



ENHANCE LITERACY INSTRUCTION USING SIGNING TIME®



Written for Two Little Hands Productions by
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COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

There are several key components to a strong foundation for literacy. They are phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency.

FOUNDATIONS OF LITERACY
Phonics: the association between the printed letter and the sound it makes
Phonemic Awareness: the ability to identify and manipulate sounds
Vocabulary: the words a child understands and can use in context
Comprehension: the ability to understand what is heard or read
Fluency: the ability to speak, read or write accurately and smoothly

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS EACH CHILD'S LEARNING STYLE

There are three main learning styles: **visual, auditory and kinesthetic/tactile.**

Visual Learners - learn best through images and pictures

Auditory Learners - learn best through sound and music

Kinesthetic/Tactile Learners - learn best by moving their whole body or hands, or through their sense of touch.

Teachers can choose activities that engage a variety of learning styles to enhance the effectiveness of their literacy instruction.



ENHANCING LITERACY WITH SIGN LANGUAGE

Sign language is an extremely valuable tool for hearing children as they learn to read. Studies have shown that children who are taught sign language as a part of their reading instruction score higher on standardized reading tests.¹ Studies have also shown that babies who learned and used signs scored an average of 12 points higher on IQ tests than their non-signing peers, when tested after second grade.²

One of the most basic literacy skills is the ability to recognize letters. Children can learn to sign the alphabet as they learn their letters. This adds a kinesthetic component that helps young children who often learn best through movement. For many children it is easier to associate the visual letter with its sign and then its sound, than it is to learn the letter and sound in isolation.

While a child is learning to identify and sign the letter C, he may learn the word *cat* to remember the sound the letter C often makes. Eventually he can fingerspell the word *cat*. This becomes a tool that can be used by the child at home, school or on the go. It helps increase memory and retention of the alphabet, letter sounds,

and word associations.

Many Signing Time Series 1 DVDs have the sign language alphabet (manual alphabet) at the end.

A child watching a Signing Time DVD enjoys the singing and signing so much that they are unaware that they are learning!

The ABC Practice Time DVD explicitly teaches each manual alphabet letter with the written letter. The ABC Signs DVD is a more informal introduction to the manual alphabet. It teaches each letter in the context of a fun song, providing examples of words that start with each letter. For example, the letter C is paired with *careful* and *caterpillar*.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of including Signing Time in a

child's literacy education is the amount of explicit vocabulary instruction included within the program. Every Signing Time product includes several representations of each word. These include the signed word, written word, spoken word, photographs, illustrations, and video. The vocabulary is also reinforced through song on the DVDs and CDs.

One of the main reasons Signing Time is effective in supporting literacy is because it is fun for the child. A child watching a Signing Time DVD enjoys the singing and signing so much that they are unaware that they are learning!

Through Signing Time, children see the word, hear the word, say the word, and feel the word, creating a multi-sensory experience for each child!





WHAT IS SIGNING TIME?

Signing Time is a family of products (DVDs, Music CDs, books, and flashcards) that teach American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary. Signing Time products are created for children from infancy through age 8, but appeal to all ages and abilities. Signing Time DVDs feature children and adults who model each sign, original music, real-life scenes, and animated segments. The combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic teaching results in an effective, multi-sensory approach to learning. Each DVD in Series 1 teaches approximately 25-30 signs.

At the time of this publication, there are 34 DVDs available for purchase. The co-creator and host of Signing Time is Rachel Coleman, who is a mother to two girls: Leah, who is deaf, and Lucy, who has cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Rachel and her husband Aaron began signing with Leah when she was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at 14 months old.

Prior to learning that Leah was deaf, Rachel was a singer and songwriter. She has personally written all the songs in the Signing Time series and her fascinating life story has been featured in numerous national publications and media programs, including NBC's TODAY show.

Signing Time appeared on public television stations from 2006-2009, for which Rachel received an Emmy® nomination for the category entitled "Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series." Coleman co-created the series with her sister, Emilie Brown, who is the mother of two boys, Alex, and Zachary. (Cousins Alex and Leah are both featured in Signing Time along with Rachel.)

