

...What Schools & Teachers Say...



the SignWriting Literacy Project
For Deaf Students

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Caldwell Elementary School Hearing Impaired Program, Wichita, Kansas



Caldwell Elementary School
(316)833-2795 - FAX 833-2796

Together Everyone Achieves More
T.E.A.M.

March 5, 1998

Valerie Sutton
The Deaf Action Committee For Sign Writing
P.O. Box 517
La Jolla, CA 92038-0517

Dear Valerie,

The staff of the Hearing Impaired Program at Caldwell Elementary School in Wichita, KS would like to participate in your SignWriting Literacy Project. We are part of the USD 259 Public School System. Our program has existed in this system for approximately 35 years. There is also a program at the junior high and senior high level in our system.

We have students with hearing impairments in preschool through 5th grade at this school. Some of our students are in self-contained classes while others are in the mainstream. The time in mainstream varies from one hour to full day. Four of our teachers would like to introduce signwriting to their students. All these teachers have a master's degree in deaf education and many years of teaching experience (5 - 25 years). Each teacher has one to three students in his or her class that would be part of the project.

Participants and grade levels as we see them at the present time:

1. 1st Grade --- 3 students (2 with cochlear implants and 1 with Spanish-speaking parents) with emerging language abilities.
2. 1st, 2nd, 3rd combo --- 2 students (one with deaf parents, one with Cambodian speaking parent) with developing language abilities.
3. 5th grade --- 1 or 2 students with low language levels
4. Multi-handicapped class --- 5 students (with varying levels of ability)

We are always looking for ways to develop and increase our students' literacy levels. Thank you for considering us for your project.

Sincerely,
Diana Smith, Teacher

Diana Smith

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Texas School for the Deaf Lower School, Austin, Texas



Marvin B. Sallap
Executive Director

Texas School for the Deaf

Educational Resource Center on Deafness

1102 South Congress Avenue • Post Office Box 3538 • Austin, Texas 78764
Voice (512) 462-5353 • TDD (512) 462-5352 • Fax (512) 462-5313

May 7, 1998

Valerie Sutton
The Deaf Action Committee For Sign Writing
P.O. Box 517
La Jolla, CA 92038-0517

Dear Ms. Sutton:

One of our elementary teachers at Texas School for the Deaf, Dr. Vicki Everhart, had the opportunity to meet with you at a conference in San Diego and learn about your Sign Writing Literacy Project. Dr. Everhart shared her enthusiasm for involving our students in the project with several teachers and our curriculum department team members who are participating in a Star Schools Grant. This grant supports a project that is led by Steve Nover from New Mexico School for the Deaf. An action research approach has been utilized with the participants who have been reading about literacy development, ASL, ESL, and exploring strategies for classroom implementation to improve the literacy skills of our students.

At this time, two teachers definitely wish to participate in the Sign Writing Literacy Project. While class assignments have not yet been finalized for the 1998-99 school year, we anticipate that the students will be somewhere between second and fifth grade. The teachers will share their experiences with sign writing at the weekly seminar that includes all of the TSD grant participant members. In addition, information will be shared at monthly forums with Steve Nover. There is potential for the sign writing project to expand into other classrooms here at Texas School for the Deaf as well as New Mexico School for the Deaf based on the seminar communication.

Our school serves approximately 450 students; about 100 of these students are in our early childhood/elementary program. We have resource staff and technological support that nurture our neverending goal to grow professionally for the benefit of our students. It would be our pleasure to be able to participate in your Sign Writing Literacy Project here at TSD.

To assist us with full participation in this project, we plan to create a permission form to distribute to parents requesting their consent for students to exhibit their work on the World Wide Web.

Please feel free to call me at (512) 389-7221 should you have additional questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gloria Seidlin-Bernstein".

Gloria Seidlin-Bernstein
Principal, Lower School

cc: Dr. Vicki Everhart
Ms. Claire Bugen

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Robarts School For The Deaf London, Ontario, Canada

Ministry of Education
and Training

The Robarts School

Box 7300
1090 Highbury Avenue
London ON N5Y 4V9
Telephone (519) 453-4400
Facsimile (519) 453-7943

Ministère de l'Éducation
et de la Formation

L'École Robarts

C. P. 7300
1090 av Highbury
London ON N5Y 4V9
Téléphone (519) 453-4400
Télécopieur (519) 453-7943



April 30, 1998

Valerie Sutton
SignWriting Literacy Project
Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting
P.O. Box 517
La Jolla, California 92038-0517

Dear Valerie:

Our school would like to participate in your SignWriting Literacy Project. We are part of the Provincial Schools Authority of Ontario.

