


# Use Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion With Sign Language and Parents as Partners: *Achieve Extraordinary Literacy Gains*



*“Active engagement  
in a task  
reorganizes the  
brain. Passive  
stimulation does  
not.” – John Brewer*

**e-Book and Web Seminar by Nellie Edge ©2009**

Excerpts from *Celebrate Language and Accelerate Literacy: High Expectations • Joyful Learning • Proven Strategies* by Nellie Edge

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***[www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com)***

# *Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion With Sign Language and Parents as Partners*

by Nellie Edge, ©2009

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## Nellie Edge

How do we make learning to read an engaging and successful experience for all young children? How can we involve parents as partners in developing vital literacy foundations while nurturing healthy dispositions towards learning? For over thirty-five years, these questions have been the driving force behind Nellie Edge and her dedicated work as a kindergarten teacher, parent, early literacy researcher, and author.

Nellie's first publication was the best-selling children's cookbook *Kids in the Kitchen* (a.k.a. *Kindergarten Cooks*). It was developed under this premise, fully illustrated to help her kindergartners on the Makah Indian Reservation connect cooking and reading in a delicious and meaningful way.

The English and Spanish, *Nellie Edge Read and Sing Big Books*™ collection with take-home Little Book masters was inspired by her extensive graduate work on language acquisition and her teaching experiences in a bilingual kindergarten in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Again, Nellie focused her writing on creating joyful beginning reading experiences and providing culturally relevant language, thereby supporting parent involvement in early literacy development.

Nellie's collaboration with Dr. Pat Wolfe, an internationally-recognized author, researcher, and expert on brain-based teaching, validated what many wise parents and teachers have intuitively discovered: **Optimal learning experiences are emotionally engaging, multisensory, and take advantage of the musical brain!**

Now, after years of study and collaboration with accomplished kindergarten teachers on "best practices" for accelerating early literacy, Nellie shares an innovative, yet elegantly simple approach for teaching ABC and phonics skills: She takes adults and children on a musical, kinesthetic, visual adventure, teaching them fingerspelling and the exquisite gestures of American Sign Language (ASL). This "Total Emotional Physical Response" experience produces dramatic recall, and the process is delightfully fun for everyone involved!

In her newest book and CD, *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sing, and Read*, (with interactive video download), Nellie Edge once again engages beginning readers in a celebration of language, and involves parents, teachers, and children in meaningful, life-long learning. She invites you to combine the memorable art of singing with the visual images of dancing fingers; effortlessly activating multiple pathways for ABC and phonics fluency: now all children can be gifted early learners!

# Discover the Magic of Singing and Signing for ABC and Phonics Immersion



**Sign language builds comprehension by creating internal images of language.** These children are signing “cat” by tracing the cat’s whiskers



**Singing and signing enhances speaking skills:** Young children who are fortunate enough to learn ASL through the accelerated language medium of songs have an early and life-long advantage in developing expressive, dynamic speaking skills. Children are signing “rain” from *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* picture book by Nellie Edge.

## Build Enthusiasm for Learning



When children are singing and signing, they are focused and engaged – the optimum state for language learning. These children are signing *t*, “*t*” turtle from *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* (song picture book), by Nellie Edge. Sign2Me® Northlight Communications, 2009.



Children are so proud of themselves when they can sign. They love to sign applause (bravo) in Sign Language: hands moving excitedly to the side of the forehead. Teachers enjoy how quiet the applause is.

Parents delight in seeing the joy and enthusiasm that children bring to learning sign language, and they love to watch their children perform. Here children are confidently performing *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* as a part of their year-end Celebration of Language. A fourth grade “reading buddy” is holding the ABC and Phonics chart.



# Research Supports Teaching All Children to Fingerspell and Sign Songs

## *Summary of Benefits:*

- **Engages the child's multiple intelligences** in representing language symbolically.
- Develops phonemic awareness, **the alphabetic principal**, vocabulary, and spelling skills.
- Facilitates a comfort in **understanding and expressing feelings**.
- Fingerspelling **develops the small muscles** necessary for writing.
- Develops **all communication skills**, which provide the window to basic literacy and academic excellence across disciplines.

*"It should be remembered that we speak more than we write. Throughout our lives we judge others, and we ourselves are judged, by what we say and how we speak." – Ernest Boyer*

- Encourages the child to **share school experiences at home**.
- **Builds community** through shared language experiences.
- Provides a **constructive physical outlet for the kinesthetic learner**.
- Combines **"saying and doing,"** which **increases retention of language and concepts by 90%**.
- Provides a **natural bridge for limited English speaking children** in developing a second language.
- Engages the high-risk learners in building confidence and **enthusiasm for learning**.
- **Encourages the whole child to focus attention on learning**.
- Provides an introduction to the **beautiful visual gestural language of ASL**.
- **Accelerates learning in the child's first and second language**, bridging the achievement gap.
- Personalizes language and concepts through **"total emotional body response."**
- Can lead to **memorable performances** for parents.
- **Builds comprehension** by creating **internal images of language**.
- Is **supported by brain research** and language acquisition theory.
- Singing and signing fluently with expression, gesture, and confidence **builds children's speaking skills**.
- **Supports inclusion** programs.
- **Teaches life skills. ASL is the third most common language in the United States.**

*"Our job is not to help kids do well in school. It's to help them do well in life."*  
– Elliot Eisner, Speech to the National Staff Development Council, December 1991

- Reading the 3-dimensional language of sign **develops visual skills for reading** printed language.
- **Provides Talented and Gifted (TAG) students a challenge – one that parents love!**

# Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy is Supported by Extensive Research

Here are excerpts from a book we highly recommend:

*Dancing With Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy*  
by Marilyn Daniels

**This book is about sign language and how sign language can be used to improve hearing children's English vocabulary, reading ability, spelling proficiency, self-esteem, and comfort with expressing emotions.** Sign also facilitates communication, is an effective tool for establishing interaction between home and school, aids teachers with classroom management, has been shown to promote a more comfortable learning environment, and initiates an interest in and enthusiasm for learning on the part of students...

**The activity of manually fingerspelling a word reinforces a child's ability to write or read or say it.** Spelling a word strengthens existing associations among writing a word, reading a word, and saying a word. Clearly children need solid visual knowledge of letters to read well. When this visual knowledge is overlaid with the feel of the letter, reading becomes easier...

**However, well before children are able to form letters with a pencil, they can form letters with the manual alphabet.** Using the manual alphabet will activate the same formative link to reading as printing, but it may have an even greater effect on children's literacy because it can occur far earlier in their maturation process...

**The feeling signs are nearly all iconic. Because the signs visually represent feelings in discernible form, the child can comprehend the meaning of the word and relate the word to their own feelings.** They are congruent. Children find it easier to identify their feelings, to express their feelings, to discuss their feelings, to understand their feelings, and perform the same operations with the feelings of others...

Become an early partner with your child as together you dance with the words of ASL. Both your fingers and hands and your child's fingers and hands can create meaning in the air as you silently exchange messages in sign language. **For your child this dance will activate formative links in the developing brain; teach phonics, vocabulary, word recognition, and comprehension; become a precursor to the recognition of print; provoke positive feedback from others;** give access to Deaf people; engender feelings of self-worth; and ultimately aid reading and spelling and communicative ability in general. It is a dance with words, to be enjoyed from babyhood, through childhood, to adulthood.

Source:

Daniels, Marilyn. *Dancing With Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001. [www.greenwood.com](http://www.greenwood.com) [www.marilyndaniels.com](http://www.marilyndaniels.com)

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# Sing and Sign for Powerful Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion: Take Advantage of How the Young Child’s Brain Learns Best

Excerpts from *The Magic of Signing Songs* Literacy Manual

“Marie Clay’s research reminds us that children come to reading from many paths. A typical kindergarten classroom embraces children who are just beginning to hear and understand the sounds of English and others who are already eager readers and writers. **Not all children have strong visual pathways for learning; rather, some of our children have strong auditory learning style preferences, or others are highly kinesthetic. Every child needs to feel successful, regardless of which way of learning works best for them.** They all deserve to be challenged. Learning letters and sounds must be a joyful, multisensory experience that is emotionally connected with pleasure and success as the brain anchors new skills to something that is already known. **It must be taught and reviewed in a context that provides differentiated reading challenges for those children in the classroom who have already mastered the alphabetic principle...**”

“Teaching the ABC’s and phonics through singing and signing is a powerful strategy for developing literacy skills. **Providing explicit, systematic phonics instruction that combines Sign Language, letter recognition, and sound/symbol connection through song is a joyful, accelerated learning approach that produces amazing results.** Our ABC and Phonics Immersion Pilot Study team has demonstrated high enthusiasm for learning, tremendous parent involvement and support, and rapid acquisition of ABC/phonics skills – even for ELL and more challenged learners. **Teachers report that kindergarten children learn the ABC’s and corresponding phonics in dramatically less time when instruction is integrated with song and American Sign Language...**”

*“Brain reorganization takes place only when the animal pays attention to the sensory input and to the task. Only when the animal is trying to learn or form a memory does it do so. Active engagement in a task reorganizes the brain. Passive stimulation does not.” – John Brewer*

## ***Emotional Engagement is the Key to All Powerful Learning.***

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“For new information to go into long-term memory and be available for recall, it must be emotionally charged. Children’s joyful, emotional, kinesthetic involvement with learning letters and sounds accelerates their learning and supports their desire to be readers. **Literacy skills are most easily remembered when hooked to language and experiences that children take pleasure in. When children sing A/a/alligator while they sign the letter and physically *become* the alligator through facial and body movement, that provides a much stronger memory connection for the brain to remember the letter and sound “A” than if they were solely relying on visual connections...**”

