Teacher touts sign language for hearing kids

Four years into her teaching career, Leslie Briggs discovered the benefits of using sign language in her classroom - behavior management became easier, class participation increased and students learned faster. But she said using sign language in the classroom isn't just for students with hearing loss.

"People don't realize that sign language is so amazingly helpful for hearing kids," Briggs said.

In realizing these benefits, she said she also found what she describes as her calling - helping other educators "catch the vision" of using sign language with hearing students.

Briggs, who has known sign language for 25 years, is teaching "Signing in School" workshops to local educators. During Saturday's workshop at Mount Logan Middle School, she told those in attendance that the opportunities are endless. Sign language, she said, "really, truly will enhance every aspect of your classroom."

Using sign language can influence auditory, kinesthetic and visual learning, Briggs said.

Involving sign language in classroom activities can help with literacy, she said, because it is a more intriguing way for students to learn and it makes them want to learn. Briggs said sign language allows students to hear, see and feel words, turning the "English alphabet into a finger play."

"It makes a world of difference," she said of the benefits regarding literacy.

Sign language can help behavior management because it’s fun and requires students to remain active, Briggs said.

"Kids are just fascinated by sign language itself and so they want to pay attention and they want to be involved and they forget to misbehave," she said.

Briggs said another benefit of using sign language is to help students establish and remember routines. Students can look at word lists, picture lists and sign language lists. That way, she said, "their reminders are on their hands."

For transition activities, she said, "Sign language is, hands down, the most effective tool you'll ever run across."

She said cognitive development - emotional, physical and social - can be affected by sign language, as well.

Briggs said she thinks using sign language has a place in any grade but is more effective for younger students in preschool through third grade.

At the workshops, Briggs teaches select signs from American Sign Language. She said educators can choose the extent to which they use sign language in classroom activities.

"Sign language can be used as a tool in any way," she said.

Briggs is the author of "Signing in School: Enrich the classroom experience through sign." She also helped write "Signing Time: Classroom Edition." Briggs taught at a middle school in Cedar City for four years. She became a certified interpreter in 1993 and now teaches a sign language class at Utah State University during the summer.

During Saturday's workshop, Briggs taught participants the signs for commands such as watch, take turns, share and help. She also led them in songs that use sign language, which she said educators could find helpful in their classroom.

Briggs said teachers who attend her workshops like, and implement, the idea of using sign language for hearing students.

"I've never had a teacher that learned..."

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Help Needed

WITHIN THE PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE

Central California Conference
Milpitas Discoveryland Preschool in Milpitas, California is looking for a new Director for the fall of 2009. Contact Robin Aaron, Education Associate for the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at 408-691-0956 or e-mail.

Hawaii Conference
Day Care Teacher/Director needed at Kahili Adventist School in Kauai, Hawaii. Must have special courses in child development and experience working with 3-5 year olds. For more information call: 808-742-9294.

Northern California Conference
Discoveryland Preschool and Hilltop Christian Preschool are looking for Early Childhood Director/Teacher. Applicants must have good leadership, management and communication skills. For more information, please contact Mrs. Coreen Hicks 925-603-5064; chicks@nccsda.com.

Southeastern California Conference
Loma Linda Children’s Center is hiring substitute teachers for all age groups. Rate of pay depends on experience and level of education. Contact Teddie Hawkins at the Loma Linda Children’s Center for more details. 909-558-4568.

Southern California Conference
Wee Care Child Center in Sylmar, California is looking for a new Director ASAP. Contact Dr. Mario Negrete, Education Associate for the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at 818-546-8400 or e-mail.

OUTSIDE THE PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE

Rocky Mountain Conference - Colorado
Little Lambs Learning Center is looking for an enthusiastic and passionate leader of little children who is not only a licensed educator but more importantly a committed Seventh-day Adventist in love with Jesus and in love with preparing children and families for His soon coming. Director’s duties will include working closely with the local board in hiring competent fellow Christians, building the best early childhood education team possible; providing oversight to the policies and procedures of the school along with seeing that the curriculum is implemented; communicating with the parents and the constituency. This individual must be licensed to operate a day care in the state of Colorado or have the qualification necessary for such licensing. Successful experience in an early childhood education center is important as well as a track record of commitment to the Adventist Church and its teachings. The ideal individual will view this opportunity as a mission with immediate as well as eternal consequences. Remuneration is dependent on education and experience.

