

PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

**AEA
(LOCAL)**

PHILOSOPHY

American Sign Language/English bilingual education adheres to the principles of additive bilingualism in the design of developmental bilingual programs for deaf and hard of hearing students. The goal is to develop social and academic proficiencies in both ASL and English. ASL/English bilingual education stresses the importance of ASL and English in the lives of deaf children as well as their need to develop the expressive and receptive language abilities linked to each language. These abilities include signing, attending to signs, reading, writing, and listening and speaking to the degree that is appropriate for individual students. In addition, students' abilities to fingerspell, read fingerspelling, lipread, and mouth English visemes are also emphasized because these incorporate skills from both languages.

A critical factor in achieving competent bilingualism is the development of conversational and academic proficiencies in both languages. Conversational proficiency refers to a child's ability to use and understand a language in the context of everyday life during face-to-face conversations. Academic language proficiency requires that children use and comprehend concepts and vocabulary in academic settings (with minimal contextual support) as well as be able to manipulate this information for different purposes (e.g. comparing, evaluating, analyzing).

RATIONALE

Early access and exposure to a natural language, whether signed or spoken, initiates the language acquisition process required for literacy development and bilingual competencies.

Research shows that first language proficiency is a powerful predictor of second language development.

ASL is the recognized language of the deaf community in the United States and provides linguistic stimulation to begin acquisition of cognitive development.

Research shows that bilingual students have cognitive advantages if both languages are fostered in all social and academic interactions.

Bilingualism, when fostered, in all social and academic interactions is also critical to the development of the whole child including a positive self-identity.

ASL/English bilingual education stresses the importance of ASL and English in the lives of deaf students and lays the foundation for literacy development.

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