

Insights from Signing Early Childhood Educators

Over the years, teachers have shared with us their joys of signing with the children in their care. Here are some of the most frequent comments we hear.

- Signing empowers children because they can communicate successfully with those around them. This sense of empowerment significantly contributes to babies' happiness.
- Children spend less time crying and teachers spend less time playing "the guessing game," allowing more time for positive interaction.
- Signing enhances early language skills because children can engage in two-way conversations with their teachers *and* their peers at an earlier age.
- Signing serves as a "language bridge" for children and staff who speak different languages-the sign is the same for eat (English) as it is comer (Spanish).
- Children learn to use signs to solve problems. STOP and SHARE are commonly used signs that help children learn to get along with one another.
- In signing classrooms, teachers report that there are fewer instances of biting and screaming because children are less frustrated.
- Children can control the topic of conversation and express their unique interests at an earlier age. This allows teachers to design learning activities that will enhance her children's specific interests.
- Signing adds fun to daily routines and circle time and music activities.
- Signing facilitates home-school communication and helps parents get more involved in preschool curriculum in a more meaningful way.
- Signing is appropriate for all preschool age groups (infants, toddlers, preschool, Pre-K) and it facilitates visual/kinesthetic learning.
- The use of signs in the classroom creates opportunities for children with special needs to interact in a more meaningful way with other children their age.
- Preschool-aged children use signs to help them understand and identify their emotions.

Research shows that integrating the use of sign language into a preschool curriculum enhances literacy skills needed for school success: reading, vocabulary, and spelling. A summary of this research can be found in Marilyn Daniels' book *Dancing with Words*.

