

A YEAR OF ASL

February Bell Ringers

Connect & Communicate

20 BELL RINGERS · BEGINNER THROUGH LEVEL 5

Start class. Start signing.



MONTHLY FOCUS

Conversation • Connection • Friendship • Black Deaf History & Perspectives • Receptive Skills • Questions • Opinions • NMS • Communication Repair

TEACHER NOTE

February focuses on communication between people rather than a specific holiday. Friendship, appreciation, and connection appear throughout the month, along with thoughtful opportunities to recognize Black Deaf history and perspectives. Activities are designed to build conversation, receptive attention, respectful interaction, and communication repair. Use them, change them, repeat them, and make them yours.

HOW DIFFERENTIATION WORKS

Most activities include Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Advanced Plus, and Level 5 options. Some are intentionally marked **All Levels**. Teachers may move students up or down as appropriate.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

ASLdeafined provides a strong starting point while leaving space for teacher judgment, student contribution, and classroom creativity.

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1

Find Something in Common

ALL LEVELS

Work with a partner. Using ASL, discover 3 things you have in common. They cannot be obvious things such as “We’re both students.”

TEACHER NOTE

Challenge: Ask follow-up questions to find less obvious connections.

2

Question, Answer, FOLLOW-UP

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Ask one familiar question and respond.
INTERMEDIATE	Ask a follow-up question.
ADVANCED	Continue for at least 3 exchanges.
ADVANCED PLUS	Keep the conversation moving naturally without prepared questions.
LEVEL 5	Use follow-up questions, comments, clarification, and natural turn-taking.

TEACHER NOTE

Big Idea: Conversation isn’t question → answer → done.

3

My Favorite...

LEVELED

TEACHER CHOOSES

Food

Movie

Activity

Place

Season

Subject

Animal

BEGINNER	Identify your favorite.
INTERMEDIATE	Give a reason.
ADVANCED	Compare it with another choice.
ADVANCED PLUS	Respond to your partner’s opinion.
LEVEL 5	Maintain a spontaneous discussion about preferences.

MAKE IT YOURS

Students may choose the category.

4

Compliment Without Appearance

ALL LEVELS

Give someone a genuine, school-appropriate compliment — but it cannot be about appearance.

THINK ABOUT

Effort

Kindness

Humor

Creativity

Improvement

Skill

Helpfulness

TEACHER NOTE

Students may compliment a fictional person if they prefer.

5

Black Deaf History Spotlight

LEVELED

Teacher introduces a Black Deaf individual, organization, event, or contribution students have learned about or are currently studying.

BEGINNER	Identify the person or topic and one key fact.
INTERMEDIATE	Explain why the person or topic is important.
ADVANCED	Summarize the contribution or significance.
ADVANCED PLUS	Connect the topic to Deaf history and community.
LEVEL 5	Discuss why multiple perspectives are important when studying Deaf history.

MAKE IT YOURS

The teacher chooses the spotlight.

TEACHER NOTE

One Bell Ringer cannot “teach Black Deaf history.” Use it as an opening for meaningful content.

6

Read My Reaction

ALL LEVELS

Partner A communicates a short statement. Partner B reacts without signing any words, using only face, head movement, and body movement. Partner A identifies the reaction — surprised, doubtful, excited, confused, unimpressed. Then switch.

7

Would You Rather? — Connection Edition

ALL LEVELS

TODAY'S QUESTION

“Would you rather have dinner with 10 people, or one close friend?”

Choose and explain. Higher-level students must respond to the partner’s reasoning, not simply give their own answer. Then students create another question.

8

Explain It Without the Sign

LEVELED

Teacher gives a vocabulary word students know. They cannot use the sign or fingerspell it.

BEGINNER	Gesture or show it.
INTERMEDIATE	Describe it.
ADVANCED	Explain it visually.
ADVANCED PLUS	Use context to communicate it naturally.
LEVEL 5	Circumlocute naturally without making the avoidance obvious.

Partner guesses.

TEACHER NOTE

A useful real-world communication strategy.

9

Meet Someone New

LEVELED

Pair students with someone they don’t usually work with.

BEGINNER	Ask 2 familiar questions.
INTERMEDIATE	Ask 3 questions plus one follow-up.
ADVANCED	Learn enough to introduce your partner to someone else.
ADVANCED PLUS	Have a natural conversation and summarize something interesting.
LEVEL 5	Maintain a spontaneous conversation without turning it into an interview.

10

Teacher’s Choice

TEACHER CHOICE

Halfway through February. Ask: **What does this class need today?** Review it. Practice it. Or repeat a Bell Ringer that worked really well.

TEACHER NOTE

You don’t need a new activity simply because it’s a new day.

11

Different Perspectives

LEVELED

Teacher gives a simple situation, such as:

EXAMPLE

“School should start later.”