## ***Reading Success or Failure Generalizes to the Child’s Whole Self-Concept.***

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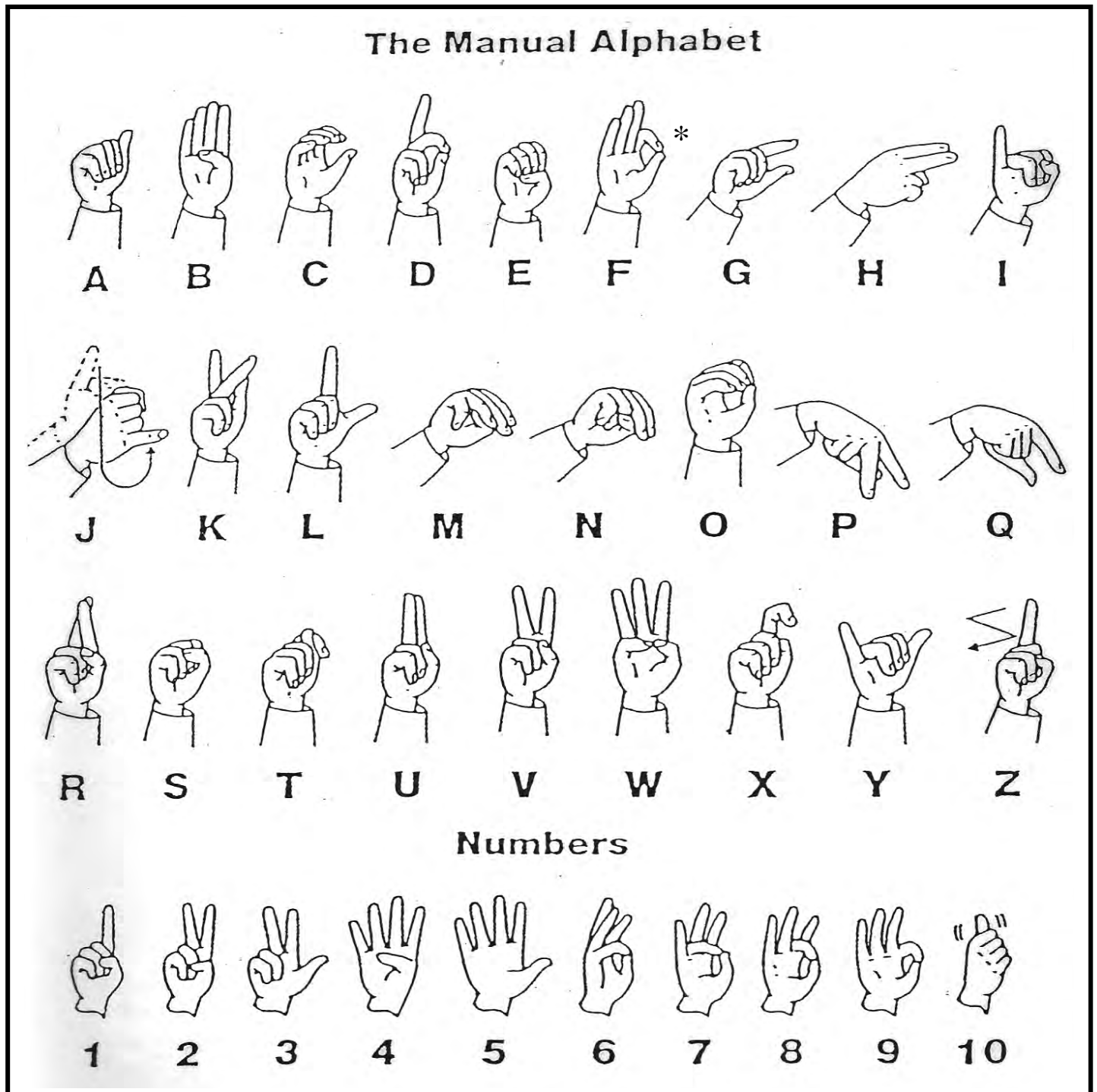
“Bruno Bettelheim’s research reminds us that how a child perceives him or herself in the act of learning to read generalizes to their whole self-concept. Our early literacy instruction must allow children to build on success so that they can associate positive feelings with learning to read. **While we are developing essential language and literacy skills, we can and must nurture belief systems that allow young children to see themselves as successful readers and successful people.** Only then can we nurture the disposition of children who love to learn...”

“Using the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* book, CD, and instructional DVD at school and at home builds success and confidence for children at all levels on the reading continuum. **Our gradual releases of responsibility instructional model is respectful of the diverse ways of knowing that children bring to the reading process and is in harmony with how the brain learns best.** Guided and engaging multisensory teaching simply makes learning letters and sounds more effortless and memorable...”



# Use One Consistent Multisensory ABC and Phonics Program

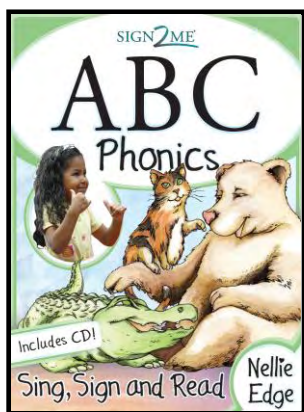
For powerful ABC and Phonics Immersion, add American Sign Language (ASL), fingerspelling, and a signed ABC and Phonics book and chart to your classroom. Children more easily access memory for letters and sounds when they fingerspell. Send a copy of your ABC song chart and CD home, for children love sharing this new language with family. **Adding the kinesthetic element of ASL for the ABC's and key phonics symbols creates powerful hooks to long-term memory with any ABC and phonics program. Singing allows the brain to chunk all twenty-six letters, sounds, and key phonics symbols into one memory space. We use the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* book, CD, and DVD by Nellie Edge. (Enhanced version available from Sign2Me.)**




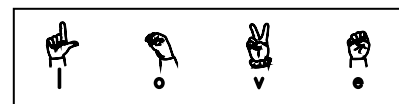
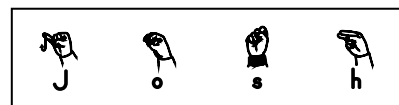
\* F is signed both with the three fingers spread and with them closed. Used with permission.  
For free manual alphabet chart, see [www.Sign2Me.com](http://www.Sign2Me.com).

# Use One, Consistent, Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion Program: Sing it, Sign it, and Send it Home!

(With special appreciation to my ABC and Phonics Immersion Pilot Team)



- **♫ Sing and Sign: Add ASL fingerspelling** for each letter and **sign the key phonics word**.
- **Teach for instant letter/sound association in the brain.** “A-ă-alligator” (accompanied with the emotionally engaging ASL) is a more efficient mnemonic device than “a-alligator-ă.”
- **Dramatically explore** each key phonics word (e.g., alligator, bear, cat, dog, etc.). Let children dramatize the animals or objects to heighten comprehension and emotional involvement. **Have puppets and/or stuffed animals available** for additional small group letter/sound instruction for those children who need it.
- **Read, sing and sign your ABC Phonics picture book or language chart several times a day.** Provide explicit large group instruction for four to eight sounds/symbols at a time. Then **provide several 15-second reviews** during the day (e.g., on the way to the library, out to recess, transitioning to story time, etc.). **Be very intentional.**
- **Send it home: ♫ Communicate, educate, and engage “parents as partners”** in ABC and phonics immersion. Send home copies of the CD, wall chart, and flashcards that accompany the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* book. Invite parents to have fun practicing with their child – several times every day. **Ask each child, “Where did you hang your chart up?” “Who did you sing and sign for?”** Expect nightly review. (Parents can download the ASL Instruction Video from [www.sign2me.com](http://www.sign2me.com))
- **Have high expectations:** provide emotionally engaging, multisensory instruction that motivates and accelerates learning! **You will be amazed** at the progress.
- **Have one consistent ABC and phonics book with key symbols and sign language charts available throughout the room:** keep miniature versions in children’s writing notebook, on the walls, in the art center, as mini-books in the literacy play center, etc.
- **Personalize your sign language ABC and phonics songbook** and wall charts with children’s art and photos of children signing. Let every child become an expert at one letter, sound and symbol – especially the most challenged learners.
- **Teach fingerspelling for children’s names.** Send parents a letter encouraging their child to learn to fingerspell his or her name before school even starts.
- **Fingerspell as you quietly go down the hall.** Fingerspell the *L-O-V-E Spells Love* and *M-O-M Spells Mom* songs. See  video clips at [www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com).



***How will you make your ABC and phonics instruction more memorable?***

# ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read Song Chart by Nellie Edge

## Send Your ABC and Phonics Chart Home for Daily Review

Special thanks to Susie Hass, Sally Rudnick, Diane Larson, and Julie Lay for inspiration.

























































 a alligator	 b bear	 c cat	 d dog
 e elephant	 f fox	 g goat	 h hat
 i insect	 j jump	 k kangaroo	 l lion
 m monkey	 n nest	 o octopus	 p piano
 q queen	 r rainbow	 s sunshine	 t turtle
 u umbrella	 v volcano	 w world	 x x-ray
 y yo-yo	 z zebra	th the sh	wh ch

ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read book, CD, and program by Nellie Edge. Published by Sign2Me. Demonstrated on *The Magic of Signing Songs DVD Vol. II*, and as free video download from [www.sign2me.com](http://www.sign2me.com). See [www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com) for Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion teaching strategies.

♫ The Twinkle, Twinkle melody begins on a, m, and y.

