

Pulling Our Own Strings

Puppets, Diversity, and Service-Learning in Partnership

It was interesting to apply the material to a real situation. It helped me see how I could apply it in the "real world."

PSYCH 375 student



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English 693, Psychology 375, Theatre 405.10, Theatre 489

Like many communities, Marion, Ohio, is becoming more diverse. Like many districts, Marion City Schools are concerned about proficiency test scores. In addition, three middle schools were being merged, resulting in pressures that exacerbate conflicts over "difference." Deepening the work of a 2004 grant-funded project in Marion public schools, psychology, theater, and English faculty from OSU Marion continued promoting understanding of differences among Marion school students while engaging OSU students in service-learning. The medium of puppetry was chosen because it enables the young audience to distance themselves from the topics of difference and conflict, providing a safe place to ask questions they might not put to "real people."

- Middle schoolers learned teamwork and commitment through the process of building puppets and stage props, memorizing lines, and learning to manipulate puppets.
- OSU students gained insights into social structures, relationships between professional work and community, volunteerism, and working across disciplines.

Everyone is different and there's nothing wrong with that.

Middle school student



The puppets engage in dialogue with the youth audience, providing an opportunity for questions they might not ask of "real people," which should help deepen their knowledge of what it is like to be "different."