As the host of Signing Time, Rachel teaches each sign and then uses the signs in an original song, featuring video clips of infants, toddlers, young children and parents who sign the targeted words in a real-life context. The added visual component of the printed vocabulary word, along with an illustration, increases retention and comprehension of the new word and its sign. Verbal vocabulary often increases as ASL vocabulary increases.



The key mission of Signing Time is to make basic sign language simple and engaging, not only for the child, but for everyone in that child's life.



HOW SIGNING TIME!® CAN HELP?

Most adults find it daunting to learn another language, but Signing Time DVDs make learning ASL vocabulary easy and fun.



Early Literacy Jump Start Bundle
www.SigningTime.com/Early-Literacy

The key mission of Signing Time is to make basic sign language simple and engaging, not only for the child, but for everyone in that child's life. Most adults find it daunting to learn another language, but Signing Time DVDs make learning ASL vocabulary easy and fun.

The Signing Time songs are repetitive and simple to learn, giving multiple opportunities to view and imitate the signs. Some of the more complex songs include ASL phrases and additional signs that make multiple viewings purposeful.

Signing Time board books and flash cards provide fun and functional ways for everyone in the family to learn and reference the signs being used for daily communication. In addition to DVDs and related products, a wealth of free information is available at the Signing Time website, www.SigningTime.com, and in the parenting forums www.SigningTime.com/forums.

Please visit <http://www.signingtime.com/baby-learns-to-read/> to see how a one year old learned to read with the help of Signing Time!



Through Signing Time, children see the word, hear the word, say the word, and feel the word, creating a multi-sensory experience for each child!



USING SIGN LANGUAGE TO ENHANCE LITERACY: A GUIDE THROUGH THE EARLY YEARS

Infants & Toddlers, *ages birth-2*

Read, read, and read! Sign, sign, and keep signing! Repetition is key for infants and toddlers. They may want to read the same story frequently. This is an important part of the developmental process. Continue reading and signing with enthusiasm!

Sing silly songs and recite nursery rhymes often. Teach new signs each time you sing and sign. This will provide a concrete visual for your child. Many signs are iconic and “look” like the concept they represent. Signing while reading or singing increases retention and makes those activities engaging, multi-sensory experiences.

Practice signing with your child using your Signing Time Flash Cards. Consider using the flashcards with the U-play Mat. This is a fun and interactive approach that allows the adult and child to have focused interaction. This method increases receptive and expressive vocabulary.

Teach the manual alphabet to your child. Have a letter of the day. For example, when it is “B” day, you can serve bananas for breakfast, bread and berries for lunch, and burritos for dinner.

Play ball outside, read books, and write a story that your child dictates to you about a bear. Every time you use a “B” word, sign the word in ASL and use the letter B to reinforce the beginning sound.

Preschool Age, *ages 3-4*

Link reading to real life. Help children connect the text they read to real life concepts. For example, after reading a book about animals, and teaching the appropriate signs, visit a local zoo or pet store and sign and say all of the animals you encounter.

When directly teaching new vocabulary, **display the written word** (flashcard), sign the word in ASL, verbalize the word, fingerspell it, and then sign the word again. This process is a powerful teaching tool that incorporates various learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile).

Elementary School, *ages 5-8*

Invite children to retell a story using ASL. Encourage your child to tell about their day at school using verbal vocabulary and signs that they know. When learning to read, have children see, hear, say, and sign the printed words. The added dimension of signing helps to reinforce vocabulary and promote retention and comprehension. When possible, provide a concrete object or visual of new words to establish meaning. Using signs can help to create strong readers.

All Ages

Read aloud daily for 15-20 minutes. Make reading an enjoyable experience for all! Use the ASL vocabulary you have learned through Signing Time and sign each word you know. Encourage your child or students to sign along with you.