# Keep copies of your ABC/phonics chart and handwriting guide in easels throughout the classroom for easy viewing

**The ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read Song Chart** by Nellie Edge

a   alligator	b   bear	c   cat	d   dog
e   elephant	f   fox	g   goat	h   hat
i   insect	j   jump	k   kangaroo	l   lion
m   monkey	n   nest	o   octopus	p   piano
q   queen	r   rainbow	s   sunshine	t   turtle
u   umbrella	v   volcano	w   world	x   x-ray
y   yo-yo	z   zebra	th  the	wh  whale
		sh  sheep	ch  chicken

Your ABC/phonics chart can be kept in clear plastic easels\* for children to move around the room and refer to as they engage in daily “kid writing.” Vowels may be highlighted in red. To create your own easel, mount two miniature ABC charts on sturdy-weight paper and laminate top-to-top. Fold in half and secure with jute tacked to the inside and tied in a bow. Some teachers include their handwriting guide on one side of the easel and the ABC/phonics chart on the other.

\* Clear stand-up sign holders are available at [www.officemax.com](http://www.officemax.com) (item #20334577)



## **Sing and Sign With Parents as Partners: Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best**

### **“Why are you signing songs?”**

#### **Signing Songs and Fingerspelling Builds Early Literacy Skills.**

Signing songs and manual fingerspelling engages the whole child in joyful learning. **It adds a kinesthetic memory connection for acquiring new skills and develops the small muscles necessary for writing. Singing and signing is multisensory – it combines “saying and doing,” which increases retention of new information and understanding of language concepts up to 90 percent.** Research shows that learning sign language builds confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Reading the three-dimensional language of sign also develops visual skills for reading printed language. Enriching children’s literacy experiences by signing familiar songs encourages teachers and parents to become learners right along with their children. As an added bonus, children usually learn to sign songs more easily than adults – much to their delight!

#### **Learning Sign Language is a Life Skill.**

Learning American Sign Language (ASL) not only gives children enhanced literacy skills, but also an important life skill. **ASL is the third most commonly used language in the United States!** Proficiency in a second language is a requirement for high school and college graduation, and the optimum age to acquire a new language is during early childhood. **Additional language acquired while the child is young enhances their communication skills throughout life.** This is especially true of learning the emotionally rich American Sign Language. New language connections in their brain develop much more quickly through song as the child communicates whole sentences and phrases rather than isolated words.

#### **Singing and Signing Enhances Speaking Skills.**

Young children who are fortunate enough to learn ASL through the accelerated language medium of songs in preschool and kindergarten have an early advantage in developing expressive, dynamic speaking skills.

#### **Singing and Signing Makes Learning to Spell Easier.**

Early literacy teachers have learned that singing and signing creates spelling success for all young children by making it auditory, kinesthetic, social, and fun! **Most young children are first auditory spellers; they become visual spellers later.** Children, by nature, love to move their bodies. **Children’s memory for the spelling sequence of words is dramatically improved through singing, signing, and fingerspelling.**

They can use fingerspelling more easily and quickly than they can print letters. Kinesthetically forming letters with the fingers dramatically improves recall of the letter, especially for the hardest-to-reach children.

### **Signing Songs Accelerates ABC and Phonics Skills.**

ABC and phonics immersion through sign language and song has been shown to greatly accelerate learning the alphabetic principal, especially for the hardest-to-reach children. Singing and signing allows us to provide multisensory instruction that is simply more memorable and joyful for young learners – it is “kid friendly.” **The kinesthetic motion of fingerspelling a letter and then signing the key word triggers a response that helps children recall the corresponding sound.** It places explicit, systematic phonics instruction within a rich language learning experience that simultaneously enhances fluency, comprehension skills, and vocabulary.

### **Group Singing and Signing is a Satisfying Social Experience.**

Choral singing, signing, and reading are satisfying social experiences where every child belongs and perceives themselves as successful. **When children are singing and signing, they are joyful, focused, and engaged – the optimum state for language learning.** They acquire language fluency while having the magical “I can read” experience. Skill instruction is accelerated because it is multisensory and placed in a meaningful context.

### **Children’s Experience in Learning to Read Generalizes to Their Whole Self-Concept.**

Bruno Bettelheim’s research reminds us that how children perceive themselves in the act of learning to read generalizes to their whole self-concept. **When teachers engage their students in multisensory literacy learning through signing familiar songs, the pleasure and success they feel will support them not only in learning to read, but also in seeing themselves as successful individuals who can learn and care about learning.**

For additional information, see [www.nellieedge.com/articles and resources.htm](http://www.nellieedge.com/articles_and_resources.htm)

- Parents: Using the ABC Sign Language and Phonics Flashcards
- Sing and Sign for Powerful ABC and Phonics Immersion
- The Magic of Signing Songs – Some Favorite Resources
- Parents as Partners: Taking the ABC and Phonics Challenge
- Signing Songs is a Powerful Language and Literacy Strategy
- Accelerate English and Spanish Learning
- Research Excerpts from **Dancing with Words** by Marilyn Daniels
- Parent Letters and Articles from **Parents as Partners in Kindergarten and Early Literacy** by Nellie Edge



## Tips from Becky Leber, Title 1, All-Day Kindergarten: *Practicing for the ABC Challenge is Collaborative and Fun*



Leaving the ABC chart at floor level makes **this a natural literacy center.** Within four to six weeks of multisensory ABC and phonics immersion, children are eager to take the “ABC Challenge” and see if they can identify each letter (A-Z), make the corresponding sound, and read the key phonics word – complete with American Sign Language (ASL). Hooray for the ABC champs!

**At kindergarten orientation, I gave each family a copy of *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* book, chart, and song CD (Now called *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*).** I really emphasized how important it was for parents to become partners in ABC and phonics learning. At the beginning of the year, we immerse all of the children in multisensory ABC activities: **singing, signing, reading, playing games, clapping, handjiving, and marching to the rhythms and language of our ABC song.** Children often choose the ABC/Phonics Literacy Center to proudly perform their new skills for each other, and motivation is high!

**To design a successful ABC/Sign Language/Phonics Center, you will need:**

- Multiple copies of *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* book
- The corresponding laminated ABC chart at floor level
- Reading the room pointers (we use a dowel with an eraser attached)



Having multiple copies of the ABC book helps. The beginning-of-the-year kinders are especially excited to practice their new Sign Language and phonics skills. Any visitor who happens by hears, **“Do you want to hear me sing the ABCs?”** They are so proud of themselves. My first year using the program, **I was amazed at how excited the kids were and how quickly they learned all the letters and sounds.** Each year this multisensory ABC and Phonics approach gets more powerful because I am more comfortable weaving fingerspelling into all of our literacy learning. Children all want to take the ABC challenge and be a “ABC champ”. One child, who was still making good progress was advised by his friends, **“Go home and practice with your book and CD!”**

# Celeste Starr, Title I Teacher, Adds an ABC Puppet Basket



L "l" lion

**My students love to sing and sign and are always ready and willing to practice again and again.** It is a great filler for those two-minute transition times when you have nothing else planned. We play with the letters, signs, and words. **We've drawn pictures that go with each letter, physically acted out the letters, and even made our own ABC charts, posters, and books for our classroom.**

**We have puppets that go with the animals in *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* (a.k.a. *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*), so each student has opportunities to**

**hold them and dramatically become that letter, sound, and animal.** We also use little props that represent the key phonics symbol (such as a miniature rainbow or umbrella). These are used to help all English language learners make the connection between letters, sounds, words, and real everyday items. **We have a special basket that is just for Sign Language books, flashcards, and our ABC/phonics charts.** There are also pointers, puppets, and wipe-off boards available so that students can be actively engaged in ABC learning during independent learning time.

I have found that this kinesthetic approach is a joyful and powerful link to students' acquisition of letters, sounds, and words. They acquire these skills so much more quickly when we integrate song and Sign Language. **My students are happily engaged and eager to share with each other, their parents, and even perform for other classrooms.** When students are trying to figure out a word or sound for their "kid writing," they often refer back to their signing ABC chart or even chant the song to themselves. It is also not uncommon for children to have automatic recall of words or sounds when I sign the letter. **This is especially important for helping ESOL students to make personal connections and acquire their English language skills with comprehension.**



K "k" kangaroo

There is a special connection between the signed ABCs, how students remember them, and how naturally and easily they use them in their reading and writing. Students are empowered with a sense of accomplishment when they have figured out all these things about letters, sounds, and words, and they realize it is literally all at their fingertips.

## Tips on Building Your Own Basket of ABC Puppets:

- Shop at dollar stores or in discount bulk catalogs.
- Check garage sales.
- Ask parents to help! Send a wish list of the puppets you still need.
- Visit Goodwill and other thrift stores and children's used clothing stores.
- You do not need to have a complete A-Z basket to start an ABC Puppet Center – start with A-L (alligator through lion).



## Kathy Magoun Makes Learning Relevant: *Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion Across the Curriculum*



Kathy Magoun, former Teacher of the Year from Connecticut, is a long-time advocate of using sign language for joyful, multisensory learning so she was excited to discover our *ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song*. She integrates ABC/phonics skills throughout her child-centered kindergarten program. Learning ABC skills is rarely an isolated literacy event.

- I asked Kathy, “When and how did you introduce other ABC books?”

“After most children have a memorable sense of *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* (which we sing all the way through often the first few weeks of school), we use the pattern to introduce each new page in other ABC books (e.g., A “a” alligator and A “a” apple). This keeps the learning new and interesting.”

- Kathy elaborated, “We review the letter/sound/sign language throughout the day and across the curriculum whenever it’s relevant rather than singing the whole song repeatedly. When we talk about families I say, “F “f” fox and F “f” family...” This way connecting letter/sound/sign language becomes a part of all of our discussions and everything we do – and children learn naturally and almost effortlessly.”

