

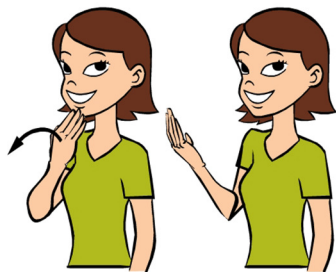
## SIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

In addition to learning the alphabet, colors, numbers and manner phrases in the classroom, each week the children learn sign language words that are associated with the weekly theme.

**Please:** To sign *please*, take your hand with fingers extended and all together, and thumb extended and sticking out. Take the hand with palm facing in and rub it in a circle on your chest.



**Thank you:** To sign *thank you*, extend your fingers and thumb. Touch your fingers to your chin and bring your fingers forward. It is almost like you are blowing a kiss out, to thank the person – but the sign is a bit lower.



**Blue:** The *blue* sign is made by making the American Sign Language sign for "B" out by the side of your body. Take your fingers outstretched with your thumb tucked under. Then twist your hand left and right out by the side of your body.



Evidence suggests that learning how to sign can enhance young children's brain function, boost their self-esteem, and give them a concrete (and appropriate) way to express emotions and enhances literacy skills. Signing at an early age also facilitates communication and is an effective tool to promote a more comfortable learning environment and initiates an interest and enthusiasm for learning.

### Sign language enhances brain activity and brain function.

Signing stimulates activity in both

## Ready, Sign, Go!

hemispheres of the brain. The act of signing promotes spatial reasoning and long term memory in the left brain, and promotes language development in the right brain. When children sign they are reinforcing their existing verbal language and teaching them another way to express language and planting it in their long-term memory, thus, creating another connection to that information in their brain. Children who use both spoken language and sign language develop a built-in redundancy of memory, storing the same word in two formats in separate areas of the brain. This dual storage system strengthen their brain connections and creates another memory store from which to draw information from.

### Sign language enhances fine motor coordination

The act of signing allows children to use their hands and fingers to form letters and words during signing they might not use otherwise use. Signing can be an exciting and interesting way for those children to practice their motor skills, which in turn will prepare them for drawing and later for writing.

### Sign language raises awareness of diversity

Sign language can open the door to introducing children to the Deaf community. The children learn that deaf people use their hands instead of the voices to communicate, because the deaf cannot hear.

### Sign language enhances and increases children's vocabulary and reading skills

Signing is another way for children to communicate. Communication is the start of enhancing their vocabulary and reading skills. Because of this they are gaining a sense of confidence and becoming competent in learning new words and

phrases in another language, which in turn builds their total vocabulary.

### Sign language helps infants and toddlers communicate their preverbal wants and needs

All infants have the motor control to approximate the signs to say words before they acquire the vocal skills. Although babies lack the means to produce vocal speech, they have the conceptual ability to make signs. When babies and toddlers are able to communicate their needs, their level of frustration is reduced, and tears and tantrums are less likely. The ability to make themselves understood fosters feelings of competence and trust in children and results in more positive adult-child interactions – essential to a child's development and sense of well-being.

