone says, “ So, what is it that you do with puppetry and young people? “ And after your pitch, hand him/her your real calling card with your contact information. Good luck!

LET’S GET STARTED

Step 1-

Decide what your one-minute pitch will be:

Option A: Develop a one-minute “elevator” pitch, or

Option B: Develop a one-minute direct talk to a simulated (or real) video camera summarizing why a school or agency should hire you.

Step 2- Turn to a partner. (60 seconds for each person.) **Total: Two minutes.**

Introduce yourself and tell him/her what kind of work you do as a teaching artist in schools or in therapeutic settings and/or as a performer and which one-minute pitch you will develop.

Step 3

Option A- Prepare a One Minute Elevator Pitch (5 minutes)

Write down answers to the following questions for a **one minute-elevator pitch** (60 seconds) with a potential employer.

If you are a teaching artist who works in schools and/or in therapeutic settings or you are a performer who does puppet shows for school assemblies, respond to these questions:

- 1) What do you *love doing* in schools?
- 2) What aspects of your work are you *great* at doing?
- 3) How does your work help *meet the Common Core Curriculum Standards* or **Learning Differences** in young people? Give an example.

OR

Option B- Prepare a One-Minute Direct Talk to Simulated Camera (Same 5 minutes)

Write down answers to the questions noted below which would summarize why the school or agency should hire you. (Note: The statement can also be posted on a website or can serve as an opening presentation at a professional conference, school meeting, PTA event where you are introducing yourself.)

- 1) **Introduce** yourself and what you do.

- 2) What are your **goals** when you work in schools?
- 3) How do you align your puppetry activities with the **Common Core Curriculum Standards** and/or meet the needs of young people with **learning differences**? Give example.
- 4) Upbeat sign off and **how to contact** you.

Step 4- Share the pitch with each other. One person shares his/her one-minute pitch with his/her partner. Other person takes notes, if desired. (One minute.) When finished, other person shares his/her one-minute pitch. (One minute).
(Total: Three minutes)

Step 5- Critique the pitch. (Total: Two minutes for each).

Criteria for a pitch: Did the pitch articulate persuasively how his/her work helps to meet educational and/or therapeutic goals, and/or reaches young people with learning differences?

- 1) What did you **like** about the one-minute elevator pitch or direct talk to the camera?
- 2) If the teaching artist could do it **over again**, what do you recommend that would make the pitch even **stronger**?

Step 6- If time permits, request volunteers to share their pitch with the entire group to be followed by critique.

Q & A

Bibliography:

Bernier, Matthew and Judith O'Hare. **Puppetry in Education and Therapy: Unlocking Doors to the Mind and Heart.** Indiana: Authorhouse, 2005.

Addendum:

- A. If you had more time for your pitch, think about preparing concise responses to the following question:
 - 1) How does your work help the school and classroom teacher prepare students to meet the Common Core Standards in Language Arts/Social Studies/Science/Health, etc.?
 - a. Tip: Google website for state and/or county or local school and click on **Curriculum Standards for Grades K-12**. Become familiar with the grades you want to work with. As an example, I selected Grade 3 Standards for **Language Arts**, which emphasizes the importance of reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking. I focused on this grade level because puppetry is a popular strategy in the early grades. I selected the **speaking** standards and noted that Standard 1 states: **Students will read, write, listen and speak for information and understanding.** And under this standard it provided a

