

ASL

Dear Parents,

Hello, and welcome to American Sign Language (ASL) class. I am very excited to meet you and explore ASL with your child. The goal for this year is to learn and practice basic vocabulary, fingerspelling, numbers, and ASL grammar. As a class, we will discuss terminology related to ASL and develop an understanding of Deaf culture and its history.

Background of this class: ASL, like any other language, has its own set of rules and grammar which is different from English. To help immerse ourselves in ASL we will start every class with a 'voice off' time. As the students enter class, I will sign welcomes and use facial expressions and body language to help the students understand ideas and messages. I will also write words on the board to help clarify ideas. It is important to remember that ASL is a visual language. Therefore, it is imperative that the student engage in conversations by watching the person who is signing. The goal is to focus on the signer's face and maintain eye contact while the conversation continues in sign. These conversations will give the student an opportunity to practice active visual 'listening.' He or she can nod, respond with a "huh?" expression, or look surprised (wide eyes and raised eyebrows), all without knowing any actual signs! As the weeks progress, the students will accumulate a host of signs to draw from to use and to practice during the 'voice off' times in class. For the first day of school, please keep this 'voice off' approach a surprise for your student (if he or she is new to the class)! It will be fun for the class to experience the 'voice off' time together and then discuss how they feel about it after the experience.

After our 'voice off' period in class (about 20 minutes), we will move to a 'voice on' period (about 20 minutes). This will allow time for clarification of new signs covered at the beginning of class. It will also give me a chance to teach the students helpful hints for remembering these new signs and to share any interesting information related to the new signs. We will then move back into a 'voice off' period and practice the new signs through a short conversation, a song, a poem, or another method, to help cement the new signs in the students' memories. This will give the students an opportunity to practice the new signs learned that day in class while incorporating previous signs from former weeks. As the students practice, I will be checking for correct hand position and helping students incorporate facial expressions and body language. Some weeks we will play games to practice the signs we have learned. I plan to use read-aloud books throughout the year to help teach the students about Deaf culture and history.

Homework: There will be homework every week and there will be a quiz given every few weeks covering new signs and a few previously learned signs. The homework, classroom activities, and quizzes will be checked and such assignments will earn points (in the form of checks) based on the quality of the work. Once a student has gained twenty checks, he or she will have an opportunity to go to the class prize box. For example, a homework assignment may be worth two checks, a quiz may be worth six

checks, a song performed for the class (on the due date) may be worth five checks, and so forth.

Supplies needed for class are:

- I will provide a notebook the first day of class to hold class handouts and homework and flash cards. Please have your child bring this with him or her each week.
- At least one pencil is needed each week.
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons (there is no need to have separate sets for this class). These items may be used some weeks and can be part of a general supply your student has for all of his or her CCS classes.
- Scissors and a glue stick (again, there is no need to have separate scissors and glue sticks for this class)

Classroom expectations:

Students should come to class prepared to learn, with positive attitudes, bring the required class supplies, and be ready to turn in completed homework. Late homework will not be accepted as outlined in the participation contract.

I will place my basic syllabus in the binder your child will receive on the first day of school. This syllabus is subject to change during the course of the year based on students' progress and any cancellations.

Thank you for this opportunity to teach and work with your child(ren),
Leila Robertson