

Showing Children A Sign

Videos Teach Sign Language

By Bob Bicknell



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Rachel Coleman, creator of the "Signing Time," tells **CBS News Correspondent Debbye Turner** why her sign language videos are as much for children who can hear as children who can't.



Rachel Coleman, teaching the American Sign Language sign for 'house.' From "Signing Time!" (CBS)

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(CBS) Rachel Coleman is a musician who knows how to improvise.

When she and her husband found out their young daughter was deaf, it didn't take her long to find a new way to both express herself and reach out to Leah's silent world.

And, it turns out, to a lot of other people as well.

Three years ago, Coleman and her family created "Signing Time!" – a series of three videos that teach young children how to sign simple words, phrases and everyday terms. The videos feature Leah and her cousin, Alex, who was taught sign language at a very young age so that he could communicate with his cousin.

Coleman says the "Signing Time!" videos are meant as much for children, like Alex, who can hear, as they are for deaf children and their families. Through catchy music, cute – but not overly-simplistic cartoons, and a cast of young helpers, Coleman's videos teach basic signs quickly, easily, and in a manner most parents won't mind watching again and again and again.

A happy side effect of this sign language education – particularly for those children who can

hear - appears to be a great reduction in the so-called “terrible twos.”

“The ‘terrible twos’ are all about communication, or the lack thereof,” Coleman says. “And with a child – maybe a 14-month-old child who knows 40-60 signs – they don’t have to scream and cry and throw themselves down on the floor. They can sign exactly what they want – ‘I want milk,’ ‘I’m tired.’ And it just eases the ‘terrible twos.’”

Overall, the videos are meant to bridge gaps

“It’s a second language used by millions of Americans – including my daughter,” Coleman says. “It never hurts to learn a second language. And it’s early communication for those toddlers who don’t yet developmentally talk yet. So they can use signs. And then it’s the miracle of communication for children who have disabilities.”

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