HOW TO USE SIGNING TIME TO ENHANCE LITERACY

As a Parent or Caregiver

Help children to sign stories

even before they can write. Children are developmentally able to use sign language before they can produce the written word, and often before they can speak! Encourage your child to use the signs and words they know to describe their daily routine, how they feel, what they learned in school that day, or what they saw at the park. It has been said that people only write as well as they can talk. Encourage your child to be a descriptive and animated storyteller (both with signs and spoken words) as early as you can. You will be amazed at what wonderful adventures they can tell about, both imaginary and in real life. You can also write down the stories they tell and have a precious memory book for the future.

Listen to Signing Time CDs and practice the new signs you have learned. Get up and dance around the room and sign, sign, sign! Listening to Signing Time CDs in the car, or watching the DVDs on a road trip are wonderful ways to practice ASL signs and a fun way to pass the time together.

Watch Signing Time DVDs

together as part of your daily routine. Encourage family members and friends to learn and use basic signs with your child.

Make signing a part of everyday life. For example, when your child is hungry, encourage her to sign “HUNGRY” and then ask, “WHAT do you WANT to EAT?” Encourage children to sign and verbalize what they want. Repeat the word and sign after they say it. “You want to EAT an APPLE?”

Take a class from a local Signing Time Academy Instructor. Classes provide valuable face-to-face interaction with a knowledgeable and trained instructor. They also facilitate wonderful bonding time between parent and child. Many families enjoy associating with other families who are signing together.

Visit www.signingtimeacademy.com to find a class in your area.

Model a love of reading. Make sure your child sees you reading and enjoying books often. Books are meant to be devoured, loved, learned from, and shared.

Encourage your child to read to you. Picture books provide wonderful opportunities for your child to “read a book” before they have even learned their letters. Use ASL signs to show what the characters in the book are doing.

Take advantage of the resources at your local library. Attend activities like library story times and help your child check out books to read. Remember to use signs as you read out loud.

Turn off the TV and get moving. TV, videogames, and computer time should be limited for children of all ages. Go outside and use the signs you have learned while you play games or go on a walk. Solve a puzzle, build a fort, read a book, dance to music, swing and slide at the park, or join a playgroup. Use signs as you interact and enjoy fun activities together.





HOW TO USE SIGNING TIME TO ENHANCE LITERACY

As a Librarian

Add Signing Time DVDs, CDs, and books to your library collection.

Share signs with children and parents during story time activities.

Teach new signs before reading a book aloud.

Invite children and parents to sign along while listening to the story.

Locate Signing Time Academy instructors in your area, and invite them to present a story time with sign language or another signing activity. Find an instructor at www.signingtimeacademy.com.



As an Educator

Incorporate sign language into your daily classroom routine. Use the Signing Time Classroom Edition to teach yourself and your students ASL signs. There are original songs, poems, games, and activities to help teach and reinforce new signs. The Signing Time Classroom Edition features 8 DVDs and 16 units of lesson material that can be incorporated into existing curriculums or used as additional lesson plans. This comprehensive resource will help guide you through how to use ASL to set up transitions for routines, assist with classroom management, increase vocabulary, add a hands-on teaching method, and to enhance literacy. Have a set time each day to teach a few new words in sign language. This can include watching the Signing Time DVD with your students, following an activity in one of the units, or learning a new song. Take opportunities to review previously learned signs with your class.

Sign the words you know.

Every time you say the words, sign, sign, sign! Learn the manual alphabet until you are proficient. Teach the manual alphabet to your students. The Signing Time ABC Signs DVD and Practice Time ABCs DVD

will help with this process. Practice and review letters and fingerspelling often with your students. When working with emerging readers, fingerspell the words the students are attempting to sound out. Encourage students to fingerspell new words, and sign all the words they know. Signing sight words will help solidify memory and meaning.

Sign and sing! The Signing Time music CDs have sing-along tracks, and your students can perform along with them. The Signing Time songs are great for learning and reinforcing the signs they know. Utilize the Signing Time board books in your classroom library. Children love exploring sign language books. They also enjoy conversing with each other using the new signs they have learned. The Signing Time flash cards are another powerful tool to teach and review American Sign Language vocabulary.





SAMPLE LESSON PLAN: ZOO ANIMALS

Target Age:

This lesson can be adapted to any age group of students from toddlers through elementary school students.