*Consider connecting our ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read book (originally called ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song) with the names of your kinders: A “a” alligator and A “a” Allison, B “b” bear and B “b” Bryon...*

Nellie Edge



*“When the theater for the deaf visited our school, we sang and signed for them. They were so impressed and my kids were so proud!”*

# Kathie Bridges' Children Memorize, Recite, and Perform Language: *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song*



Kathie Bridges teaches two two-and-a-half-hour kindergarten sessions in a mixed socio-economic community in Salem, Oregon.

Kathie's joyful, language-rich classroom, high expectations for student achievement, and her own background using Sign Language in special education made *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* (a.k.a. *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*) a natural

choice for her curriculum. The children quickly learned the song and signed with precision and delight. **They performed with great pride for their fourth-grade buddies, the school secretary, and to enthusiastic applause from families during the Winter (Christmas) Celebration.**

Pringle Elementary is one of Salem's oldest schools, with a long tradition of celebrating the arts and high expectations that all of its students become good performers. This, more often than not, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. **Pringle children rise to meet high expectations with amazing performance skills.**

## How did Kathie help the slower Sign Language learners?

Kathie helps the children individually to form each sign correctly. She talks to the children about the deaf community ("When communicating in Sign Language, the palm of your hand is like your face. You would never turn your back to people when speaking to them, so keep your palm facing outward.") Kathie adds four to eight new letters every few days and reviews often.

Copies of the ABC chart and flashcards go home with each child. Most families keep the chart on the refrigerator. The children love to practice, and their parents are so impressed.

Kathie further reinforces the Sign Language ABCs by dismissing the children silently by fingerspelling the first letter of their name. "If your name begins with ... (Kathie signs a letter), then you may be excused." This teaches the children to really pay attention and sharpen their visual skills. High-frequency words are also fingerspelled.

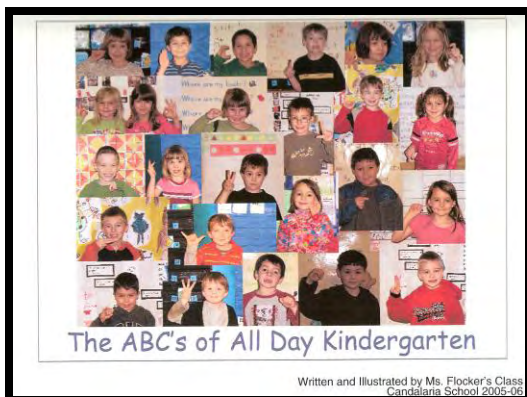


Kathie Bridges makes ABC and phonics learning meaningful, engaging, multisensory, and fun! She further builds automaticity with letters and sounds through a program of individual, systematic, daily repetition at home and at school using ABC flashcards until mastery is achieved.

# Laura Flocker's Experience: Parents Love this Approach to the ABCs

Laura Flocker teaches an all-day “parent-requested and tuition-supported” kindergarten in Salem, Oregon. Laura is a legend in this school community, known for her incredible arts-rich program where science explorations, drawing, and art experiences fill the day and friendly animals are a part of the life of the classroom. Parent participation and support for their child learning American Sign Language is very high. **They love seeing their child's pride and enthusiasm for learning. Parents appreciate the playful, stress-free approach to learning phonics while the children are also learning a second language.** One parent whose daughter learned the whole *ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* in one week told of how proudly her daughter performed the song for her cousins and neighbors – for anyone who would listen. Her brother was jealous that he didn't get to learn the ABCs through sign and song!

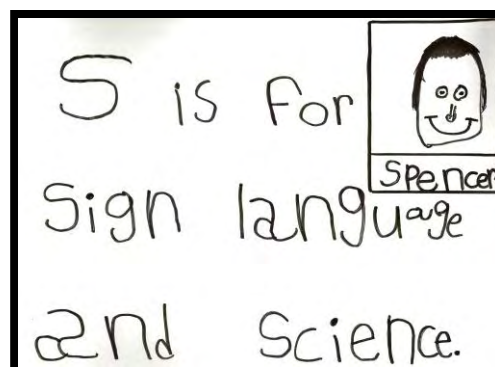
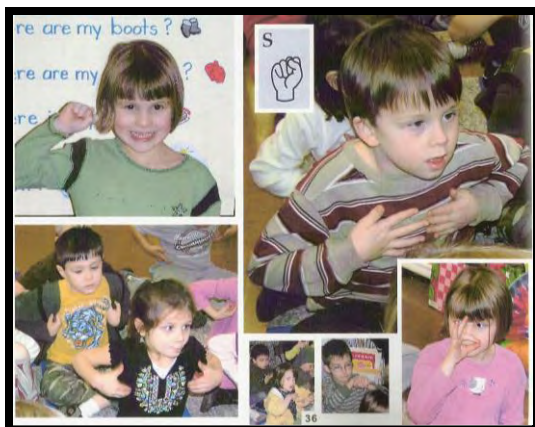
**Laura gave every parent a copy of *The ABC Sign Language and Phonics Song* book and CD (a.k.a. *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*).**



**Later, the class published their own original book featuring the children as ABC experts.** This was a real hit, and Laura says it is “one of the best things I've done!” Now every family has a cherished bound book they can read together and delight in. It is a celebration of friends and a reminder of the child's success in learning how to read and write.

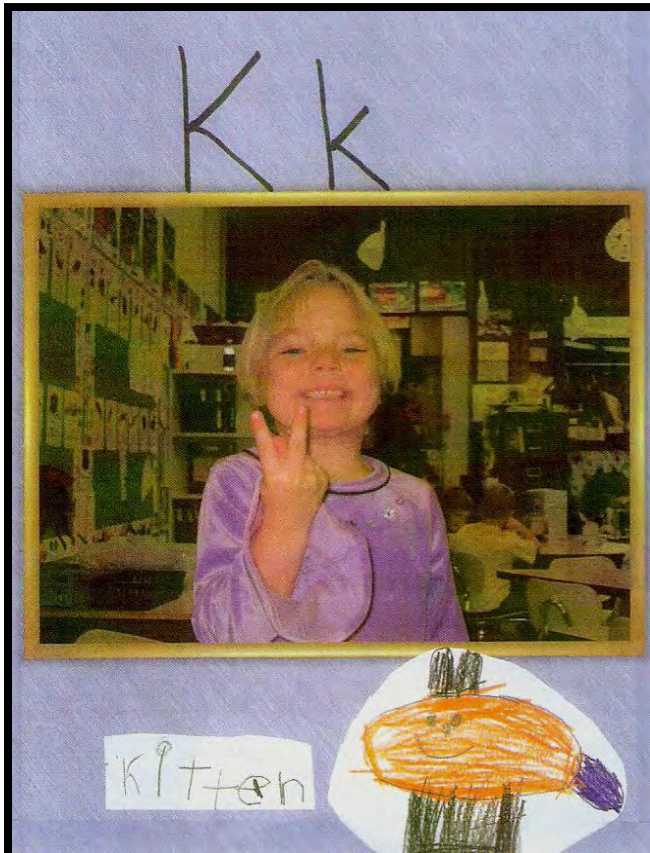
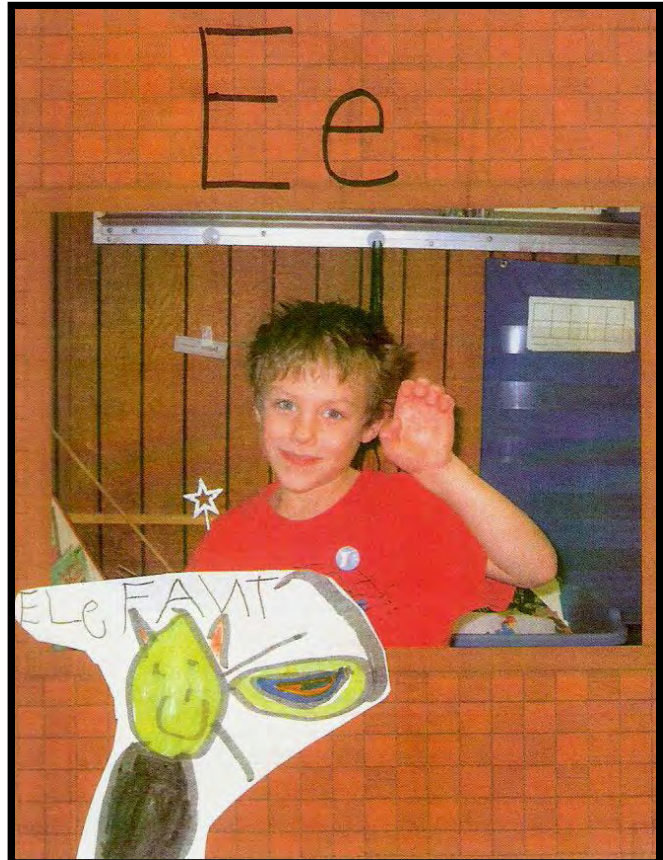
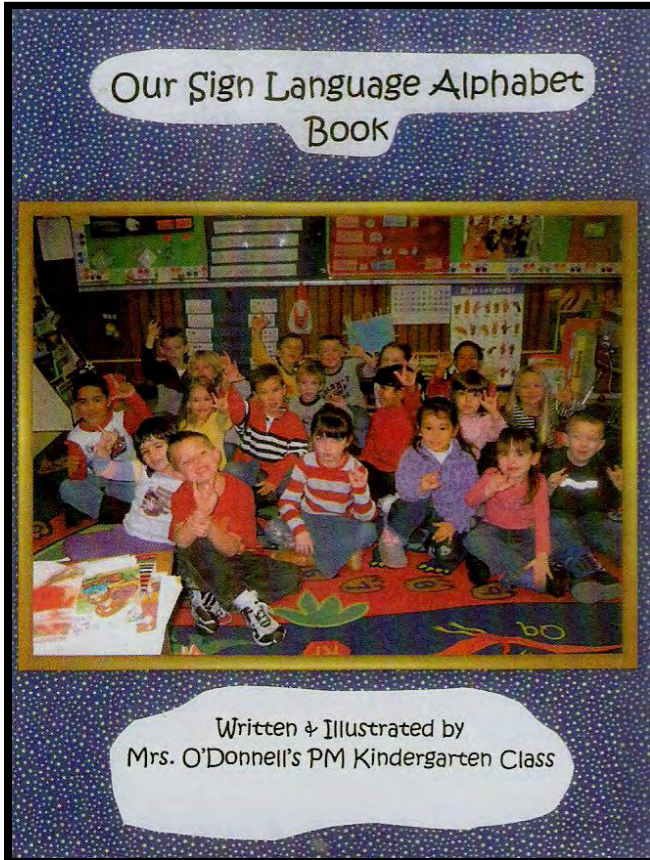
*To publish your class book, contact:*