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- b. **grade-specific performance** indicator that included: ***Describe a problem and suggest one or more solutions.*** I developed a puppetry skit that addresses the performance indicator. I divided the class into pairs and gave each pair a card which said, ***“Create a one minute skit where one puppet tries to be helpful to the other puppet in one of the following areas: traffic safety, getting to sleep, good manners, good study habits, dental care, eating healthy food, etc.”*** (Each pair had a different area to be helpful.) **This activity provided the evidence that students are describing a problem and suggesting one or more solutions.**
- c. To build on this idea, think about developing specific lesson plans that demonstrate how the puppetry activities you do with students will address specific **standards, performance indicators** for **grades you want to teach as well as the concepts to be taught** that will bring the curriculum alive. Share these **sample lesson plans** when you meet with school staff and/or include on your website. Include puppetry activities that demonstrate that you are building strong content knowledge for each subject.
E.g., English/Language Arts
- d. Example #1-Share a sample lesson plan on how students can strengthen communication skills. I.e., **develop a 3-minute puppet skit emphasizing the key ideas in story creation with beginning, middle and end. Demonstrate how these activities foster oral expression, writing and thinking skills.**
Example #2-Share a sample lesson plan on how your work encourages close reading to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. **Demonstrate how your students create puppet skits that cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text.**
E.g., Social Studies
Example #1-(Older grades) Share a sample lesson plan in American History. **Demonstrate how your students create puppet skits that use evidence and cite specific examples of deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic.**
Example #2- Share a sample lesson plan on how students strengthen their understanding of other perspectives and cultures. **Demonstrate how your students create puppet skits that are based on texts recommended by the school and/or classroom teacher.**

- 2) How do your “hands-on” workshops encourage imaginative artistic solutions while strengthening student creativity and self-expression?
- 3) How does your work generate motivation and excitement in the curriculum?
- 4) How does your work strengthen student skills in working independently and in small groups?

- 5) How does your work strengthen students' communication skills in reading, writing, listening, sequencing, observing, comprehending and interpreting text?
- 6) How does your work incorporate music and movement?
- 7) How does your work encourage inquiry-based learning?
- 8) How does your work help students learn how to constructively critique each other's puppet skits?
- 9) How does your work strengthen rapport with the classroom teacher? With the school principal? With the PTA? With other colleagues in the school? With colleagues at the agency?
- 10) How does your work strengthen student workforce and college preparation skills, e.g., creative and critical thinkers, problem solvers, ability to analyze, information, use of technology, productive habits of mind, i.e., focus attention on task, perseverance, ability to meet deadlines, etc.
- 11) How does your work strengthen social, emotional and physical development and different approaches to learning?
- 12) If you do puppet shows in school assemblies, how do they address curriculum needs of the school, especially in Language Arts/ Social Studies/Math/Science/Healthy Habits, etc.?
- 13) If you provide curriculum guides for your puppet shows, are they aligned with the Common Core Standards? If so, how?
- 14) Think about one human-interest story that reflects the impact of your work in schools. Reflect on other human-interest stories you can share when you meet with people who are in a position to hire you and/or recommend your services. Think of specific examples on the impact of your work on student skills in English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, Nutrition, Health Habits, Teamwork, Social and/or Emotional Development of young people as well as working with special needs students, etc.
- 15) What evidence of evaluation and/or assessment of your work can you share? Any anecdotal comments and/or letters from Principals, Classroom Teachers, Children, PTA, etc.?
- 16) In cooperation with the classroom teacher develop a test that reflects how your students mastered specific content based on your work. Also, develop an attitudinal questionnaire that demonstrates how students liked your workshops and/or puppet show. Use the results as evidence of your effectiveness in strengthening student knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- 17) In cooperation with the school staff, organize a public event where all members of the school community will be involved in seeing you and the great work you are doing on behalf of the educational puppetry community wherever you live! Continued success.

Think of an example of how the educational puppetry program you teach:

- Develops creativity
- Helps the Child Express His Feelings
- Helps the Child With a Reading Problem
- Helps the Child with a Speech Problem

Helps the Child Develop Better Listening Habits
Helps the Child Develop Cooperative Behavior

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Carol Sterling is an educational puppeteer who has had the honor of serving in former positions as President of *UNIMA-USA*, Educational Puppetry Consultant for Puppeteers of America, and as a member of the Advisory Board for *The Puppetry Journal*. She is the recipient of the 2013 Puppeteers of America Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin Award for Contributions in the Field of Education. She is a former Board Member of the Jim Henson Foundation and the Puppetry Guild of Greater New York and she is currently serving on the UNIMA-USA Committee for Scholarships. She has completed two Fulbright Specialist Programs as an educational puppeteer in Uganda (2012) and India (2015). Carol has also conducted workshops throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, China, Germany, Israel, Japan, Spain and United Kingdom. Carol has championed the importance of educational puppetry on local, state, regional, national and international levels.