Objective:

Students will:

- engage in oral reading through sign language
- learn and practice signs for zoo animals

Materials:

1. *Wild About Books* by Judy Sierra, Knopf, 2004
2. Signing Time DVD: The Zoo Train
3. Picture of a Giraffe, Elephant, Panda, Monkey, and Penguin

Signs to be taught:

PANDA - sign the letter P and make a circle around your eye showing the panda's eye markings or fingerspell P-A-N-D-A

ELEPHANT - start with your hand up by your nose and move it down in front of your body, tracing the shape of an elephant's trunk

PENGUIN - put your arms against your sides and point your fingers out away from your body like a penguin's feet. Then move your torso like a penguin waddling.

GIRAFFE - cup your hand against your chest palm facing up and move your hand up showing a giraffe's neck

MONKEY - move hands below your armpits like a monkey

BOOK - hold your hands together in front of you, then open them like a book

LIBRARY - sign the letter L and move it around in a circle

Procedure:

1. Introduce the Topic

Ask students if they have ever been to the zoo or if they have seen pictures of zoo animals in a book, magazine, or in a video. Have them close their eyes and think about what animals they know live in a zoo. As time allows, ask a few students to tell the group what animals they are thinking of. Then tell the students you are going to teach them some signs for common zoo animals. Introduce each sign by showing a picture and demonstrating the sign. Invite students to practice the sign along with you.

2. Introduce the Book

Hold up the book *Wild About Books* by Judy Sierra and tell students that it is about a zoo where the animals learn to love books when Molly McGrew, the librarian, drives her bookmobile into the zoo one day.

3. Involve Students in Reading

Demonstrate the signs for BOOK and LIBRARY. Tell students that as they hear the

word for one of the signs you have introduced, you would like them to sign it as you read. While reading, pause briefly after reading the target words to give students a chance to sign the words you have taught them.

4. Show the Video

Introduce the video to the students by telling them that they are going to watch a video that will show them the signs for many zoo and aquarium animals. Tell them you will be using the signs in a game after the video to give them incentive to focus and remember the signs.

5. Play a Game

Play the game "Guess What I Am!" If you are comfortable singing, you can do it as a song (like Rachel does in the Zoo Train DVD), or play it like a pantomime game. This game will check students' comprehension of the signs they learned.

6. Wrap It Up

If time allows, review all the signs at the end of the class and congratulate students on their efforts and learning. Encourage students to teach the signs to a parent, sibling or friend before the end of the day.



SUCCESS STORIES

Viewers of NBC's Today Show watched in awe as 17-month-old Elizabeth Barrett read to them. Elizabeth's parents attribute her early reading in part to Signing Time. Elizabeth started reading shortly after her first birthday, while most children do not learn to read until they are four to six years old.

According to the Today Show, "Katy Barrett and her husband, Michael, are speech pathologists, and when Elizabeth was born they started teaching her sign language along with spoken language. They read to her often, and her favorite television program — the only one her parents let her watch — was a PBS show called 'Signing Time,' which teaches kids sign language."

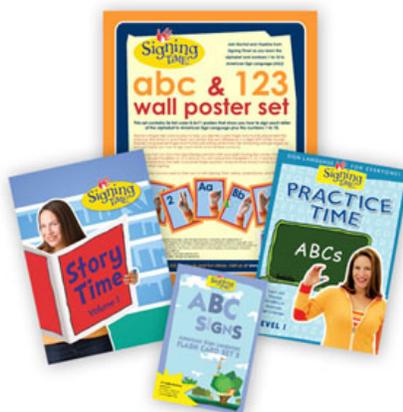
Thousands of parents like the Barretts are seeing that children can accelerate their language and reading development through the unique blend of sign language, written word, song and video modeling used in Signing Time.

Watch an interview with Katy and Elizabeth Barrett at www.signingtime.com/baby-learns-to-read/

Learning ABCs with Signing Time Reinforces Core Curriculum. "I have been using Signing Time in my classroom for the past three years. I have found it to be a great tool specifically for classroom management. In education we use many silent cues to guide student behavior. Sign language helps students to know specifically what I want them to do.