**Nationwide Learning, Inc.**  
6700 South Topeka Blvd.  
P.O. Box 19244, Topeka, KS 66619-0244  
800-867-2292 (7:00am to 5:30pm CST weekdays)  
Email: [info@nationwide.com](mailto:info@nationwide.com)



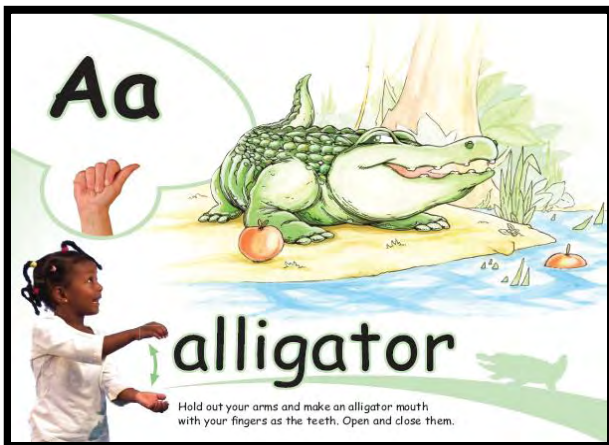
**We love this way of honoring children as authors, illustrators, and experts at American Sign Language and phonics.** Teachers receive the class book kit and one copy of the bound book free, and books are published within ten days of agreed-upon publishing date. Cost per book is similar to the cost of quality hardback children's books, and they look and feel like real books. How fun is that?

# Personalize Your ABC and Phonics Program: Create a Classroom of Signing Experts



What a wonderful ABC memory book: each child's photo, name, writing, and art.  
*Special thanks to Jill O'Donnell for sharing.*

## *ABC and Phonics Rehearsal Strategies: Vary the Practice*



- **Send home copies of the ABC Phonics wall chart and song CD for families to enjoy together.** (You have permission and are encouraged to **make this a parents as partners program.**) Invite parents to download the free ASL instructional video from [www.sign2me.com](http://www.sign2me.com).
- **Consider having children’s main performance of this song in November as a part of your Thankfulness Celebration** or in December for your winter or Christmas celebration.

- **Our focus is active, joyful immersion.** We want to plant these foundation skills in the most efficient, accurate, and successful way possible for all learners.

**Children need a variety of ways to practice so they don’t get bored. This is known as “elaborative rehearsal.” Consider these strategies:**

- **Teach A-D the first week of school and teach these well.** Let the children perform for the music teacher, librarian, or school secretary – any appreciative audience will do! Add four to eight new letters at a time.
- **“Please teach A-L to your fourth-grade buddy today.”** Switch roles and let your students act as teachers. This is a great learning experience that will encourage them and reinforce what they know and can share.
- **Review I, J, K, and L with your kindergarten partner:** pair, review, and teach.
- **Let them feel the rhythms of sound.**
  - “Today, we’re going to chant our ABC song by just doing a clap-slap rhythm on our thighs.” (No Sign Language.)
  - “Today, see if you can keep the rhythm with rhythm sticks while we sing our ABC and phonics song all the way through. Eyes on me! Ready? Start!”
  - “Today we’re going to do our ABC/phonics song with a partner as a handjive.” (Demonstrate patty-cake style.)
  - **“Instead of singing, let’s say our ABC Phonics song with a full voice and march to the rhythm.”**
- **Invite half the class to stand and perform A-L while the audience of remaining children sings along and gives them positive feedback.** “I liked the way you looked...” **Or, invite them to perform for someone special.** “Today we’re going to do our best practice. We’ll go perform for the principal. He is amazed at our singing and signing.”
- **Practice doing A-L with “no voice at all,” using only Sign Language and mouthing the letters and sounds.** This teaches children to hear and feel the rhythm of the language internally.

## Elaborative Rehearsal Keeps the Enthusiasm High



- “Let’s say our ABC and phonics song softly and tiptoe around the room.”
  - “Sing A-H in slow motion... now let’s see if we can sing at a rapid pace!”
  - “We’ll practice our ABC song silently as we go down the hall. Hear the language in your inner ear, mouth the sound while signing – but no sound will come out. Watch me!” (As teacher walks backwards.)
  - “Who did you read and sing your ABC and phonics song to last night? Remember, if your family is not available to listen, you can read and perform it for your cat or teddy bear or goldfish. They will love to listen to you!”
  - Invite last year’s kindergartners to come and partner with your kids and sing and sign facing the new learners.
- Give extra help to the slower learners and playfully reinforce the skill one-on-one when you are dialoguing with them. *B “b” bear and B “b” Brian!*”
  - Bring in a “signing bear” and invite the children to sign with him. Later, make him available in the ABC/Phonics Center.
  - “This time, I’m going to try and trick you. Watch my hand signs and see if I’m doing the right animal” (do B “b” and sign cat or dog instead of bear). “Aren’t you clever for catching my trick!”
  - “Be sure and sing the new letters E-F-G to our class bunny so she learns to read too!”
  - Using white boards, ask the children to write the letter while you say the letter, sound, and key phonics symbol (lower-case or upper-case). Erase and try another one.
  - Choose one child to be the “expert” for each letter of the alphabet. Line the children up and sing the ABC and phonics song, pausing for each child to perform their letter of expertise. (Hopefully, you don’t have more than twenty-six kinders, but if you do, double up on some of the letters!) Stand behind each child and cue them “A” – pause – touch their shoulders – help if needed!



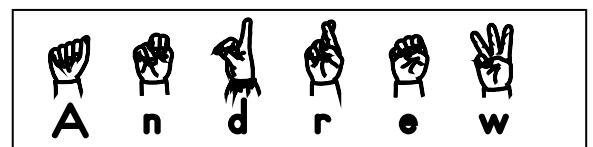
**Our friend Mitzi Shirk had thirty-five kindergartners (which should never happen in a state that values literacy!), but even against the odds, her children still far surpassed state benchmarks for kindergarten. She attributes this to multisensory ABC and phonics immersion, daily “kid writing”, and our joyful literacy practices.**

# ABC and Phonics Immersion: How to Engage Kinders Who Are Harder-to-Accelerate

Remember Bettelheim's research:

*“How children perceive themselves in the act of learning to read generalizes to their whole self-concept.”* Start with what the child **can** do and build on success. Keep going back to what is known to build confidence and create an anchor for new learning.

- **Joyful, multisensory immersion is still the key.** Some children need more of it with greater support and repetition – more good teaching and more good practice.
- **Use puppets and visuals to reinforce learning.** Celeste Starr has a puppet that corresponds to each of our key phonics objects. Children are motivated to play with the sound puppets.
- **Encourage writing of hard-to-remember letters while saying the letter/sound and key phonics object.** Writing in the air and then on the chalkboard or in a sand tray seems to help some learners.
- **Pair the slower learning child with an ABC expert.** Kind kinder buddies for team practice has proven effective.
- **Let the slower ABC learner become the class expert for one or two letter/sounds.** Call on him or her to display that knowledge and help others often.
- **Use flash cards.** Play visual matching and auditory memory games.
- **As soon as the child can do four letters accurately, let him perform (with a few confident buddies – if needed) for an enthusiastic school helper.** Custodians, librarians, and secretaries usually offer enthusiastic responses. “Listen to you! You know a,b,c,d...and even the Sign Language! Wow! Aren't you proud of yourself?”
- **Emphasize the first letter of each child's name and connect it to the ABC and phonics song.** Teach each child to fingerspell their name.



- **With every new set of four letters, provide additional, individual, multisensory practice.** Train a parent helper or fourth-grade buddy to help. Do not let a child fall behind.
- **Involve parents as partners in learning the ABC Phonics: Sing Sign, and Read song picture book.** Show them how to engage the child in direct, systematic instruction with a growing collection of ABC and Phonics cards to build instant recognition of letters and sounds. Kathie Bridges sends flashcards and a record-keeping form home so parents whose children need extra support can track their child's progress nightly.
- **Practice for automaticity.** Have the child write his or her name several times a day and name the letters in order and then randomly. Use the same process with high-frequency words. Practice until there is instant retrieval of alphabetic knowledge.