BEGINNER	Agree or disagree.
INTERMEDIATE	Give a reason.
ADVANCED	Explain your position.
ADVANCED PLUS	Respond respectfully to the opposite position.
LEVEL 5	Present a position while acknowledging a reasonable counterargument.

MAKE IT YOURS

Keep topics light and classroom appropriate.

12

Black Deaf Community — Quick Think

LEVELED

START WITH

“The Deaf community is not one single experience.”

BEGINNER	Identify ways people within any community can be different.
INTERMEDIATE	Explain why communities contain different experiences.
ADVANCED	Discuss how identities and experiences can intersect.
ADVANCED PLUS	Connect language, culture, community, and lived experience.
LEVEL 5	Reflect on why learning Deaf culture should include diverse Deaf perspectives.

TEACHER NOTE

This is a reflection prompt, not an invitation to ask students to disclose personal identities.

13

Conversation Rescue

LEVELED

The conversation dies. Partner A says something. Partner B must keep it alive.

BEGINNER	Ask a related question.
INTERMEDIATE	Add a comment plus a question.
ADVANCED	Connect it to another topic naturally.
ADVANCED PLUS	Use conversational transitions.
LEVEL 5	Sustain the exchange naturally without relying on constant questions.

14

Say It With Your Face

LEVELED

START WITH

"I like it."

NOW COMMUNICATE

I LOVE it. It's okay. I'm pretending to like it. I definitely don't like it.

Use the same general concept with different NMS. Higher levels discuss how the meaning changed.

15

The Perfect Friend

LEVELED

TODAY'S QUESTION

"What qualities make someone a good friend?"

BEGINNER	Identify 3 qualities.
INTERMEDIATE	Explain one.
ADVANCED	Rank several qualities and explain why.
ADVANCED PLUS	Discuss whether good friendship looks the same for everyone.
LEVEL 5	Discuss how communication, trust, boundaries, and respect contribute to relationships.

TEACHER NOTE

Students discuss the concept, not their personal friendships.

16

Student Challenge

STUDENT CHOICE

Students create today's Bell Ringer. **February rule:** it must require two people to communicate. Teacher chooses one.

POSSIBLE FORMS

ConversationGuessing gameReceptive challengeVisual descriptionOpinion exchange

17

Lost in Translation

LEVELED

Teacher provides a simple English idea. Students consider:

STUDENTS CONSIDER

“How would you communicate the meaning, rather than replace every English word with a sign?”

BEGINNER	Identify the main concept.
INTERMEDIATE	Communicate the basic meaning.
ADVANCED	Compare a word-for-word approach with a more natural ASL approach.
ADVANCED PLUS	Explain why restructuring may be needed.
LEVEL 5	Discuss how context affects translation choices.

TEACHER NOTE

Focus on meaning rather than word substitution.

18

Listen With Your Eyes

ALL LEVELS

Partner A signs for approximately 30 seconds. Partner B cannot interrupt. When finished, Partner B communicates one thing they understood plus one follow-up question. Then switch.

TEACHER NOTE

Good communication isn’t only about expressing yourself. It’s also about receiving someone else.

19

60-Second Connection

LEVELED

TEACHER PROVIDES A TOPIC

Something funny

Something interesting

Something you’d like to learn

A favorite experience

Something you’re looking forward to

BEGINNER	20 seconds.
INTERMEDIATE	30–45 seconds.
ADVANCED	60 seconds.
ADVANCED PLUS	60 seconds with natural transitions and NMS.
LEVEL 5	Spontaneous 60-second discourse followed by partner interaction.

TEACHER NOTE

Partner must respond to something actually said.

20

What Makes Communication Work?

MONTHLY REFLECTION

FINISH THE THOUGHT

“Good communication requires...”

BEGINNER	Identify one thing.
INTERMEDIATE	Explain why.
ADVANCED	Give an example.
ADVANCED PLUS	Explain what can cause communication to break down.
LEVEL 5	Reflect on how both people share responsibility for successful communication.

TEACHER NOTE

Teacher Wrap-Up: Ask, “What can *you* do to become a better communicator?”

February’s Big Idea

January focused on individual growth: what do I remember, what do I want to improve?

February shifts from *me* to *us*.

WHAT STUDENTS PRACTICE

ACROSS THE MONTH

Listening visually	Asking meaningful follow-up questions
Respecting different perspectives	Repairing communication
Sustaining real conversations	

CULTURE & COMMUNITY

February also creates space for Black Deaf history and Black Deaf perspectives as part of a broader understanding that the Deaf community is diverse and no single experience represents everyone.

GUIDING IDEA

Students should move beyond taking turns performing ASL. The goal is genuine interaction: receiving, responding, clarifying, repairing, and connecting.

Which ones worked? Notes for next February