

SIGNS OF SHARING

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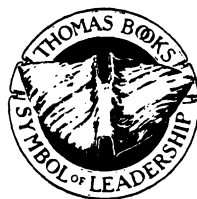
An Elementary Sign Language and Deaf Awareness Curriculum

By

SUE F.V. RAKOW and CAROL B. CARPENTER

Illustrations by

Nancy E. Hazekamp



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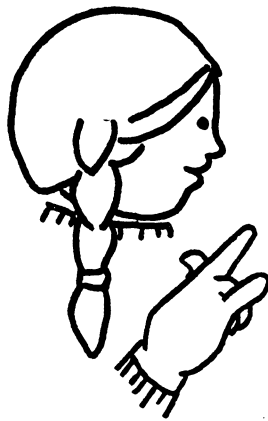
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*Dedicated
to
Aaron, Alex, Anne
Mark and Todd*



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SIGNS OF SHARING

I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unique set of materials is to provide educators whose responsibilities include the integration of hearing-impaired children, a multifaceted tool to teach sign language and to facilitate the integration of hearing impaired children in mainstreamed programs.

One very real problem when teaching sign language to a group of students is the need to produce visual materials to supplement the instructor. The more involved young children become in the educational process the quicker they learn. As the children watch the instructor make the various hand configurations they also see a picture of the sign. The teacher has the flexibility to individualize what she teaches using sign cards or reproduced copies made from the sign sheets. All these various materials reinforce the sign language concepts being taught. The variety of materials also allow the teacher to customize instruction to a particular group.

Another problem facing teachers who are not proficient in sign language, yet working with children who communicate in sign, is their feeling of awkwardness. The teachers and other children in the school want to establish avenues of communication, yet often feel overwhelmed when beginning to learn sign language. It is the intention of the authors to provide materials that will make learning sign language enjoyable. It is also our intent to provide these materials in a manner that is manageable to the novice.

Another area addressed in this set of materials is deaf awareness. Young hearing children often have had little exposure to information about deafness. In a mainstreamed situation, hearing and hearing-impaired children and the school staff must work together. The more informed these people are, the easier it is to develop a smooth and comfortable working relationship. The student outline and introduction for the teachers contain interesting activities and experiments to help children learn through experience about hearing, hearing impairments, and sign language. These materials may be adapted for use by classroom teachers, speech therapists, special educators, interpreters, after school programs, leaders of girl and boy scout troops, 4-H groups, Campfire clubs, and anyone working with early childhood and primary elementary education.

1. THE SIGN CARDS

Pictures depicting signs that are especially appealing to young children are provided. So often sign language materials use adult models or use no

faces. The materials in this set depict multiracial multicultural children thus appealing to a wide diversity of audiences. These signs, four on a page, may be cut apart to make individual cards. These may be enlarged to meet teacher needs such as making flash card, posters, or bulletin board displays. Specific suggestions are given in each lesson.

2. THE SIGN SHEETS

Each lesson has a sheet including all the signs introduced in that lesson so that they may be copied for the whole class to be sent home. These may also be made into the child's personal sign language book. The possibilities for use are countless.

3. ACTIVITY SHEETS

Most lessons include an additional activity sheet which may be copied for each student in the class. These provide another way to practice and recognize signs.

4. THE LESSONS

The signs are divided into 28 lessons to be used as avenues for introducing sign language. The lessons are designed to give creative, exciting, and fun ways of using signs. Each lesson includes a topic, a list of signs to be introduced, materials needed, and numerous activities to present and practice the signs.

The sign cards, sign sheets, and activity sheets are included with each lesson for accessibility, however, the teacher may want to include more or perhaps less signs than are indicated in a lesson plan. The teachers may choose those signs which they feel are most appropriate and delete others according to the needs of their particular class.

5. DEAF AWARENESS

These lessons are designed to first give the teacher necessary background information on five important issues: hearing impairment, hearing aids and F.M. systems, speechreading, manual communication/sign language, and ways to help hearing children be helpful to their hearing-impaired friends. Next, the teacher is given specific ideas for teaching her class the information in the above five categories. The knowledge she has gained by studying the guide, will help her to utilize the student activities.

II

MAINSTREAMING TIPS

There are a number of ways that teachers can help the mainstreaming of hearing-impaired children into regular classrooms. It would be best to speak with a teacher of the hearing impaired and to read some of the literature listed in the bibliography before a child is integrated. The following is a brief summary of some specific ideas to aid in the integration process. These are designed for information as well as being a basis of discussion between various specialists who may be providing services to the child or children, i.e., speech pathologist, resource room teacher, language teacher, etc.

1. It is important to remember that a hearing-impaired child is a child first and hearing impaired second. He or she has the same needs and desires as a hearing peer. He or she should not be pampered or punished because he or she cannot hear. The hearing impaired child must have the same learning opportunities to feel successful, to grow and develop self confidence, and develop his or her own special abilities and interests.

2. To help establish positive attitudes toward the hearing-impaired child, remember that you are the model for the other children in the class. It may help to establish a "buddy" system in which another child helps to communicate classroom activities. Encourage the hearing-impaired child to participate in class discussions and activities. Use the materials in the Deaf Awareness section. Knowledge is the key to understanding and acceptance.

3. Assign the hearing-impaired child a favorable seat. Since a hearing-impaired child will be either watching an interpreter or reading your lips, it is necessary to place him or her where the view of you is unobstructed. The child should be near but not directly under you, removed from noise sources and not facing a light source. Having your back to bright windows, will shadow and darken your face, making you difficult to speechread.

4. Always speak naturally to a hearing-impaired child. There is no need to shout, overenunciate, or slow down too much. It is easier to speechread natural speech. Try not to move around the room too much. Face the class as much as possible. Don't continue to speak while writing on the board. Using an overhead projector allows the teacher to write and speak simultaneously. This way the hearing-impaired child can watch you and see what's being written. Remember not to cover your face with your hand or a book. When reports are given, have the children stand at the front of the classroom so the hearing-impaired child can see the lips of the speakers. Be sure you