## Using the ABC Sign Language Flashcards and Song Chart

Dear Parents and Families,

The enclosed ABC/phonics charts and flashcards complement the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* song picture book and CD, which we use for multisensory literacy instruction in our kindergarten. **We sing, sign, and read this song every day.** It is amazing how quickly children learn to recognize the letter, sign, and sound through repetition of this active, engaging ABC/Phonics song. **We are reminded that the brain is wired to remember large amounts of information most easily when connected through the rhythm and melody of a song.** Enjoy the song as a free download with the American Sign Language Instructional Video at [www.Sign2Me.com](http://www.Sign2Me.com).

**Please post the song charts on the refrigerator or bedroom door for additional daily practice until your child knows it by heart.**

These flashcards, which also **focus on lower-case letters**, provide another opportunity for your child to be immersed in ABC and phonics activities. **Notice that the key phonics word is included to challenge the early readers.**

**Please use the chart and flashcards to:**

- **Encourage your child to play naming and sound games with the cards.**
- **See how quickly the child can say the letter, sound, and key object word.**
- Notice your child's fingerspelling and use of American Sign Language.
- **Let your child teach you how to fingerspell each letter.** Compare your child's finger positions to the song chart.
- **Once your child has letter/sound recognition of a portion of the song, invite them to perform it over and over again to any appreciative audience.** They will soon perform the entire *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* song.

When first learning these essential foundation skills, it is important for children to practice the letter sound consistently from the same ABC book at home and at school. **Daily multisensory practice accelerates children's learning.**

**Thank you for the commitment to your child's literacy development at home and at school.**

Warmly,



## ABC and Phonics Flashcard Practice

Dear Families:

**Our goal is to enable your child to say each letter and its corresponding sound instantly by sight recognition while also fingerspelling the letter.** We want your child to know each of the ABC's and their corresponding sounds automatically without having to think about it for several seconds. Your nightly commitment to singing the entire *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read* chart and then practicing (playing games) with four to eight ABC/phonics flashcards (or the entire set!) will greatly accelerate your child's literacy.

**Some ways to play with flashcards (five-minute games):**

- 1 **Use these cards as a simple flashcard game.** Show the card and challenge your child to quickly say the letter and sound. Make a stack of the cards he or she instantly knows. Give your child a high-five for effort.
- 2 **Lay four to eight cards out on the table face-up.** Point to a card and ask your child to say the letter and sound and to sign the letter and key phonics symbol. Mix them up occasionally and do them out of sequence.
- 3 **Let your child teach you the fingerspelling and Sign Language for each card.** Switch roles – say, “You be the teacher!”
- 4 **Put the cards in a basket or hat and pull them out one at a time.** Ask your child to quickly say the letter and sound.
- 5 **Say the sound of one of the alphabet flashcards and ask your child to point to or to pick up the card that matches the letter sound and say the letter.**
- 6 **Brainstorm a list of words that contain the sound that a certain letter makes, referring back to the key phonics symbol.** Look around the room or in the refrigerator... B, “b” bear and B, “b” butter, banana, bread...and so on.
- 7 **Select one or two letter/sound cards that your child does not automatically recall yet and remember to review them the next day.**

**Keep it playful and be enthusiastic.** Always start with the letters and sounds your child already knows, giving them **positive feedback and encouragement**. “Good for you!...You already know these sounds!...Last week you didn't know, but now look at how many you have learned!...You can do it!...Wow! You know all those letters, sounds, and even American Sign Language! Let's go show Grandma what you've learned.”

# Taking “The ABC and Phonics Challenge”

Dear Parents and Families,

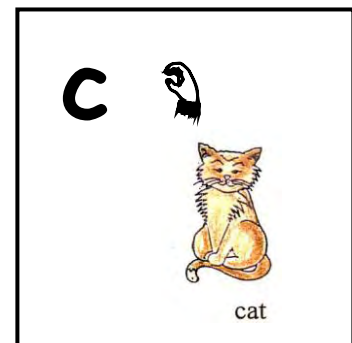
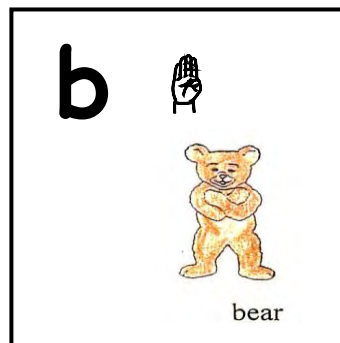
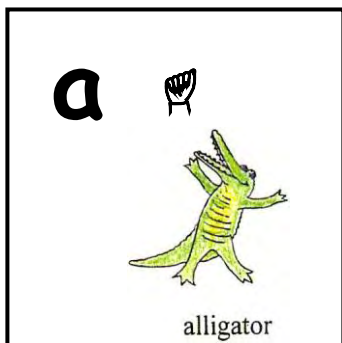
**The kindergarten children are quickly learning *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*. Thank you for continuing to review it daily at home!** We sing and say the letter names while we sign them, adding the sounds of the letters, and then sign and read the picture clue for each page. For those children who already know letter names and sounds, this gives them practice learning American Sign Language (ASL) and reading key phonics words.

**Starting next week, children may choose to take “The ABC and Phonics Challenge.”** If they can read the whole book on their own, we will celebrate their learning with a cheer and a special certificate. **Remember the children are NOT in competition with each other.** This is their personal literacy challenge. Learning letters and sounds is an exciting and vitally important skill. It is made more memorable when combined with Sign Language, which is why we are immersed in multisensory ABC and phonics fun in kindergarten.

Thank you for encouraging your child’s delight in learning and performing ABC’s, phonics, and ASL at home. **You are giving your child a foundation for reading success.**

Warmly,

Inspiration for this letter comes from Susie Haas and Diane Larson.



## Our Animated Literacy Cheer:

Jeremy can read!  
Hip, hip, hooray!  
Cha-cha-cha

*(Exact Signed English for Silent Applause\*)*

\*Children wave both hands enthusiastically as in signing “wonderful.”

a



b



c



h



I took the

abc and

phonics challenge

and I won!

d



e



m



f



Name \_\_\_\_\_

l



Date \_\_\_\_\_



g



Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

k



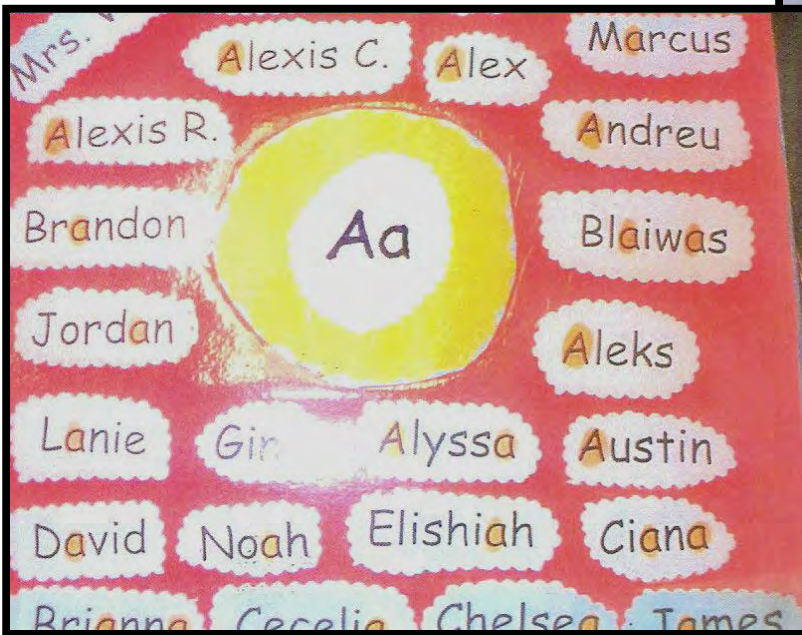
i



h



# Enhance Your ABC and Phonics Immersion Program: Create Memory Hooks Using the Letters of Each Child's Name



*"Who has a 'd' in their name?" Julie Rundquist created a lovely and colorful ABC book of children's names.*

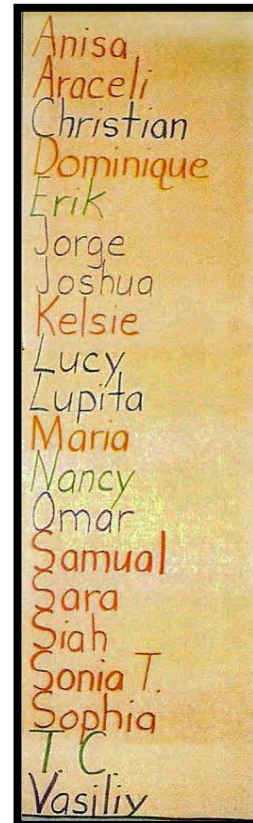


*Notice the fingerspelling on Katie Nelson's moveable name word wall. Children use the name cards during word work activities and "Kid Writing" workshop.*

## Powerful ABC and Phonics Immersion Strategies Build on Children's Names

*"The child's name is an island of security in a sea of unknown print"*

Marie Clay



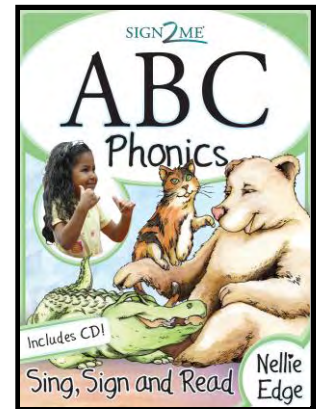
*Post a color-highlighted, alphabetized list of children's names for comparison and word study. (Thank you Jennifer Foster!)*

# The Magic of Signing Songs – Our Favorite Resources

## ***ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*** (Picture Book/CD and Program) by Nellie Edge

©2001, revised 2006, 2009. Seattle, WA: Sign2Me®/Northlight Communications.

