**Props and Enactment**

LINDA HAYGOOD: Hi. I'm Linda Haygood, and I wanted to talk a little bit about a topic that some of you have asked about when you're starting to do this playing with words intervention, and that is props and enactment. These play-based elements are really important for developing concepts, for building more flexible thinking, and for encouraging engagement, both with each other and with the story itself.

I used to think that objects were important mostly for kids who had a limited verbal skills, and that these kids who talk a lot and appear to have very good language don't need the props and enactment as much. But some of my students have taught me otherwise.

I have a couple of students who are very verbal students who talk and talk and talk and have many words, who taught me that they really didn't know the meaning of the word umbrella, although they used it to describe something that people hauled in the rain, when I asked them to go get one off the table, whether it was open or whether it was closed, they could not find an umbrella.

That gave me an aha moment when I thought, well, these kids need some concept development and some work with objects and experiences with objects too. Sometimes I use props first as a way to help get started, and sometimes I use them as more as a way to enact the ideas that the students have come up with verbally.

But in any case, I've found more and more props and the actions that accompany them are very important. I would like to say one thing. By props, most people immediately start thinking about miniature objects, like tiny toy cars, dolls, action figures. Even for characters, I don't like to use these with students who have visual impairment.

First of all, because they're hard for the student to interpret. They all might feel like pieces of plastic. And without a verbal explanation, the eyes or the feet of the action figure cannot be found. Compare it to this, I'd much rather, if I'm introducing the character of a bunny, use this rather than a stuffed bunny.

The child can actually be the bunny. The ears are long. The mouth is here. Here's the nose. And it encourages you to want to hop. That's what bunnies do. Or perhaps, in today's story, you want to be the birthday cake. Maybe the tiger with pointed ears. May be the low vision student can see the stripes. Or could be, perhaps, the butterfly with big wings.

Much more meaningful for the student who is blind to become the animal than to try to imagine how this small plastic action figure is meant to represent it. So I really discourage the use of miniatures. I like to use objects that have interesting sensory qualities and that are readily available.

If you look in the site at the story of the two boys and the robot under epic stories, Cole and Dylan did not-- had an idea for robots. I didn't know they were going to have that idea when I entered the room, so I had the scan quickly and find two bookshelves that might meet the qualifications for becoming a robot.

So I encourage you to be flexible in your thinking as well as expecting them to. And very often, the objects you need to represent things are within arm's reach, I want to show you a game inspired by an improvisation group. Here, this book gave me lots of ideas. It's called Plays Well With Others by Les McGehee, and it's about adult play activities.

And I kind of blended some games together that less recommends one is yes and. Really, that is the theme of the playing with words intervention, always accepting what somebody else gives you and extending it. I've also added some other connecting words. I like that. Good idea. You're so funny. Wow, I wish I'd thought of that. Those kinds of connecting words that can be used.

The other part of the game is props. It's a game in which people pass an object around and try to think of what else the object could be based on its qualities, and it requires some divergent thinking and some pretend play.

So I'm going to show you some examples of that. Perhaps you have an orange. The first player will say, this is an orange. They will pass it to the next person and they will say, no. They might say, yes, that's a good idea. And they could also be a baseball, because you can throw it and it's round.

It can also be, the third player might say, oh, good idea, baseball. But it could also be a moon. The fourth player might say, oh, moon. That reminds me, it could also be the sun. The fourth player might open the orange a bit, take a sniff, and say, oh, that reminds me-- that makes me think of a glass of orange juice.

Another object might be this eyeglass box. This is an eyeglass box. The second player might say, yes, and it seems to have a mouth that can open and shut. It could be a monster that wants to eat you up. The third player might put a few objects inside and say, yes, that's a good idea. And if you stuffed it full of batteries, it could become a rattle.

The fourth player might say, oh, that's a good idea. And when it's noisy, it can sound like an alien creature walking up a hill. Sound effects are always good.

Next, we might have a toilet paper roll. All good prop kits should include several toilet paper rolls and several eyeglass boxes, I believe. The toilet paper roll could be, oh, it can also be a horn. [TOOTS] The third player might say, oh, and it can also-- good idea. And it can also be a rolling pin or a telescope.

The fourth player might say, oh, look. If we put it on a launch pad, It can also be a rocket ship. [TAKEOFF SOUND] I have a few more. I can never stop once I get started. These are tongs, like you use in the kitchen. The second player might say, ah, I like that. I like that, and I have another idea. I think this could be the mouth of an alligator coming to get you.

And the next player could say, just listen. It sounds like the tick, tock, tick, tock of a clock. And the third player might say, yes, and that reminds me. This is what it sounds like when I'm running. It can be running noises.

Another. This is a pillow. And it can also be, the second player might say, yes. And it's also a crown for a queen. And the third player might say, good idea. I like that. And I think it can be a trampling, because it's real bouncy. A trampoline for a small character.

I think you're getting the idea now. The idea being that any of these actions and objects can be incorporated into a story. And I have a few more. Let's see. Let me try this one. This is a mirror. However, the first player might say, it's a good mirror, and I also think it would be a good pancake flipper.

The third player says, yes, and it could also be a fan. The next player says, I think it would be a good fan. That was a good thinking. And also, it could also be an iPad, because it feels like an iPad on the surface, and it's the same shape and size.

Those are some of my ideas for props. I hope they give you some creativity and then some permission to have fun. It's as important for the adult as the student to embrace the spirit of play when we're working together on this playing with words intervention.

So I hope you enjoy thinking of props and starting to use them. Each and every one of these props can also be associated with actions. I will save that for another time.