



**American Sign
Language (ASL) and the
Special Language
Credit Option
Revised 2005**

***AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) AND
THE SPECIAL LANGUAGE CREDIT OPTION***

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ASL AND THE SPECIAL LANGUAGE CREDIT OPTION

American Sign Language (ASL) is one of the languages eligible for Special Language Credit Option purposes. The information in this section will be of interest to students, families, and school administrators. The Manitoba School for the Deaf is responsible for coordinating the evaluation for credits in ASL. Senior Years credits are granted based on competency criteria which are provided later in this document.

Please note the following

- Students must understand that these evaluations are for the purpose of **Senior Years Credits in Manitoba** only and should not be used as any certification of Sign language courses offered in Manitoba. Only an official ASL instructor can award a certificate.
- As of the 2004–2005 school year, students will be eligible to challenge for up to four credits, one in each of the Senior years (10G, 20G, 30S, and 40S). Examinations are based on the Vista curriculum. Criteria for each grade level are being developed and will be available in the fall of 2004.
- These evaluations are generally designed for people who have had extensive exposure to ASL or who have developed fluency through Sign language classes. The ASL Special Language examinations are demanding and rigorous. **To successfully challenge a particular grade level, the student must achieve a mark of 60% or higher. Retroactive credits for prior grade levels may be awarded subject to satisfactory performance.**
- Personnel from the Manitoba School for the Deaf coordinate the evaluators through the American Sign Language Instructors of Manitoba (ASLIM) organization. In general, the evaluators are members of the Manitoba Deaf Community.
- Evaluations are normally held on a Friday evening and Saturday in November and May on an annual basis, conditional on the number of applicants. If required, appointments will be made for the Thursday and/or Wednesday evenings prior to these weekends. Please contact the ASL Coordinator to confirm the deadline for the receipt of applications for ASL examinations for the current school year. Usually, the deadline for receipt of applications for ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations is **November 1 and May 1 of each school year.**
- **There is no charge for this evaluation.** A copy of the application form may be downloaded, or contact the ASL Coordinator to have an information package sent to you.
- The contact for ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations is:

ASL Coordinator
Manitoba School for the Deaf
242 Stradford Street
Winnipeg MB R2Y 2C9
Telephone: (204) 945-8934 (Manitoba Relay Service, 1-800-855-0511)
Fax: (204) 945-1767

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ASL AND THE VISTA CURRICULUM

Did you know...

- Many people mistakenly believe that American Sign Language (ASL) is English conveyed through signs. Some think that it is a manual code for English, that it can express only concrete information, or that there is one universal sign language used by Deaf people around the world. Linguistic research demonstrates, however, that ASL is comparable in complexity and expressiveness to spoken languages. It is not a form of English. It has its own distinct grammatical structure, which must be mastered in the same way as the grammar of any other language. ASL differs from spoken languages in that it is visual rather than auditory, and is composed of precise handshapes and movements.
- ASL is capable of conveying subtle, complex, and abstract ideas. Signers can discuss philosophy, literature, or politics as well as football, cars, or income taxes. Sign language can express poetry as poignantly as any spoken language, and can communicate humour, wit, and satire just as biting. As in other languages, new vocabulary items are constantly being introduced by the community in response to cultural and technological change.
- When two languages coexist in any community, the language of the majority culture may influence the language of the minority culture. One of the ways that ASL is influenced by English is in the incorporation of certain fingerspelled English words. In general, fingerspelling is used to give
 - names of people
 - names of cities and states
 - titles of movies or books
 - brand names

Fingerspelling is also used for “fingerspelled loan signs.” These are two- to five-letter, commonly used words that have their own unique patterns of movement. These movement patterns are different from ordinary fingerspelling: the words have become ASL signs rather than fingerspelled words. Some of these you may already know, e.g., OK, car, bus. Fingerspelling, however, is **not a substitute for signing**. Do not spell a word as your first alternative for expressing an idea for which you don’t know a sign. Instead, point, describe, act out, gesture, draw—anything but fingerspelling.

- **Deaf people vary their signs to match the language skills of the other person.** This may mean the inclusion of more fingerspelled words, more mouthing of words, gesturing, simple sentences, a slower pace, and more English word order. The goal is to communicate, so Deaf people will use whatever combination of methods is most effective. This is similar to what you would do with a person who is obviously not fluent in the English language.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS: THE VISTA CURRICULUM CONCEPTS

The Vista Curriculum: Grade Level Expectations

As of the 2004–2005 school year, students will be eligible for up to four Senior Years credits, one in each of the Senior years. ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations are based on the Vista curriculum, Levels 1–3.

To successfully challenge for a Senior 4 credit, students must have mastered all aspects of Vista Level 3.

New grade level expectations for Senior 1 to 3 and their congruency with the Vista curriculum are being developed.