This new *Sing, Sign and Read Book*™ by Nellie Edge provides powerful multisensory ABC and phonics immersion. Each engaging page features one letter with its manual, American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet hand shape, a prominent picture of the key phonics symbol associated with that letter, and a child demonstrating the appropriate ASL sign. (An instructional video is available as a free download from [www.Sign2Me.com](http://www.Sign2Me.com))



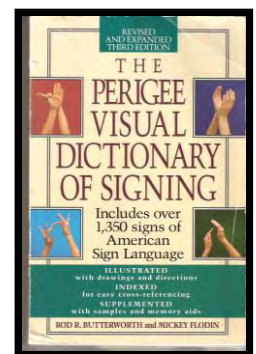
Email [Sign2Me](mailto:Sign2Me) to receive information for the additional Training Resource Packet, including ABC charts, flashcards, Accelerated Literacy Guide, and parent letters for home-school collaboration.

## ***The Perigee Visual Dictionary of Signing***

By Rod Butterworth and Mickey (1995) Produced by: Perigee Trade.  
Your class needs at least one sign language dictionary. **This affordable paperback is our choice.**

## ***Lift Up Your Hands***

By Donna C. Gadling, Pastor Daniel H. Pokorny, and Dr. Lottie L. Riekehof (1992). Produced by: The National Grange, 1616 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. 2006. (202) 628-3507; [www.nationalgrange.org](http://www.nationalgrange.org)



Favorite patriotic songs with illustrations for sign language interpretation are featured. They use a combination of American Sign Language signs and English word order.

## ***Beginning Sign Language Books and Free ASL Alphabet Poster***

By S. Harold Collins. Produced by: Garlic Press, 1312 Jeppesen Ave., Eugene, OR, 97401; (541) 345-0063; [www.garlicpress.com](http://www.garlicpress.com)

Our two favorites are: *Signing at School*, which presents especially common signs, sentences and vocabulary for use in the early childhood classroom, and *Signs for Animals and Pets* (a board book).

## ***Dancing with Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy***

By Marilyn Daniels. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001.

This fascinating book presents the research underlying the recommendation of teaching sign language to all children to “improve hearing children’s English vocabulary, reading ability, spelling proficiency, self-esteem, and comfort expressing emotions.”

## **Seminar and Distance Learning Materials**

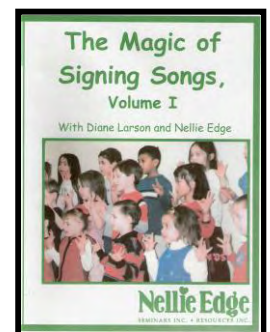
(Email [info@nelliedge.com](mailto:info@nelliedge.com) for details.)

### **The Original Video (Now DVD): *The Magic of Signing Songs, Volume I***

Instructional DVD: How to sign twenty-one songs, from Nellie Edge Seminars. Signed by Diane Larson. Nellie Edge Resources, Inc.

[www.nelliedge.com](http://www.nelliedge.com)

Includes *ABC Song*; *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*; *You Are My Sunshine*; *May There Always Be Sunshine*; *Sing Your Way Home*; *Five Little Monkeys*; *Happy Birthday*; *Rainbow 'Round Me*; *Magic Penny*; *I Think You're Wonderful*; *Sign to Me*; *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*.



### **Also includes Nellie Edge Read and Sing Big Books™:**

*I Can Read Colors (Se Leer Colores); I Have A Cat (Yo Tengo Un Gato); The Opposite Song (La Cancion de Opuestos); Goodnight Irene (Buenos Noches Irene); Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear (Osito, Osito); I Love the Mountains (Amos Los Montes).*

- Comes with ASL Instruction Book and “I Can Read” anthology set.

### ***Maximizing Language and Literacy Through the Magic of Signing Songs***

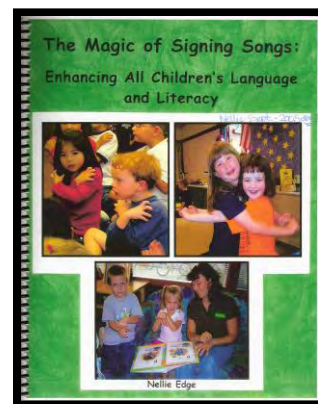
Literacy Manual by Nellie Edge, Revised 2008.

This book combines research and “best practices” for incorporating twenty-one well-loved songs in sign language into the pre K-3 curriculum. It contains the words, music, and chords for all signed songs and is designed to accompany the original instructional DVD *The Magic of Signing Songs*. You will find concise summaries of informative articles, Brain-Friendly Literacy™ strategies, classroom rituals and traditions that build joyful learning communities, the rationale for signing songs with all children, and resources for additional study. Includes a separate “I Can Read” Anthology packet of ten songs, poems, and rhymes (blackline masters).

### ***The Magic of Signing Songs: Enhancing All Children’s Language and Literacy***

Literacy Manual by Nellie Edge, revised 2009.

The next best thing to attending the engaging signing seminar, *The Magic of Signing Songs*, is to study this book and the accompanying seminar video. This practical book is designed to introduce all educators to the joyful art of signing songs. Engage your children in signing songs for powerful ABC and phonics immersion, to enhance spelling, reading and speaking skills, build a cooperative learning community, and utilize their multiple intelligences in learning and expressing language. Includes words and extensive curriculum connections for all songs, Brain-Friendly Literacy™ strategies, sample parent letters, phonemic awareness and differentiated literacy guides, information on using sign language for class management, classroom rituals and celebrations, literacy research, and resources. Book comes with ASL instructional book and “I Can Read” Anthology and Little Book collection (blackline masters).



### **DVD: *The Magic of Signing Songs, Volume II***

**(Includes song book with pictorial American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation)**

Instructional DVD of ten songs from Nellie Edge Seminars. Signed by Diane Larson.

Nellie Edge Resources, Inc. [www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com)

Includes: *The Sign Language ABC and Phonics Song, What a Wonderful World, Pledge of Allegiance, America the Beautiful, This Land is Your Land, See Me Beautiful, The More We Get Together (with variations), L-O-V-E Spells Love, M-O-M Spells Mom, English and Spanish Greeting and Farewell Song*. These songs have accelerated literacy, engaged children in joyful learning, and brought audiences to tears.

Teachers, parents, and their children love how easy it is to learn to sign memorable songs with our new video. Each song is sung and signed in its entirety; the signs are slowly demonstrated and explained and the song is repeated. Take this video and the songs with the accompanying visual ASL guide into your classroom (or living room) and learn to sign along with your students.

- Comes with ASL Instruction Book and “I Can Read” anthology set.

### ***Come Sign With Us***

Book by Jan C. Hafer and Robert M. Wilson; illustrated by Paul Setzer. Washington, D.C.: Clerc Books, 1996.

Here is a fully illustrated activities manual for teaching children sign language. It features more

than 300 line drawings of adults and children signing familiar words, phrases, and sentences using American Sign Language (ASL) signs in English word order. All signs have equivalent words listed in English and Spanish as well. The *Come Sign With Us* video is also available.

### ***Sign with Your Baby***

***Book and Video/DVD by Joseph Garcia***

Seattle, WA: Northlight Communications, 1999.

[www.sign2me.com](http://www.sign2me.com)

We love this timeless book and DVD – it makes a wonderful gift for new parents! The how-to DVD shows Dr. Joseph Garcia and wise, responsive parents empowering early two-way communication with their babies and toddlers while supporting English language development, all through the use of American Sign Language.

### ***Sign Language Rubber Stamps***

Harris Communication, 1-800-825-6758, [www.harriscomm.com](http://www.harriscomm.com) (To locate, go to the homepage, click on “novelties,” “rubber stamps,” then “next page.”)

These stamps are our favorites for the writing center: Fingerspell “LOVE,” “friend” and the ABC’s with manual sign and capital letter.

### ***Fingerletter Font (Signed letters)***

Available at Educational Fontware, Inc., 6396 NE Ralston Rd, Bainbridge Island, WA, 98110. (800) 806-2155; [efi@educationalfontware.com](mailto:efi@educationalfontware.com)

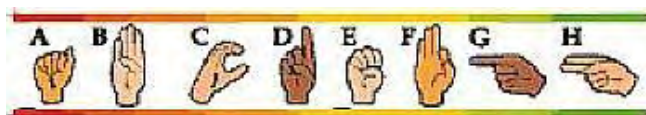
Help children learn to fingerspell each other’s names by creating name tags with this specialty computer font using the signed fingerspelling that can be made very large.



### ***Sign Language Alphabet Line***

by TS Denison available at <http://www.frankschaffer.com/>

These child-size handshapes are perfect to display in the classroom at kid level. Simply cut the alphabet line apart and add your hand-made laminated heart letters or use a die cut machine. (See page 118.)



### ***Practice American Sign Language on the Internet***

Michigan State University ASL (American Sign Language) Browser \*

<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/title>

### **For a comprehensive catalog of sign language resources:**

Gallaudet University Bookstore, 800 Florida Avenue NE, Washington, D.C., 2002. (800) 451-1073; <http://www.gallaudet.edu/>.

### ***To order a Signing Bear***

See <http://www.signingsmart.com/store/customer/home.php?cat=268>

A cuddly signing bear adds to the emotionally engaging experience of signing songs for children of all ages! Your arms fit into his arms so the bear can “come alive” in the classroom.



