

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

In 2000, under the auspices of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, *The Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages, Kindergarten to Grade 12* was released as a common base and support document for developing curricula for specific languages in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. Subsequently, Edmonton Public Schools drew on and adapted the WCP International Languages Curriculum for the development of their *American Sign Language and Deaf Culture, Three Year Program (ASL 15/25/35) Curriculum*. In 2008, Manitoba School for the Deaf and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth obtained permission from Edmonton Public Schools to adapt their program of studies for use in Manitoba. This document, *Grades 9 to 12 American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Culture (DC): Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes*, is the result of this initiative.

The *Grades 9 to 12 American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Culture (DC): Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes* has been developed primarily for hearing, hard of hearing, and Deaf students who are beginning their study of ASL and Deaf culture in senior high school.

## Rationale

ASL is a complex language that has been used for centuries throughout North America. Signed languages are unlike spoken languages in that they are three-dimensional “languages in motion.”

The value of learning ASL for Canadian society as a whole is enormous. Apart from the common advantages related to the learning of a second language, it permits an insight into Deaf culture and bestows more opportunity to communicate directly with the Deaf and hard of hearing. The learning of ASL develops awareness of and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity, in addition to preserving cultural identity. It also provides cultural enrichment and is the best means of fostering understanding and solidarity among Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people. Furthermore, it gives the opportunity to identify, question, and challenge one’s own cultural assumptions, values, and perspectives and to contribute positively to society.

As well, for students who already have some knowledge of ASL, or family/friendship connections to Deaf culture, it offers an opportunity of renewing contact with the language and culture. For some, it may contribute to maintaining and further developing proficiency in one’s first language.

There is significant evidence to suggest that learning another language contributes to the development of increased grammatical abilities in one’s first language and enhances

cognitive functioning, particularly increased ability to conceptualize and to think abstractly, more cognitive flexibility, and greater divergent thinking, creativity, and metalinguistic competence. Because the acquisition of ASL poses a significant challenge to most hearing people, it stimulates considerable strategizing and metacognition.

Finally, in today's world, the knowledge of a second language and culture in general is an advantage for individuals providing language skills that enable them to communicate and interact effectively in the workplace and community, while broadening the world for people who are Deaf/hard of hearing.

## Assumptions

The following are statements of assumptions which have guided the development of the *Common Curriculum Framework* and this *Curriculum Framework*:

- Language is communication.
- All students can be successful learners of language and culture, although they will learn in a variety of ways and acquire proficiency at varied rates.
- All languages can be taught and learned.
- Learning a second language leads to enhanced learning in both the child's primary language and in related areas of cognitive development and knowledge acquisition. This is true of children who come to the class with no knowledge of the second language and are learning it as a second or additional language. It is also true of children

who have some knowledge of the second language and are developing literacy skills in that language.

For a brief discussion of some of the factors that need to be considered when implementing this curriculum, see Appendix A: Using the Curriculum.

## Effective Language Learning

The following are some **general principles** of effective language learning identified in the research on second language learning and acquisition. These principles have guided the development of the conceptual model used in this framework.

### Focus on Meaning

Language learning is more effective when classes are structured around meaningful tasks rather than around elements of the language itself, such as grammatical structures, vocabulary themes, or language functions. The principal focus of classroom activities is on communication while learning about a content area or carrying out a project or task. Specific language skills are taught when students notice they need certain vocabulary, structures, or functions to carry out the task they have chosen to do. Language learning then has a purpose and students are more highly motivated.

### Focus on Interaction

Students learn languages more effectively when they have ample opportunity to work in groups on tasks they have chosen and tasks which require them to negotiate meaning with their fellow students. Negotiating meaning involves working to make oneself understood and to understand others. In classrooms structured in this way, students have more practice time, they are working on tasks that reflect their interests, and they are using ASL in situations that more closely resemble those outside of school.

### Focus on Strategies

Successful ASL learners use a number of strategies that help make their learning more effective. These language learning strategies\* are often categorized as cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective. Communication or language use strategies\* are an important component of communicative competence. These include strategies used regularly by users of any language to enhance communication. But they also include repair and compensation strategies, which are particularly important in the early stages of language learning if students are to engage in communicative activities before they have extensive knowledge of the language.

