"Signing Naturally" is based on the "functional/notional" approach. This approach places major emphasis on the communicative purpose of speech acts--or "functions"--of a language: introducing people to one another, requesting information, extending an invitation, directing someone to do or not to do something, describing a book, and so forth.

Other effective approaches, many of which are used as substrategies by the "Signing Naturally" program, include the following:

* "Role playing" can be used to promote simplified interactive exchanges between students. The speed of signing, although fluent, is recognizably slower than normal conversation between ASL native signers.

* "Episodic hypothesis" suggests that any text or discourse will be easier to recall and understand if it is episodically organized (Oller & Richard-Amato, 1983). An episodic lesson can be as simple as having students describe what they see in a picture, what they think happened immediately before the picture, and what happened immediately thereafter. Discussion focuses not only on the correct usage of ASL, but also on the story sequencing.

* The "cognitive approach" attempts to organize materials around a grammatical syllabus while allowing for meaningful practice and use of language (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). It emphasizes understanding and encourages the conscious selection of grammatical forms.

* "Spiraling" assists students in acquiring language concepts. "Materials or skills are taught in increasingly greater depth at each succeeding level of instruction" (Baker & Cokely, 1980, p. 183).

Some methods of second language instruction include a silent period during which the learners are not required to speak and are allowed to rehearse silently. ASL courses frequently offer visual preparation exercises before expecting students to produce signs accurately. Hearing students are auditorily attuned to their environment and need a transition period to help them become visually oriented.

Most language acquisition and teaching theorists now support a holistic view of second language learning in which teachers are sensitive to the individual needs of students rather than to any dominant language methodology (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). Before deciding
which approaches to use, ASL SI Leaders, like all second language teachers, should learn who their students are and why they want to learn the language.

**Suggested Activities for the ASL SI Session:**

**Sign Language Telephone Game**
Remember the game "Telephone" from grade school? Well, with this game, you sign it instead of say it. So, everyone lines up or forms a circle without looking at each other. The first person taps person #2 on the shoulder and signs something to him or her. Then, person #2 signs it to person #3, and so on. Make sure the people further along in the line don't see! When the sign gets to the last person, you see how much it's changed! You can also do this by drawing on each other’s backs. Great fun!

**Animal Memory Game**
Everyone forms a circle and picks an animal. Then, you go around the circle and everyone signs their animal. The person starting the game (person #1) starts by signing another person's animal sign. The person whose animal sign person #1 signed (person #2) then signs another person's animal sign. So, not only do you have to remember your animal sign, you have to remember the animal signs of the other people in the circle! This is a great way to build animal vocabulary!

**Deaf Bingo**
This is great for teaching the alphabet and numbers. You just play Bingo and instead of shouting the letters and numbers, you sign them! (We have a Bingo roller in each SI room!)

**Facial Signs**
I totally made the name of this game up. We played this in one of my first ASL classes. It's great practice for facial expressions! Everyone gets into a circle and chooses their favorite sign. Then, the leader says a feeling, like sad, happy, excited, scared, etc. Everyone in the circle then signs their sign while showing this feeling. I chose the word SODA-POP. Imagine how funny that was when I signed it sadly!

*These were taken from the following website:
http://www.start-american-sign-language.com

**More activities:**
**Guess What I Am!**
This is one of our favorite ways to include ASL in our learning fun. Here’s one you can play anywhere and all it requires is your thinking skills. It’s the old classic, “I’m thinking of a....” and then you go on to describe it. We call it the “Guess What I Am!” game.
Think of some ASL signs you’ve been teaching your students, such as animals, food or objects found in the home. Then describe it using as many signs, charades and spoken words as you can. Aim for using fewer and fewer spoken words as their ASL vocabulary increases.

**Classic Games with a Twist**

As you think about the games you might have played as a kid, begin to think of ways you can add in ASL. Other traditional games to consider are Pictionary, Boggle, Scrabble, BINGO and Simon Says.

**Reading Together**

Bring simple storybooks to read together as a group and include signing in your reading. The stories themselves will seem to come alive as you “animate” the descriptions and “label” the pictures with sign language. Try to choose books that include vocabulary words your students are currently learning and use lots of dramatic expressions when reading the stories together.

Above information adapted from this website:
http://www.reallifeathome.com/teaching-american-sign-language-5-fun-activities/

These represent just a few of many fun options! 😊