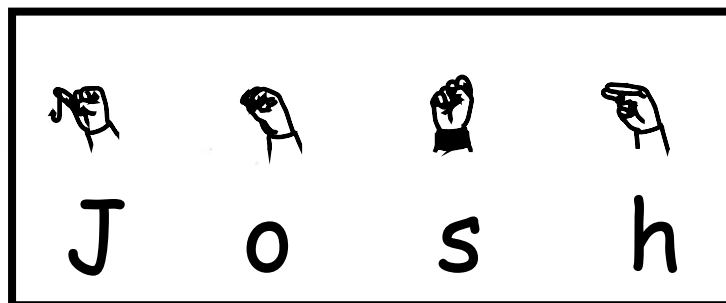
# Send Your Students a Welcome Letter: Fingerspell Your Name!

August 2009

Dear Josh,

Soon it will be time for school to start. We will laugh and play and talk and dance together. Learning to read and write will be a grand adventure. Every day we will sing and sign our ABC's and learn about animals and fascinating things in the real world - from alligators to volcanoes. We will learn to draw, and we will memorize many poems and Mother Goose rhymes.

You will learn to fingerspell all of the letters of the alphabet. Here is how we fingerspell your name:



You may enjoy practicing these letters with your family before school starts.

I love to sing and write, ride bikes, study birds, and look at the stars. I look forward to hearing your stories about family fun and what you did this summer.

Smiles from your kindergarten teacher,  
Nellie Edge

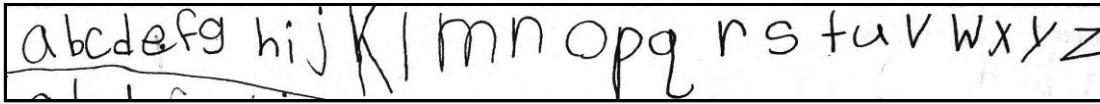


# *Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion: Notes*

How will you make your instruction more memorable?



## ABC Fluency (Quick Letter Writing) Research and Practice: Kindergartners Can Learn to Recall and Efficiently Print Forty Letters Per Minute



Kindergarten teachers in a study from the University of Washington found that children who could recall (with no abc sample visible) and print letters of the alphabet (first lower case, then upper case) at forty letters per minute were all very successful with first-grade reading and writing tasks. **In fact, there were virtually no reading failures among such children and normal functioning kindergarten children can all reach this level if they are properly taught.** “Children who write the alphabet at over forty letters per minute can always name randomly presented letters at least at that rate too.”

**Use this powerful mental retrieval exercise in January or after most children already have mastery of the alphabetic principle and fluency writing their name and several high-frequency words.** (Fluency is speed and accuracy.) Prepare children for a “brain exercise.”\*

- **Make sure the children all know the traditional ABC song and chant so the letter sequence is already held in long-term memory.**
- **I introduce this by first doing a mental rehearsal with the whole class gathered on the floor in front of me.** We talk about how we exercise our arms and legs: “Now we get to exercise our brain too!” I ask the children to slowly visualize, verbalize, and finger-write in the air along with me: a, b, c...z. We practice immediately stopping at the bell sound. Then the children are excused to tables to do the one-minute brain exercise (also called a “timed ABC write”) exactly as we have already mentally practiced it. Children put their name on their paper and wait until they hear, “ABC: Start now!”
- **Use a timer (or bell) to signal, “stop writing and put the pencil down.”** Ask the children to draw a line across the paper under their first ABC exercise. Pause and challenge them to do one more one-minute “brain exercise.” “See if you can remember the letters even more quickly!”
- **Carefully monitor that the children are all building on success and understanding what is expected of them.** Make sure this activity starts and continues as a positive experience.
- **Stress that once they finish a-z, they can quickly start over with ABC again.** Tell the children to write the letters as accurately and as quickly as possible. “**No erasing.** Just keep going.”
- **Keep track of the correct number of letters printed. You will gain some surprising insights into children’s alphabetic knowledge and handwriting skills. Date the papers and record progress.**

**\*Do not do this activity with the entire class if you know it will create frustration and defeat for some of the children.** Provide an alternative activity for these children until they are ready to join the others and build on success. For children who are ready for this activity, it is challenging and fun. We have even seen children choose to practice this on their own (using a timer, of course!) during their activity time.

# Provide ABC Fluency Practice for Less-Experienced Students



David practices his name, a, b, c, and then adds d. A vertical surface (the easel) facilitates handwriting. Soon he practices meaningful sentences: "I love you."

You probably already know which children need more time and more carefully scaffolded writing instruction to be successful and perceive ABC fluency practice ("brain exercise") as an enjoyable challenge.

I recommend giving less-experienced children additional guided writing practice individually or in a small groups, building fluency with their name and meaningful words and phrases. Then encourage them to mentally retrieve and write a,b,c, then a, b, c, d, and e, f, g over and over in a very non-threatening environment on their

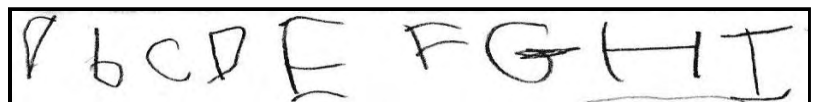
name ticket or journals. Keep verbalizing another phrase of the traditional ABC chant so the children have the internal auditory support. Provide guided imagery rehearsals and teach them to sub-vocalize a, b, c, d, e, f, g as they write. **Train parents and volunteers to work one-on-one with less-experienced students:** write the letters in the air, on salt trays, on Etch-a-Sketch boards, at the easel, and on the chalkboard. **The key is accurate repetition until each child has quick, confident recall and efficient handwriting for a growing number of letters.** This type of fluency rehearsal may be a more efficient use of time than merely asking children to (often mindlessly) copy one letter over and over for handwriting practice. **Copying from a model does not require a child to develop quick letter recall.** Perhaps ABC fluency practice even deserves a brief segment of writing workshop time. Once children truly have fluency with most letters and some key high-frequency words and phrases, they can more easily focus on recording their ideas fluently in daily "kid writing".

## Why is this important?

*"The point, is the practice in retrieving the picture of the letter*

*from the brain. You are exercising the brain and setting in stone the path for retrieving words from the brain. When we read, we are retrieving the pictures of words from our brains. And for comprehension to occur, that retrieval has to be fast, or at the rate one speaks. It holds the same principle; you are practicing the quick retrieval process to ready the kid's brains for fluent reading."*

– 'Pickles' on the mentor kindergarten teachers chatboard



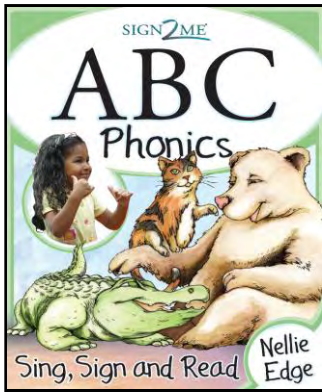
**Fluency = speed + accuracy**



**How do you use high-frequency words to build ABC fluency?**

# How to Use Other Favorite ABC Books:

*Enhance your ABC and Phonics Program with Multisensory Strategies that Stick*



***ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read*** by Nellie Edge (Sign2Me Publishers, 2009)

*Start the year with one key ABC and Phonics book as your anchor text. Add finger spelling and American Sign Language (ASL) for phonics symbols and invite your children on an engaging musical learning adventure at school and at home. After children have fluency with one foundation ABC book, use the pattern to introduce each new page in other ABC books. Use the fingerspelling and refer back to your original key phonics symbols. (See [www.sign2me.com](http://www.sign2me.com) for ASL instructional video download.)*

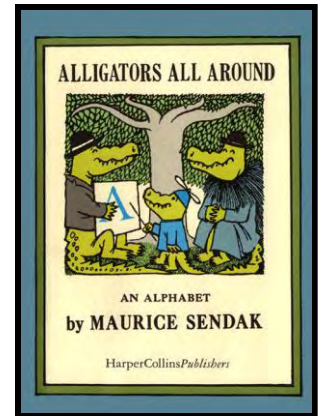
***ABC: A Child's First Alphabet Book*** by Alison Jay (Dutton, 2003)



***Animalia*** by Graeme Base (Puffin, 1996)

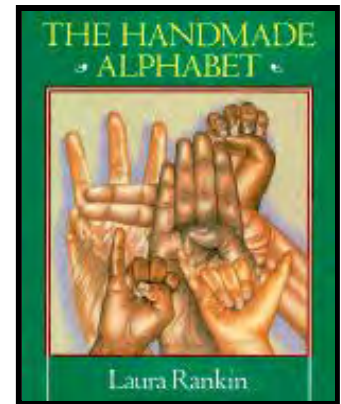
***Alligators All Around: An Alphabet*** by Maurice Sendak (Harper Trophy, 1991)

***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*** by Bill Martin, Jr. (Simon and Schuster, 1989)

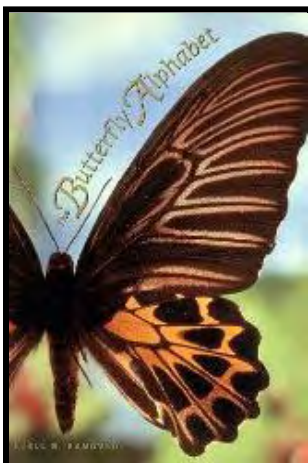


***Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables From A to Z*** by Lois Ehlert (Voyager Books, 1993)

***Max's ABC*** by Rosemary Wells (Puffin, 2006)



***Mrs. Bindergarten Gets Ready For Kindergarten*** by Joseph Slate (Dutton, 1996)



***Superhero ABC*** by Bob McLeod (HarperCollins, 2006)

***The Butterfly Alphabet*** by Kjell B. Sandved (Scholastic, 1996)

***The Handmade Alphabet*** by Laura Rankin (Dial Books, 1991)

***Toot & Puddle: Puddle's ABC*** by Hollie Hobbie (Little, Brown and Company, 2000)

