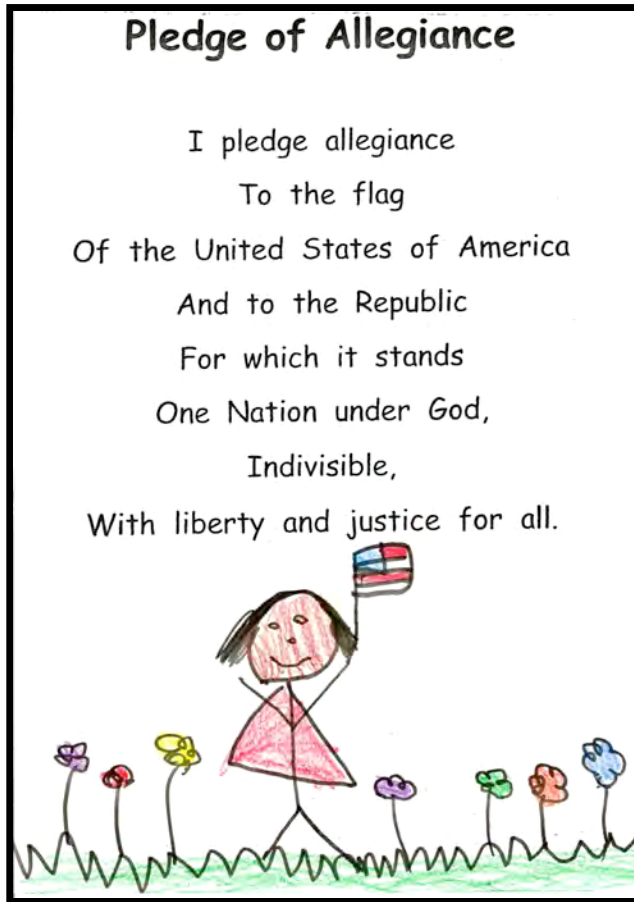


Pledge of Allegiance: Use Sign Language and Art to Build Meaning



Children love to recite **The Pledge of Allegiance with accompanying American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation.** We provide repeated practice with the oral language and signed concepts until mastery is achieved. Then we invite children to perform for their reading buddies, principal, parents or the whole school at an assembly! **Children gain confidence and pride in their speech and communications skills** when they can sign and recite and perform familiar language with precise enunciation – and dramatic flair.

Illustrating The Pledge of Allegiance personalizes the language; each child, makes it truly “their own.”

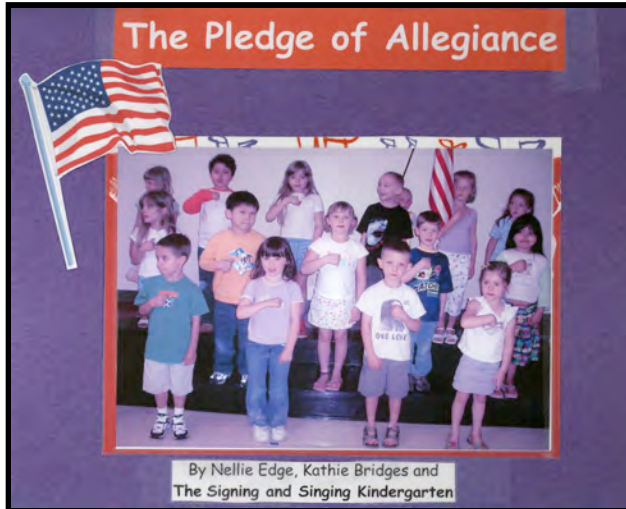
Engage children in illustrating their own Pledge of Allegiance. Save the individually illustrate page in the child’s “I Can Read” Notebooks (a.k.a. Read Together Anthologies and Poetry Notebooks). This will be read and reread. Repeated Reading Practice Builds Confidence and Fluency: Expression, Inflection, Accuracy and Phrasing.

Build Reading Independence With Meaningful Language

Student samples of illustrated poetry pages can also be stored in clear plastic sleeves and available for the children to choose for their individual “Read to Self” book boxes. Familiar and meaningful language becomes a part of their “Just Right: I Can Read!” materials as they proudly build reading independence.

See www.nellieedge.com for Pledge of Allegiance and other free anthology pages suitable for emergent and independent readers.

I Pledge Allegiance: Make Your Own Class Book



These photos feature Kathie Bridges' kinders as experts at signing The Pledge of Allegiance.

- **Teach *The Pledge of Allegiance*** by having children repeat each phrase after you. Add the American Sign Language for as many key concepts as are appropriate for your children's age and experience. Discuss the new vocabulary.
- In your weekly newsletter invite the parents to encourage each child to practice reciting and signing *The Pledge of Allegiance* at home. **Send home the ASL guide sheet.**
- **Use the pocket chart** to carefully focus children's attention to print: track the words, match individual word cards, sequence words in phrases, and highlight high-frequency words.
- Use **I pledge allegiance to the flag** as a cut apart, word matching, paste and read activity on a child's drawing of the flag. (See pages 90 and 91.)
- **Create a class book or poetry poster** of *The Pledge of Allegiance* for children's guided and independent reading practice. Include pictures of children signing.
- **Read and discuss the information picture book *I pledge allegiance***, by Bill Martin, Jr. and Michael Simpson and/or *The Pledge of Allegiance* (special commemorative edition, Scholastic/Cartwheel Books, ISBN:0-439-39962-9.)
- **Talk about the United States flag** and look at one closely. Explore different artists' interpretations of the flag. Discuss techniques for creating a realistic flag or an impressionistic looking flag.
- **Ask the children to draw a picture of themselves and/or the flag** on the printed anthology page for their "I Can Read" notebook.
- **Support each child in oral reading practice to build fluency.** Invite 4th grade reading buddies, trained reading tutors and parents to use the Neurological Impress Method.
- **Perform *The Pledge of Allegiance* with sign language for your next school assembly or parent program.** Let children experience the pleasure of expressing beautiful language and turning that pleasure over to an appreciative audience.