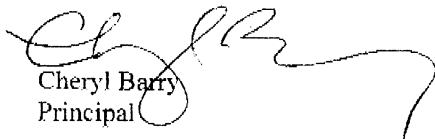
We would like to introduce SignWriting to our students because we hope it will promote a recognition of the fact that writing and sign communication are closely related. This, we hope, will lead to an increased motivation to read.

We agree to complete three Web Reports in return for the SignWriting materials and technical support you donate to us. We understand that this letter and all three reports will become public information and will be posted to the SignWriting Email List and posted on the SignWriting Web Site. You have our full permission to use the information as needed.

Please send SignWriting materials for six teachers and 40 students.

Thank you for considering us for your project.

Sincerely,


Cheryl Barry
Principal

/lw

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Private Tutor of Deaf Students Kathy Akehurst, Ontario, Canada

Kathy Akehurst

D824, 057832, R.R. #4, Tara, ON N0H 2N0 Canada

Phone/Fax: 519-376-0520

E-mail: mikabeau@log.on.ca

01 October 1998

TO:

Valerie Sutton
SignWriting Literacy Project
Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting
P.O. Box 517
La Jolla, CA. 92038-0517, USA

Dear Valerie,

On behalf of my seven students, I am writing to thank you for the donation of SignWriting books and videotapes, to be used in the SignWriting Literacy Project, which we are conducting this fall, 1998. We have received the following from you:

1. One copy of the **Lessons in SignWriting Textbook**, to be used as a reference manual for me.
2. Three copies of the **Lessons in SignWriting Video Series and Booklets**, for the parents.
3. Eight copies of **Goldilocks & The Three Bears, Reading Level 1**, for our individual use.
4. Eight copies of **Goldilocks & The Three Bears, Reading Level 2**, for our individual use.
5. Eight copies of **Sutton's ASL Picture Dictionary**, for our individual use.
6. One copy of the video: **SignWriting Children's Stories Series**, to be enjoyed by as many people as we can encourage to view it!

I am also writing to tell you that these materials were received in good order and have been distributed to those involved in this Project as of today, October 1st, 1998.

We agree, as a group, to complete three Web Reports in return for the SignWriting materials and technical support you have donated to us. We realize the reports are due on these dates:

Web Report #1: September 15th, 1998

Web Report #2: November 1st, 1998

Web Report #3: December 1st, 1998

We understand that, without these reports, you cannot apply for further funding, and we support your efforts in raising more funds to support this Project in the future. We will keep you posted as to our progress.

Sincerely,



Kathy Akehurst
Private Tutor
D824, 057832
R.R. #4, Tara, ON
N0H 2N0
Canada

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Teacher's Feedback

Date: Thu, 15 Oct 1998

Hi Valerie! Things are going well. What a nifty Project!!

I had rather an interesting experience with the flashcards so I wanted to let you know about that. My group has just returned to its regular sessions so we're still a bit disorganized from the summer. We just decided to get together as I wanted to explain all the particulars of the Project, etc. What I DID do for that gathering (it was very informal), however, was to set the flashcards up around the room. Some were with the picture showing, some with the SW showing. I also put the two introductory videos (Lessons In SW Videos) on to play on a small TV we have in the meeting room.

Our purpose in gathering was really just to organize our sessions for the next part of the year, but I wanted to see who would be drawn to the materials and when. It was most interesting to note that everyone, adults and children, sooner or later (adults...after we had finished the 'official' discussions and were down to the tea and cookies part, children...whenever the mood took them...) wandered over and watched the videos (or parts thereof) and all the students took turns working with the flashcards. This really whetted their appetite to start the Project and we did that at our next meeting by having everyone watch the two videos and, afterwards, working with the flashcards.

I found it best to have everyone (adults and children alike) see the two introductory videos as they all seemed to get different things from them and then, as a group, were able to help each other remember the handshapes. I was surprised at how much the younger children (like my four-year old) seemed to remember from the videos and it was most successful for us to do it this way. The smaller flashcards (showing the separate handshapes) were invaluable after the tapes were turned off as reminders when we got a bit mixed up.

As we are not a formal group, we have the freedom to display materials as we like, when we like, etc. I have noticed vast differences in the students learning styles and being able to allow them access to the materials like this with me there to answer questions (or remain silent) for them seems to really be working out well. I noticed that a few of the children took new signs and attempted to draw what they thought would be the corresponding SignWriting. They wouldn't let me keep their attempts (I did try, Valerie!) but it was fascinating to note that, basically, they were on the 'right track' as to how the signs might be written.