Overview of Vista Concepts for ASL 40S

Language Functions

LOCATING THINGS AROUND THE HOUSE

Give reason
Make request
Ask where
Give specific location
Correct and confirm information
Open conversations

Grammar

topic-comment structure
weak hand as reference
locative classifiers
yes/no questions
wh— questions
ordinal numbers
numbers: 101-109; multiples of 100 to 1000

COMPLAINING, MAKING SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS

Complain about others
Make suggestion
Make request
Ask for permission
Express concern
Decline, explain why
Agree, with condition
Agree, tell shortcomings
Ask for clarification

recurring time signs: EVERY– (time sign)
continuous time signs: ALL– (time sign)
temporal aspect: recurring, continuous
inflecting verbs
role shifting
conditional sentences
clock numbers

EXCHANGING PERSONAL INFORMATION: LIFE EVENTS

Ask/tell when	when clauses
Tell about life events	phrasing for sequencing events
Ask nationality of name	contrastive structure
Narrate family immigration history (Breakaway)	descriptive and locative classifiers numbers: 110-119; dates and addresses

DESCRIBING AND IDENTIFYING THINGS

Ask what a word means	descriptive classifiers for shapes, patterns, textures
Give definition	instrument classifiers
Describe object	weak hand as reference topic-comment structure non-manual markers: “oo,” “cha,” “mm” money makers

TALKING ABOUT THE WEEKEND

Ask about the weekend	temporal sequencing
Describe weekend activities	time signs with durative aspect
Express opinions/feelings	element classifiers (Breakaway)
Tell about disrupted plans	numbers: 120-1000

Examination Process for Senior 4 ASL 40S Special Language Credit Examination

There will be three ASL Deaf evaluators.

The test will be based on:

1. ASL Expressive Skills
2. View the videotape and then answer the questions
3. a) pictorial story activity
b) video clips
4. Comprehension Skills
 - a) view the videotape story and retell the story
 - b) evaluation of your ASL skills based on that video story

Strategies for Learning American Sign Language (and points to consider when preparing for ASL exams)

To increase language learning in the ASL classroom and when reviewing for examination purposes, the following strategies might prove useful:

1. Follow all conversations, whether they are between the teacher and class, teacher and student, or student and student.
2. **Focus on the signer's face, not on the hands.** Don't break eye contact while in a signed conversation.
3. Develop active listening behaviours, e.g., nodding, responding with "huh?," "wow," "really?." Your teacher may stop to repeat information because you do not nod to indicate you are following along. This is not teacher/student behaviour—it is cultural. **Listeners have very active roles in signed conversation.**
4. Participate as much as possible by adding comments, agreeing or disagreeing, etc. The more you participate, the more you will retain what you learn. Don't worry about mistakes. They are part of the learning process.
5. Try not to worry about a sign you missed. Work on getting the gist of the conversation. If a particular sign is repeated over and over, and you haven't a clue to its meaning, then ask. Try to avoid asking your classmate for quick English translations. You lose out on valuable communication experiences that can strengthen your comprehension skills.
6. Leave English (and your voice) outside the door. Try not to translate in your head as you watch someone sign. Don't worry about memorizing, as repetition and context will help you acquire the language.
7. Try to maintain a signing environment during class breaks, before class begins, and whenever Deaf people are present.
8. Try not to miss class. Your class strives to form a language community; the cohesiveness of the group influences how rich the language exchange is in the classroom. Missing class makes it difficult to achieve this interactive environment.

Application for ASL Special Language Credit Option Examinations

All Senior Years students requesting ASL challenge examinations for Special Language Credit Option purposes must complete this form. AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) ONLY.

Return to: ASL Specialist
Manitoba School for the Deaf
242 Stradford Street
Winnipeg MB R2Y 2C9
Telephone: 945-8934
Fax: 945-1767

Part I: To be completed by Student

FULL NAME OF APPLICANT: _____
(Surname) (Given Names)

ADDRESS: _____

HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ POSTAL CODE: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ PRESENT GRADE: _____
(Day / Month / Year)

SCHOOL ATTENDED THIS YEAR: _____

ADDRESS OF SCHOOL: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____ TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

NAME OF PRINCIPAL: _____

SCHOOL DIVISION: _____

CHECK THE GRADE/ASL LEVEL FOR WHICH AN EXAMINATION IS REQUESTED:

ASL 10G ASL 20G ASL 30S ASL 40S

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR INFORMATION: _____

_____ (Date) _____ (Signature of Applicant)

Part II: To be completed by the School

This is to certify that the applicant _____ is a student presently enrolled in this school. His/her application for a special credit is hereby approved and the school/school division accepts responsibility for the expense involved in the assessment.

SCHOOL: _____

SIGNATURE OF TEACHER OR COUNSELLOR: _____

APPROVED: _____ (Principal) _____ (Date)

FORWARD MARKS TO: MAILING ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

FAX: _____

SLCO-4/05

**Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth
Special Language Credit Option
Examiner's Report Form**

American Sign Language (ASL)

NAME OF STUDENT: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

DATE OF EXAMINATION: _____

GRADE LEVEL TESTED/CHALLENGED: Senior 1 Senior 2 Senior 3 Senior 4

STUDENT MARKS. PLEASE COMPLETE:

ASL COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS: FINAL MARK _____ PERCENT.

Examiner's recommendation:

I recommend that the student be awarded the following credits for American Sign Language (ASL) based on the student's performance. (Check all boxes that apply including retroactive credits awarded.)

- 10G
- 20G
- 30S
- 40S

NAME OF EXAMINER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

EXAMINER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE REPORT PREPARED: _____