Systematically Organize for Accelerated Literacy

Reciting and performing songs, poems and rhymes in English and American Sign Language (ASL) accelerates fluency and comprehension of oral language. However, accelerated reading gains will only occur within a systematic approach to literacy that allows children to build on success while feeling emotionally safe. Children first practice reading the language, in unison, with group support and teacher modeling. Then small-group guided reading experiences and one-on-one practice provides for gradual release of support until mastery is achieved.

Teach High Frequency Words: *I, the, and.*

The words to the *Pledge of Allegiance* are printed on sentence strips or word cards that can be manipulated in the pocket chart. **Colored plastic¹ is used to cover high-frequency words:**

- I – yellow
- the – pink
- and – green

(a-n-d: stretch the word and punch out the final sound)

Many children learn “I” on the first day of school. Their reading skills are supported by highlighting “I” using color and inviting them to find “I” within familiar language.

We teach “the” through Kinesthetic Auditory Rhythm and Rhyme (KARR). Children love our jazzy approach to spelling and are proud to wear a heart necklace of the word they know “by heart.” (See page 149.)

Enhance comprehension by teaching the ASL symbols and discussing the meaning of key vocabulary.

Use the Neurological Impress Method to Build Mastery of Language.

We need to systematically support children as they move from shared and guided reading experiences with familiar text to one-on-one read-aloud practice with the support of a skilled reading coach (fluent “Reading Buddy” or parent). Using the Neurological Impress Method (see page 47), the child rehearses the language until they are confident and fluent. This type of reading practice is solidly supported by research. **Consider making audio recordings** for further practice at home and at school. In one study, listening to beautifully articulated language while reading aloud with the recording accelerated fluency gains by 65%. That is one more reason why we encourage children to **memorize, recite, and perform songs and rhymes in sign language and connect the language to print.**



¹ See “Reading Acceleration Program,” *The Reading Teacher*, September, 2004. See www.abcstuff.com for Pocket Chart Highlighter Strips, item #HT010.

Use a Systematic Approach for Accelerated Literacy: Connect Oral Language to Print

Oral language is still the vital foundation needed for a successful literacy program. However, in order to connect oral language to print and accelerate reading development, we **need** a systematic plan of differentiated instruction. With the support of repeated readings, children build fluency and confidence.

Give children meaningful and memorable language as an invitation to read. Teach them to sign and perform the language with confidence. Then plan the environment to systematically support reading behavior until mastery is obtained. Transition from the support of shared and guided reading to individual practice using helpers trained in the Neurological Impress Method (a gradual release of responsibility model). When we teach children to recite, perform and read language with confidence, fluency, and joy these positive beginnings build motivation and reading independence.

1. **Use a Big Book, language chart or pocket chart** with enlarged text to model the strategies that successful readers use. Teach new literacy skills and high-frequency words within the context of the whole piece of language. Focus on one part of the text for explicit instruction and then return to reading/singing/signing the entire text in unison, while tracking the words.
2. **Consider making class books or “poem boards”** for songs and rhymes that are not already available in book format (and easily accessible for classroom reading). 10" x 12" poem boards can be laminated and stored in a “poetry board” box. These can be selected for daily “read to self” time throughout the year by the children, even after newer poems, songs, chants and pledges have replaced earlier language charts in key positions on classroom walls. (Alas, there is never enough wall space!)
3. **Give every child a growing collection of personal Little Books and/or “I Can Read” Notebook** pages of the new language for further reading practice. (**Buddy reading** with a fluent, trained 4th grader is helpful.) Little Books and “I Can Read” Notebooks go home for **family reading**.

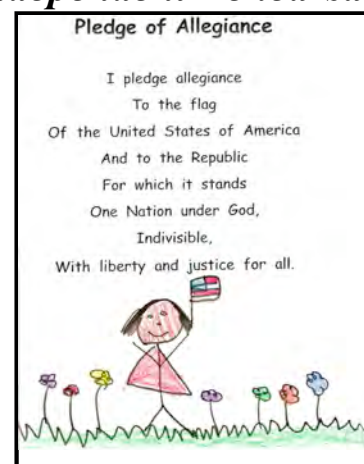
Shared Reading → **Guided Reading Practice** → **Independent Rehearsal**



Language is printed on individual word cards that can be manipulated in a pocket chart. Colored acetate overlays high-frequency words. Children recite words in unison. Skills are taught in context.



A class book is made featuring children signing The Pledge of Allegiance. (Notice the spacing between words.) This book is available in the library or the child's book boxes for guided and independent reading.



The same lyrics are also placed in each child's "I Can Read" or "Read Together" Notebook as an anthology page or Little Book so they can be read over and over again with fluency and delight.



What organized system have you developed to accelerate literacy with predictable and memorable print?