"It has enhanced his communication skills, his verbal acuity, and increased his confidence and social skills!"

Kei M., Charlamont, MA



Early Literacy Jump Start Bundle
www.SigningTime.com/Early-Literacy

There have been many times I have been able to address a problem that has occurred on the other side of the classroom just by using a sign. I even use signs to direct students on what they need to do like "line up" or "pay attention".

I've also been able to use Signing Time effectively to support our curriculum. In our first grade class, we use the Signing Time DVD called "ABC Signs" at the beginning of the year to learn the alphabet in sign language. We continue to use the signs all year to reinforce the alphabet and their sounds. We have also tied in to the curriculum many of the other volumes of Signing Time and use them to reinforce the things that we are already teaching.

Sign language has been a wonderful tool for some of our students with special needs that struggle with language development. Using sign language brings another dimension to what they are being taught and boosts their comprehension.

Besides these teaching benefits, students get the added advantage of learning the basics of a second language (American Sign Language). I know it is working because I frequently find my students signing with each other in small group settings. They love to go



home and share the signs they know with their family, and they always look forward to the time when they can watch another volume of Signing Time.”

Anya G.

Kearns, Utah

*Utah Walk Now for Autism Speaks
First Grade Teacher*

Fingerspelling helped him remember. “My 8 year old has been a great reader for many years, but he struggles when it comes to spelling. We started fingerspelling words he had gotten wrong to see if it helped. It was amazing to watch him come up to the hard word again and spell it out on his fingers first. Having another method to teach the brain really seemed to help him remember.”

Melissa M.

Bala Cynwyd, PA

My son with Down syndrome learned to read with the help of Signing Time. “We began signing with William when he was a few months old. He began signing back to us just before he was a year old, but it never seemed to be something he was completely interested in. When he was two, we discovered Signing Time and his interest in using ASL skyrocketed. He could communicate with us! Suddenly he wanted to learn more, but only from Signing

Time - no other product had the same effect on him. When volume 5, the ABC Signs, came out, we discovered an additional benefit of learning ASL. William, who has Trisomy 21 (Down Syndrome) began spelling and reading at 4½. The words were almost all from Signing Time, so it’s an unmistakable connection. He mastered his ABC’s very quickly after Signing Time volume 5, and we realized that the format of Signing Time was teaching him to read as well. To see Rachel sign and say a word as the written word is presented on the screen, has ingrained them firmly in William’s mind. It has enhanced his communication skills, his verbal acuity, and increased his confidence and social skills.”

Kei M.

Charlamont, Massachusetts

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Virginia Brown, MA

holds a Masters Degree in Reading and Language Arts and a Remedial Reading Certification from Central Connecticut State University as well as an elementary education certification from Sweet Briar College. Virginia taught Pre-K through grade 1 for eight years. She currently serves on the board and was a past director for Mothers’

Connection of the Farmington Valley. Virginia is certified as a Baby Signing Time instructor, teaching classes at The Little Green Tambourine in Canton, CT. Virginia began using Signing Time with her oldest son three years ago.

Robin L. Williams, MA holds a Masters Degree in Teaching with a Reading Specialization from National University, and has a Clear Multiple Subject California Teaching Credential. After interpreting in Utah for a year, she taught in public elementary schools for eight years. She has been using American Sign Language for the past 13 years after studying ASL at Brigham Young University and earning her Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education. Robin is a Thinking Maps Trainer of Trainers, and is a UCI Fellow with the Writing Project. Robin is a Master Signing Time Instructor certified through the Signing Time Academy. She currently is a stay-at-home mom with an infant and toddler who love to sign.

¹ Daniels, Marilyn, *Dancing with Words: Signing for Hearing Children’s Literacy*. Bergin & Garvey, Westport, CT, 2001.

² Acredolo, L.P., & Goodwyn, S.W. “The long-term impact of symbolic gesturing during infancy on IQ at age 8.” Paper presented at the meetings of the International Society for Infant Studies, Brighton, UK. July 2000