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American Sign Language (ASL) for Teachers and Young Children

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Learning Outcomes

- Identify at least four special needs populations who benefit from using ASL signs.
- Name at least three benefits of incorporating ASL into classroom and childcare settings.
- List three strategies used to effectively produce and incorporate ASL signs into the classroom settings.
Benefits of Incorporating ASL into Childcare Environments and Classroom Settings

1. Minimizes stress and frustration for children and adults

Benefits

2. Allows little ones to clearly communicate specific thoughts, basic needs, and wants
Alexander signs “more”

Benefits

3. Using ASL signs may accelerate verbal language
Benefits

4. Signing reinforces verbal language by adding visual and kinesthetic movement to auditory input

Benefits

5. Signing children tend to be more interested in books
Demonstration

- Sign for “book”

Benefits

6. Signing builds on babies’ natural tendencies to use gestures
Demonstration

- Sign for “up”

Benefits

7. Using ASL signs serves as a language bridge for children and adults who speak different languages
Developmental Milestones

- 6-7 months: typically developing children develop gross motor skills and some are sitting independently.

- Prior to 18-24 months, little ones have not yet acquired the motor skills necessary to form words verbally.

- Gross motor skills, and some fine motor skills, are needed for signing (control over their hands)

- Signing builds upon the natural tendency to point/gesture
Signing with Children with Special Needs

- Increased opportunity to express themselves
- Improved ability to connect with others

Harley’s Video
Special Needs Populations Who Benefit from Using ASL Signs

- Down Syndrome
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Cerebral Palsy
- Expressive language difficulties: apraxia of speech, aphasia
- Learning disabilities
- Delays of prematurity
- Medical conditions including: tracheotomized children, short-term illnesses, post-surgical conditions that inhibit speech

Strategies for Signing Success

1. Choose 3-5 signs that are meaningful to you and the child.
Tristyn signs “more”

Harley signs “more”
Tristyn signs “eat”

Harley signs “eat”
Tristyn signs “water”

Strategies for Signing Success

2. Create the sign at the same time you verbalize it.
Strategies for Signing Success

3. Make eye contact with the child as you sign and make the sign as close to your face as possible.

Demonstration

- Create signs at the same time you speak the word, using good eye contact.
- Sign for “Do you want to eat?”
- Sign for “Do you want more?”
- Sign for “Do you want milk?”
Strategies for Signing Success

4. Use repetition and slightly exaggerate the motion used in the sign.

Demonstration

- Sign for “sleep”
- Sign for “please”
- Sign for “thank you”
- Sign for “all done”
Strategies for Signing Success

5. Repetition and continue to sign...be patient until they are ready to sign back.

6. When your little one does sign back, affirm that you understand and congratulate him/her.
Strategies for Signing Success

7. Accept the child’s approximations – they don’t always make the sign correctly.

Demonstration

- Approximation for the sign “more”
8. Let signing occur naturally. Incorporate signs into every day activities and routines.

Demonstration

- Sign for “where?”
- Sign for “shoes”
- Sign for “book”
- Sign for “play”
- Sign for “ball”
Strategies for Signing Success

9. Be patient. The child will learn to sign at his/her own pace.

10. Make it FUN!

- Enjoy the deep sense of connection you will feel with the child when you begin to have a meaningful two-way conversation.
ASL Signs are “Iconic”

- ASL signs are easy to learn and to remember because they look a lot like the object or concept they are describing.

Demonstration

- Sign for “milk”
- Sign for “tree”
- Sign for “bird”
- Sign for “duck”
- Sign for “me/mine”
- Sign for “up”
- Sign for “sleep”
“Adapted Signs”

- “Made-up” signs (not standard ASL signs)
- Created by adults (parents, teachers)
- Reduces the need for too many steps to create a sign, and reduces confusion for young ones

Demonstration

- Sign for “help”
- Sign for “all done/finish”
Demonstration

**Signs for Teachers**

- Eat
- More
- Sleep
- Bath
- Stop
- Thank You
- Shoes
- Foods (i.e. banana, apple, cracker)

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Continued

**Demonstration**

**Signs for Teachers**

- All Done/Finish
- Book
- Please
- Help
- Ball
- Yes/No
- Juice
- Water
Demonstration

Signs for Teachers

- Help
- Milk
- Hurt/Pain
- Run/Jump
- Stop
- Water
- Where
- Play
- Sit

Summary

Questions?
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References:

- Sign With Your Baby: How to Communicate with Infants Before They Can Speak by: Joseph Garcia
- www.signwithyourbaby.com
- www.drjosephgarcia.com