Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide provides information about American Sign Language and how you can integrate ASL to support early learning for babies and toddlers. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

American Sign Language

Learn about American Sign Language

- ASL is a visual, gestural language. It is a complete language with unique grammar and linguistic features.

- ASL is highly descriptive and uses space, handshapes, facial expressions, body positioning, and movement to communicate.

- Many people use ASL, including people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, a child of Deaf adults, people who are hearing, and people with disabilities.

- Children who are learning ASL are considered dual language learners in Head Start.

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Early Learning

ASL and Early Learning

Benefits of ASL in Early Childhood

- ASL provides earlier access to expressive communication.

- ASL increases engagement with peers, educators, and families.

- Multisensory learning supports vocabulary recall.

- ASL acts as a communication bridge for children who are dual language learners.

- **ASL fluency supports speech and English language development.** Learning ASL has been shown to support the development of speech skills, English language development, and early literacy skills, regardless of hearing ability.

ASL and Your Learning Environments

What ASL signs would be the most important for you, children, and families to learn (center-based, family child care, home visits, group socializations)?

In what activity or routine would you first integrate ASL?

What resources would you like to add into your learning environment to support Deaf-friendly environments (e.g., mirrors, dolls with hearing devices, multisensory toys, books, posters, etc.)

Continued Learning for Educators

Incorporate Deaf-Friendly Practices	• Wave your hand or tapping their shoulder to get their attention. • Flash lights to signal transitions. • Remove visual obstructions. • Use soft lighting options. Learn more: **National Deaf Children's Society**
Learn ASL from Deaf People	• Connect with your local Deaf Services Center for classes and events. • Find Deaf creators and teachers on the web. Learn more: "ASL Learning" section in the Resources below.
Invite Deaf Volunteers	• Check with your local Deaf Services Center for possible volunteers to join your learning environment. • Invite family members who use ASL to teach in your learning environment.

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Resource Spotlight: Ready DLL Mobile App

ASL is coming soon to the DLL App! Twenty-three signs and sentences!

Ready DLL is a mobile application (app) for Head Start and Early Head Start teachers and caregivers who support children who are dual language learners (DLLs). Access resources, learn key words and phrases, and discover implementation strategies from your smartphone.

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/ready-dll-mobile-app

Helpful Resources (* resources available in Spanish)

Online Resources

IDEA 101: Partnering with Service Providers to Support Effective Inclusion
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/idea-101-partnering-service-providers-support-effective-inclusion

Promoting Early Hearing Screening and the Use of Assistive Technology*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/head-start-center-inclusion

Follow-up Checklist: When a Child is Identified with a Permanent Hearing Loss*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/follow-checklist-when-child-identified-permanent-hearing-loss

How Teachers and Parents Can Accommodate for a Child's Temporary or Permanent Hearing Loss*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/how-teachers-parents-can-accommodate-childs-temporary-or-permanent-hearing-loss

Head Start Center for Inclusion
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/head-start-center-inclusion

Responsive Teaching and Learning Environments for Dual Language Learners
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/responsive-teaching-learning-environments-dual-language-learners

Planned Language Approach*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/planned-language-approach

- Specific Strategies to Support Dual Language Learners When Adults Do Not Speak Their Language
  https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/head-start-center-inclusion

Including Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/inclusion-children-disabilities-training-guide/including-infants-toddlers-disabilities

Dual Language Learner Celebration Week 2024: Multicultural Principles and ASL
https://fb.watch/qDi8UAg_Xk/

Multicultural Principles for Early Childhood Leaders*
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/multicultural-principles-early-childhood-leaders/multicultural-principles-early-childhood-leaders

Online Communities / PushPlay

MyPeers: Head Start Disabilities-Inclusion Network
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-social-network-early-childhood-professionals

PushPlay DTL on Demand
https://gateway.on24.com/wcc/eh/2926734/dtl-push-play-on-demand

ASL Learning

Find your local Deaf resource center, community colleges, or community classes for ASL resources and classes.

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center (Register for free to access resources to ASL resources)
https://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/ndec/professionals/

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center: "Focusing on Early Accessible Language with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Babies"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zjIxiVIT00

Hands Land (Learn ASL rhythm and rhymes to support learning)
https://sites.google.com/handsland.com/handsland/home

American Society for Deaf Children (Free ASL storytelling videos for children)
https://deafchildren.org/knowledge-center/asl-resources/sign-language-stories/

HandSpeak (ASL Dictionary and Deaf culture resources)
https://www.handspeak.com/word/

Jason Gervase (Learn ASL with Deaf Teacher)
https://www.tiktok.com/@jasegervase

Christina Pax (Follow a family's journey learning ASL)
https://www.tiktok.com/@christina_pax?lang=en

That Deaf Family (Follow a Deaf family's journey on TikTok)
https://www.tiktok.com/@thatdeafamily/video/7078172625490431275?lang=en

American Society for Deaf Children (Sign Language Use for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Babies: The Evidence Supports It)
https://carcsd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Sign-Language-Research-Brief.pdf

Rocky Mountain Deaf School (ASL Storytelling)
https://www.youtube.com/@RMDSCO

Earworm Podcast: Family-to-Family Support as a key resource when empowering families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing to become informed decision makers
http://www.earwormpodcast.org/