



Sign Language Lesson Plans

Provided by Rocky Mountain ADA Center

Suggested Ages

Preschool

SIGN LANGUAGE LESSON PLAN

American Sign Language (ASL) is a whole unique language that is used to communicate with people with hearing impairments, disabilities, and preverbal infants. ASL combines hand signs, gestures, and facial expressions to create words and sentences. In the United States, approximately one million people communicate via ASL.

Implementing sign language in the classroom is a fun way to teach children a second language and help them understand how others communicate. Preschool children may particularly benefit, as sign language can encourage communication among children of all types of backgrounds, abilities, and ages (Zeece & Wolda, 1995).

One effective way to teach sign language is through direct instruction (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984). When teaching sign language, this is done through modeling, guided practice with the children, teacher-provided feedback, and independent practice. Following the initial direct instruction in this plan, there are particular learning activities that address gross motor skills, music, language arts, and arts and crafts.

PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

Give each child an animal sign language coloring sheet (provided with the sign language coloring pages). Have the children color in their page and teach them how to do the sign for the picture they have (don't give every child the same picture). Once everyone is done, have them sit in a group and have each child stand up and show the class the sign they learned. Have the other children guess what animal they are signing and once everyone has guessed have the child hold up the picture they colored in featuring the animal. Once everyone is done, have them hang on to their pictures for the next part of the lesson.

This lesson is designed so that the initial instruction would occur with the entire class. The other three activities (gross motor skills, language arts, arts and crafts) could be done in centers, with the teacher and paraprofessional doing the two teacher-directed centers, and the arts and crafts table being an independent center.

INITIAL INSTRUCTION

Call students to the carpet. Share the photograph cards with the children, and model the sign for each child. Then, teach the signs for “How are you?”, “fine,” and “thank you.” After modeling and practice, sing the Animal Song with the children (to the tune of “Where is Thumbkin?”):

Class: “Where is Turtle (sign for the animal)?”

Class: “Where is Turtle (sign for the animal)?”

Children who colored in turtle: “Here I am. Here I am. (waves).”

Class: “How are you today, friend (sign “how are you”)?”

Children who colored in turtle: “Very well, I thank you (sign “fine,” and “thank you”).”

Class: “Come and play. Come and play.”

The initial instruction addresses the areas of fine motor development, cognitive development, social skills, and music.

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS AND SIGNING PRACTICE: *Simon Says*

Prior to the game, teach more signs to the children. Depending on their age, you could teach color words, number signs, etc.

For *Simon Says*, give the commands, alternating between gross motor movements and signs. For example:

Simon Says...jump in place.

Simon Says...the color red.

Simon Says...stretch up tall.

Simon Says...the number three.

Simon Says...hop on one foot.

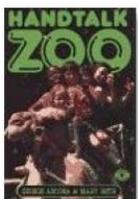
Simon Says...thank you.

LANGUAGE ARTS: Fingerspelling the alphabet.

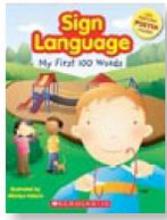
Teacher shares the book *My First Book of Sign Language* by Joan Holub with the children. This book is a beginner’s guide to fingerspelling the alphabet. The book shows the handshape for each letter, along with signs for words that start with each letter. (ISBN-13: 978-0439635820).

While reading the book, the teacher models the sign for each letter, and children “mirror” the signs.

Additional resources for language arts time:



Handtalk Zoo by George Ancona and Mary Beth Miller. In this book, Mary Beth and her friends visit the zoo, where they share their adventures by signing. The children visit the bears, feed the sea lions, and climb like the monkeys, teaching sign language and fingerspelling the entire way. (ISBN-13: 978-0689803925).



My First 100 Words by Scholastic. This book is a reference guide for very young children – one that makes learning important signs fun. There are basic signs that children would use every day, including food, colors, animals, and school words. Fingerspelling and number sign instructions are also included. (ISBN-13: 978-0545056571).



Signing at School by S. Harold Collins and Dahna Solar. This book presents basic signs that children might use in a school setting (e.g., greetings, the alphabet, asking questions, and following directions). (ISBN-13: 978-0931993473).

ARTS AND CRAFTS

For this lesson, provide children with the coloring sheets showing various signs that can be downloaded at <http://www.adainformation.org/childcare>. These can be completed independently by the children.

OTHER RESOURCES:

<http://www.start-american-sign-language.com/sign-language-game.html>

<http://www.signingtimekids.org/>

REFERENCES

Miller, D. T. (1984, April). Classroom control through manual communication: The use of **sign language** with behaviorally disordered **children**. Paper presented at the 62nd Annual Convention of Council for Exceptional **Children**, Washington, D.C.

Rosenshine, B., & Stevens, R. (1986). **Teaching** functions. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 376-391). New York: Macmillan.

Zeece, P. D., & Wolda, M. K. (1995). Let me see what you say: Let me see what you feel! **Teaching Exceptional Children**. 27. 4-9.

The Rocky Mountain ADA Center is operated by Meeting the Challenge, Inc. and makes information, training and technical assistance readily available to employers, people with disabilities, and other entities with rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Rocky Mountain ADA Center serves individuals and organizations within a six state region including Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

For more information, please visit www.adainformation.org, or contact your local ADA Center at (800) 949-4232 or adainfo@adainformation.org.