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Position Statement On ASL and English Bilingual Education

- Declaración de principios sobre la educación bilingüe en la ASL y el inglés (<https://www.nad.org/declaracion-de-principios-sobre-la-educacion-bilingue-en-la-asl-y-el-ingles/>)

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) supports bilingualism: the development and use of American Sign Language (ASL) and English in the home and educational environment[1] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftn1) for infants, children, youth, and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing.[2] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftn2)

WHAT is ASL and English Bilingualism?

The primary goal of an ASL and English Bilingual Education is for students to become “dynamic bilinguals.” “Dynamic bilingualism” (Garcia, 2009: 55) refers to one’s ability to have access to and use ASL and English for different purposes and to adjust to multilingual, multimodal communication interactions in all settings (e.g. school, home, restaurants, playgrounds, sports, etc.).

WHO benefits from ASL and English Bilingual Education?

Children who are deaf and hard of hearing, from birth through 21 years of age, regardless of the educational environment, benefit from ASL and English Bilingual Education. ASL and English Bilingual Education is “inclusive” in that deaf and hard of hearing children with varying degrees of hearing levels and varied use and benefit from visual, tactile, and listening technologies are educated together, through fully accessible and natural pedagogies.

WHY is ASL and English Bilingual Education important?

ASL and English Bilingual Education is important and effective because it addresses the needs of the whole child. ASL and English Bilingual Education recognizes the intimate relationships between language development, cognitive development and social/emotional development. As such, ASL and English Bilingual Education fosters positive self-esteem, confidence, resilience, and identity, factors necessary for lifelong learning and success. Typically, deaf and hard of hearing children who are given equal access to language, communication, and academic learning opportunities can and do achieve at the same levels as hearing children or better.

HOW does a school plan for, implement, and maintain ASL and English Bilingual Education?

Regardless of setting, ASL and English Bilingual Education requires that certain factors be in place. Those factors include:

- **A Clearly Articulated Philosophy** that defines ASL and English Bilingual Education and which is shared with families, school staff, and throughout the community.
- **Skilled and Knowledgeable Teachers and Staff** who are proficient and knowledgeable in the areas of: language development, the linguistics of ASL, and the use of ASL and English

bilingual educational strategies.

- **Supportive Resources** such as: diverse, trained teachers and staff; adult and peer language models; deaf professionals and paraprofessionals; materials such as curriculum, books, media, and software; and a physical environment that meets the sensory needs of the students.
- **Family and Community Education** that provides on-going dialogue and strategies to support bilingual development such as family ASL and English workshops, appropriate materials, and mentors.
- **Defined Allocation of Language Use** that clarifies how and when ASL and spoken and/or written English are used for social and academic purposes in school and at home, with the goal of developing “dynamic bilingualism” competencies[3] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftn3).
- **Individualized Educational Planning for Each Student** that includes the student’s profile and age-appropriate goals based on formal and informal assessment, as well as documentation of the child’s ongoing development and use of ASL and English for communication, learning, and critical thinking skills
- **A Cultural Environment** that respects and honors the various beliefs, behaviors, and values present in both Deaf and Hearing Communities and that practices relationship building and consensus among people of various cultures and backgrounds.

For a more in-depth description of the above, go to: (link to relevant section in Parents Section with resources) See also the Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (<https://www.nad.org/issues/education/k-12/bill-of-rights>).

For more information and inquiries, please contact NAD (<https://www.nad.org/contact-us>).

Resources and References

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[1] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftnref) The word “environment” includes any place an infant, child, youth or adult receives education among which are (but not limited to): early intervention programs, homes, schools for the deaf, public schools/programs, and home-schooling.

[2] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftnref) The term “deaf and hard of hearing” encompasses children with multiple identities, unilateral hearing levels (hearing in only one ear), DeafBlind children and DeafPlus children (deaf children with additional disabilities) including deaf children with cerebral palsy.

[3] (https://www.nad.org/position-statement-asl-and-english-bilingual-education#_ftnref) “Dynamic bilingualism competencies” (as presented by premier international authors and researchers on bilingual education) are the skills and abilities that demonstrate the acceptance and use of two or more languages by a child, separately but not segregated and with equal respect for each language.

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