Contact: Pat Chapman, Administrative Assistant, Rocky Mountain Conference-Colorado, 2520 S. Downing Street, Denver, CO 80210, 303-282-3650. E-mail
Sometimes, the CAPSO E-Mailer is inclined to think that the decisive factor motivating the conduct of certain research studies is the fact that all reasonable areas of inquiry have already been staked out. The requirement that doctoral dissertations reflect original contributions to research coupled with the pressures accompanying "publish or perish" tenure tracks often conspire to stoke creativity at the expense of relevance.

Consider "Science in the Preschool Classroom: A Programmatic Research Agenda to Improve Science Readiness." Apparently, this article provides an account of several studies focusing on preschool science, which is characterized as "an important but under-researched school readiness domain." One study, employing "...a large, ethnically diverse statewide database of Head Start children's school readiness," found "...that children end their pre-kindergarten year with science readiness scores significantly lower than readiness scores in all other measured domains." A second study identified "...low self-efficacy in science and time-management issues as two possible barriers for why preschool teachers may have difficulty teaching science." While early education is, decidedly, not the E-Mailer's field of expertise, the above-mentioned findings occasion several thoughts, beginning with: Is it really necessary to equip four year-olds with science readiness skills? Sure, preschoolers are naturally curious and inquisitive. But I'd venture that precious few of the tens of thousands of leading scientists around the globe were ever exposed to formalized preschool "science readiness" regimens.

Secondly, is there something wrong with assigning higher priority to nurturing non-academic dispositions and abilities (like coping with delayed gratification) and fostering the development of social skills (like learning how to take turns, share, apologize, etc.) when working with a group of four year-olds? Or, are those curricular standards supposed to be fully addressed at age 3? Thirdly, when do kids just get to be kids? Whatever their developmental capabilities and cognitive capacities, why subject three and four year-olds to the testing, classification, labeling, interventions and prescriptions that invariably accompany state and/or national curricular standards? Finally, we seem to have enough trouble staffing our middle and high school math and science classrooms with teachers who, themselves, were math and science majors. Why and how can we possibly expect preschool educators to possess something other than "low-efficacy" when it comes to science?

The same Spirit that in His stead was sent to be the instructor of His first co-workers, Christ has commissioned to be the instructor of His co-workers today. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20), is His promise.

The presence of the same guide in educational work today will produce the same results as of old. This is the end to which true education tends; this is the work that God designs it to accomplish. Education, page 96.

Thank you, Angela Sanchez, for your suggestion!
Reading the Signs
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about it (who hasn't) chosen not to do it with their kids," she said.
Briggs said students love it, too, because gestures are "their first language."
Teachers and students are enthusiastic about sign language, Briggs said.
"Sometimes the fact that it is fun is enough," she said.
Briggs will be teaching "Signing in Schools" again April 3 and May 8. The classes are open to anyone who wants to attend. For more information, call the Community Education department at Logan City School District at (435) 755-2300, or call Leslie Briggs at (435) 258-0005, or e-mail her at briggs_98@msn.com.

By Arie Kirk

Suggested website for signing:
http://www.mybabycantalk.com/

Also try American Sign Language Learning System by Dr. Elaine Costello. Her books and DVDs can be found on Amazon.com

Praying with Your Children

An important component to living a Christian life is prayer. Our children learn how to incorporate prayer into their daily lives by mimicking our attitude toward prayer. It is vital they learn to reverence God, but not to fear Him. So often children are conditioned to say the same words with a somber mood. Let’s brighten their outlook on communicating with a loving Father in heaven.

Week of the Young Child (WOYC) is April 11-17! The theme this year is Early Years are Learning Years. The purpose of WOYC is to honor the young child and those who work with them. It’s a great way to promote your ECEC program(s) through community involvement activities relevant to this year’s theme.

Check out the ideas and information by visiting the NAEYC website:
http://www.naeyc.org/woyc

National Playground Safety Week is April 26-30! The National Program for Playground Safety hosts this annual event to help ECEC programs focus on their supervision skills, teach young children safety concepts and to help inform the general public on how to protect their children on public playgrounds. This is another way to get your center’s name and information out to the community – simply supply brochures, posters, one-hour trainings and other like events to help educate the public.

This is also a great time to help initiate Risk Management forms and policies since playgrounds (and supervision) can pose serious safety risks.

Check out some great ideas and information by visiting:
http://www.uni.edu/playground/safetyweek/

Provider Appreciation Day this year is May 7. This is a day to recognize our ECEC professionals – we no longer call them “providers”.

For ideas and more information, visit:
http://www.providerappreciationday.org/

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