

LET'S SIGN WITH YOUNG CHILDREN



The use of British Sign language (BSL) with babies and young children is an area of growing interest for its potential benefits to a whole range of children including;

- deaf children
- pre-verbal hearing babies
- children who are autistic
- children who are dyslexic
- with communication difficulties
- with speech and/or language impairments
- with learning disability



Signing adds visual and kinaesthetic dimensions - alternative channels that can help children to internalise language and take pleasure in its use. Whole group or class involvement is a way of ensuring a rich and inclusive communication environment that is enjoyable - children do seem to love it.



Learning the basics of a new language offers all children an added general life skill that can not only improve their own language and communication skills but that can give them awareness of difference and confidence to meet the communication needs of others.



People are often surprised to discover that BSL was not officially recognised by the government until 2003 and that its use in deaf education was strongly discouraged until as recently as the 1980s. Despite this fact, BSL has always flourished in deaf schools and community as a valued and essential language in spite of policies against it that were based on the belief that signing would stop deaf children developing speech.



From profoundly Deaf co-writer of **LET'S SIGN Early Years**, Sandra Teasdale (translated from BSL).....

".....BSL is my first language, even though my parents and family didn't sign and I had very little access to it when I was small. It is the language that feels natural and comfortable to me and the only way I can express myself properly. Like my Deaf friends and colleagues, English is not easy for me.



.....The important thing is that we all signed - and those who spoke still spoke - signing never stopped them."

The status of BSL and its accepted use in education has changed markedly in the last 7 years or so and this has been further helped by the Baby Signing movement.



The idea of using sign language with pre-verbal hearing babies originated in America, and early materials were based on American Sign Language (ASL). British Sign Language (BSL) is a separate language - the indigenous natural language of the British Deaf community, and forms the basis of other systems such as Makaton and Signalong which were developed to help communication with people with special needs and support speech with the signs of BSL vocabulary.

Adèle Marshall Baby Signing teacher.....



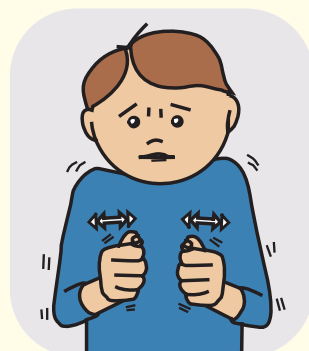
"In America extensive research has been carried out on the benefits of using some simple signs (derived from genuine sign language, such as BSL) with hearing babies, in order to communicate with them before they are able to express themselves verbally. Recent research suggests that babies are learning the foundations of language and making important connections long before it was previously believed...."



There is now a much more healthy interest and attitude to sign language, bringing with it an increased demand for stimulating, colourful materials that should be the right of all children - books, flashcards, games, stories, songs and rhymes that children can all enjoy together.



The resultant growth in resources to fill this need includes our own **LET'S SIGN Series** of BSL educational materials for all ages and abilities, from early years to adult learner, Vj g'sign graphics ctg"also available on rdegpeg for making tailor-made materials h tqo www.widgit.com dun



The early years are the optimum time for language learning when children are like linguistic sponges with abilities that can leave adults standing. Even small steps to include some signs to our everyday communications with young children can go a long way in ensuring the inclusion of all children who sign, and help to form acceptance and life-long respect for difference.

So why not start signing with your children today - it's always going to be an extra string to their bow - and what's more it is wonderful fun

For the LET'S SIGN Series see

www.DeafBooks.co.uk



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