

Communication: Sights and Sounds

Objective

Students find ways to communicate with each other individually without talking. They demonstrate sounds and gestures they can use to communicate.

Materials

- ❑ American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet on page 2

Background

People use a variety of silent gestures to communicate. Such gestures can be an important type of communication. One way hearing-impaired people can communicate is by using sign language. Here in the United States, American Sign Language (ASL) is a common language. At SeaWorld, trainers communicate with trained animals by using rewards, targets, and signals.

Action

1. Have students think of sounds (other than words) that have a meaning associated with them. On the board, make a list of the sounds they name. (Examples: The doorbell means someone is at the door. The phone ringing means someone wants to talk to you. A whistle stops action in a basketball game. A fire alarm tells people to go outside. A bell tells students to line up after recess.)
2. Next, ask students to think of gestures that have a meaning associated with them. On the board, make a list of the gestures they name. (Examples: a wave, an “okay” gesture, a “shush” gesture, a thumbs-up, football signals such as “touchdown,” baseball signals such as “out” and “safe,” and scuba-diving signals such as “out of air.”)
3. Discuss ways that people who don’t speak the same language can communicate with each other.
4. Explain that ASL is a non-verbal language that’s used by many hearing impaired people (and others). Teach students the ASL alphabet. Help them learn to finger-spell their names and other words.
5. As a class, make up your own signs for some of the things that you frequently need to communicate to each other. (For example, students can make up signs for you to tell them to line up, to sit down, or to wash their hands. They can make up signs for telling you that they are finished with a project, that they have a question, or that they need an object.) Try using the signs instead of talking.

Deeper Depths

Find out if any of your students (or other teachers, staff, or volunteers at your school) know sign language. If so, have them teach the class some signs. Find a sign language book at the library. Teach students some signs.

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ASL FINGER-SPELLING ALPHABET

(Signs show the receiver's view on the left and the signer's view on the right.)

a	b	c	d	e	f	g							
h	i	j	k	l	m	n							
o	p	q	r	s	t	u							
v	w	x	y	z									