

MICHIGAN  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Michigan School for the Deaf  
Language Policy

It is the policy of the Michigan School for the Deaf (MSD) to provide a bilingual education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who attend the school. A bilingual education respects both American Sign Language and English, and demands excellence in the achievement of proficiency in both languages. A bilingual education assures access to literacy and academic achievement. A bilingual education respects the primary or native language of students while providing access to academic, social and civic competencies.

Philosophy and Principles of the Language Policy at the Michigan School for the Deaf

American Sign Language (ASL)/English Bilingual Education at the Michigan School for the Deaf recognizes and values both the native language (ASL) of the Deaf community and the majority language (English). Because ASL is a visual/spatial language, ASL provides Deaf and Hard of Hearing students with clear, complete and consistent access to linguistic information. Fluency in ASL allows students access to developing skill in English literacy (reading, writing, and if appropriate, speaking), improving reading proficiency and increasing academic success.

In keeping with a bilingual philosophy, the Michigan School for the Deaf strives to keep use of the two languages, American Sign Language and English, separate. The MSD goals are:

- To demonstrate respect for both languages
- To provide accessible communication for all members of the MSD community
- To assist all MSD students with the development of proficiency in ASL and English

This language policy impacts on student achievement by ensuring that students have full access to communication and linguistic information, as well as providing students with greater opportunities to increase academic skills, improve literacy and achieve their potential.

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