Another truly interesting development has been that one of the adult students is really a sloppy signer (sorry, I haven't another word for it, initially I had the dickens of a time trying to receive from him!). Again, to remind you, they were raised orally and the school they attended actually punished them for signing - hence, he picked up what I can only assume is the basic equivalent of street slang for his signing. The nice thing that has happened now, (and I think even he is pleased) is that, in an effort to help his children understand and "learn to write their language", he must slow down and actually THINK THROUGH the components of a sign. This has helped him to sign more clearly (because he knows he's being watched and because he is now more aware of the correct placement of his hands, etc.). I, of course, am very grateful for this turn of events (:), but it's also nice to see him feeling better about himself and knowing he's helping the others while at the same time improving his own ability.

Well, enough for now. Just wanted to let you know the latest. Am pleased to hear that the reports will be placed on-line and we'll try to fill ours out as soon as we can. Take care, and thanks again for all your work in setting up this Project and in SignWriting in general!

Kathy Akehurst, Private Tutor, Ontario, Canada Email: mikabeau@log.on.ca
<http://www.SignWriting.org/teach004.html>

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Teacher's Feedback

Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998

Valerie, I am so excited about the coloring book level. It is great!! I love these drawing & description pages. They are terrific!!!! If possible I would like to have your permission to work on doing the same thing for the Level 2 Reader. I believe that would help my students immensely. It may only be necessary to do something like that with the 1st Reader. By the time we move to the next stories, they will probably understand what we are doing. But I think with the first one we will have to move a little slower. Thanks for all your great work!!!!

Date: Wed, 16 Sep 1998

Another use for the flashcards, which I typically use in my classroom, is to use them to construct sentences in a pocket chart, on a table, on the floor, or wherever. This would be a step before the children actually wrote the signs. A sentence or paragraph or story could be developed in this manner and then written. You could use it after a field trip or any kind of classroom experience to record what happened. The children could develop it together and decide which event occurred first, second, and third.

I am hoping to have an IBM or clone in my classroom soon so my children can actually type from the SignWriter program. I am working on that donation.

As far as the amount of content on a page in your levels of "The Three Bears"-- I think what you have done in the coloring book form is great. Your coloring book format is great for little kids. It highlights the story and starts on their beginning level. It gets them to retell the story in their own words. We want creativity on their part. In that way we can determine their level of comprehension. The higher the level the more detailed the story can become. You need some stories to use as teaching tools. Other stories can be written in their full richness. Variety is the spice of life.

Thanks for all your hard work. You can quote or copy any of the above comments if you wish.

Your friend, Diana Smith
Email: adsmith@fn.net

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Teacher's Feedback

Date: 16 Sep 1997

From: "TOGIOKA Patti" <patti.togioka@osd.k12.or.us>

To: "ASL Teacher Internet List <TeachASL@Admin.Humberc.on.ca>,"

I did a story time with the elementary school students at the Oregon School for the Deaf last Friday using your Goldilocks and the Three Bears. It was one of the most awesome experiences I've ever had with kids!!! The kids not only read the signs, they fixed up one of the signs I had read incorrectly, they put periods next to the darkened lines, they added commas at the double lines and they READ the story. We then transferred it to written English and they labeled the Sign Writing and wrote in English. IT WAS AWESOME!!!

I think that because they had no preconceived notions of what is and is not ASL, they felt comfortable with the Sign Writing. They LOVED the activity. The way I introduced the story and how I explained the ASL sentences and facial expressions, etc. worked really well. Sometime, when I have the time, I will have to write down the procedure. I wish you all could have been there. It was MAGICAL!

PS. One of the students came up to read a signed sentence and just told the story in his own words. I was able to say "Are you reading the story or telling us about it". He then looked at the Sign Writing and READ the story. By the third page of the story, the kids were figuring out the signs by themselves with no assistance from me.

Patti TOGIOKA
Elementary Teacher
Oregon School For The Deaf
mailto:patti.togioka@osd.k12.or.us

...for more information, contact...

The SignWriting Literacy Project

The DAC • Deaf Action Committee For SignWriting • P.O. Box 517 • La Jolla • CA • 92038-0517 • USA

The Center For Sutton Movement Writing, Inc, a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501c3 educational charity, sponsors the Deaf Action Committee For SignWriting • Box 517 • La Jolla • CA • 92038-0517
Voice: (858)456-0098 • TTY: (858)456-0010 • Fax: (858)456-0020 • E-mail: DAC@SignWriting.org