

Appendix E Qualifications and Considerations

It needs to be understood that ASL immersion class is conceptually based on the SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) model championed in monolingual schools experiencing a fair amount of students needing such specially designed instruction to learn English as a second language. The pedagogy surrounding this practice was based upon the “Contextual Interaction Theory” (Krashen, 1987). At the center of the theory are two major components, “comprehensible language input” and a “supportive affective environment”, which are the heart and soul of ASL immersion classes. The provision of ASL immersion classes allows identified students to move forward with academic courses such as mathematics and science while at the same time learning ASL through the contextual clues provided by the course of study.

Additionally, it is important to implement and follow the practices of ASL immersion as a short-term support service for students to bring them on par with their same-aged peers. Some students exit after one quarter or one semester, but most often, they exit after a year in this class. Once they have exited ASL immersion class, they begin receiving tutoring services. If students take longer than one year to exit ASL immersion class, it is usually an indication that there may be other cognitive challenges at play (autism spectrum, intellectual disability, et cetera). The ASL immersion teacher should handle all the ASL goals set forth in the IEP. Weekly checks for understanding or formative assessment should be conducted through video recordings. Students should watch themselves in these videos and rate their own performance. Peers can also rate the videos, giving feedback on how/what to improve.

A note of caution, if this course is not written into the course selection, it is very difficult to schedule as a “time slot” during the school day. That was a struggle for five years for ASL Immersion II class at the secondary level. The things that prevent scheduling ASL immersion into the day of a secondary student include dual-placement classes (students who go to a local public school for 1 or 2 classes), graduation requirements (for instance, KSD requires all students to have 2 hours of English Language Arts [ELA] class for 4 years to graduate), overall class schedules for core classes (i.e., seniors and juniors typically take ELA class first thing in the morning), and other electives offered.

However, there are exceptional cases where deaf and hard-of-hearing students in their teens, who have yet acquired a first language or experience extreme late-first language acquisition in ASL. Those students are linguistically isolated until adolescence due to social and other factors, such as limited schooling and/or having very little or no language input of any kind (spoken, written or signed) throughout childhood (Ferjan Ramirez, Liberman & Mayberry, 2013). These identified students need to begin in ASL Immersion I class; subsequently, the secondary school must create such a class to remediate and support their first language acquisition in ASL before they are ready for ASL Immersion II class.