Not all students acquire these strategies on their own. Most of them will benefit from explicit classroom instruction regarding language learning and language use strategies, provided alongside instruction in ASL itself. Once students

are consciously aware of strategies, have practised using them, can select the most effective ones for a particular task, and can see the link between their own actions and their learning, they will be more motivated and more effective ASL learners.

### Focus on Prior Knowledge

Constructivist theory of learning suggests that we learn by integrating new information or experiences into what we already know and have experienced. Students do this most effectively through active engagement with tasks that are meaningful to them, in authentic contexts, using actual tools. For this reason, the content and tasks around which lessons and units are structured should reflect students' experiences. For example, if students are involved with and interested in a particular sport, a task can be chosen that links with the sport. The learning activities will build on their knowledge and experience while encouraging them to increase their understanding and broaden their horizons.

Students will come to their ASL learning experience with different prior knowledge, even if they have similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Classroom activities that offer them choice and flexibility allow students to make meaningful connections and to be actively involved in constructing their own learning.

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\* Words followed by an asterisk [\*] are defined in the Glossary.

## Transfer and Inference

In addition to knowledge about content, students will come to their ASL class with a large body of useful knowledge about language, even if they have never used ASL. They can transfer knowledge of English and other languages they know or are learning to ASL. Initially, English may also be a source of interference as students try to apply generalizations that are valid for English to ASL. Students benefit from an awareness of differences as well as similarities in relation to any component of ASL: sign formation, grammatical structures, sign vocabulary, discourse\* features. They may also transfer language learning and language use strategies from one language context to another.

## Language Learning and Culture\*

Intercultural competence\* is an essential element of any language learning endeavour. Knowledge of Deaf culture alone is not sufficient. Cultures evolve over time. Diversity exists within cultures in any society. If students develop the skills to analyze, understand, and relate to any culture with which they may come into contact, they will be prepared for encounters with new cultural practices.

## Conceptual Model

The aim of the *Curriculum Framework* is the development of communicative competence\* in ASL.

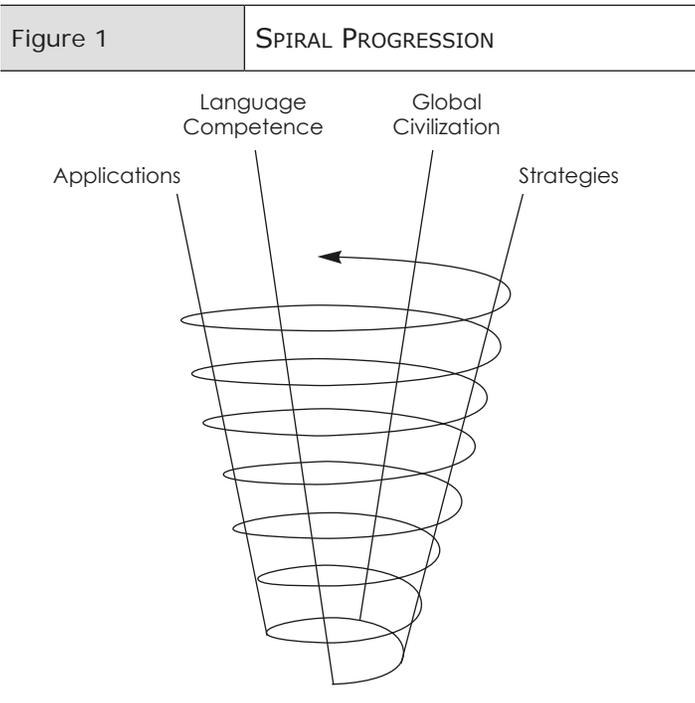
### Four Components

For the purposes of this *Curriculum Framework*, communicative competence is represented by four interrelated and interdependent components. The **Applications** component deals with what the students will be able to do with ASL, the functions they will be able to perform, and the contexts in which they will be able to operate. **Language Competence** addresses the students' knowledge of ASL and their ability to use that knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful texts\* appropriate to the situation in which they are used. **Global Citizenship** aims to develop intercultural competence with a particular focus on Deaf culture. The **Strategies** component helps students learn and communicate more effectively and more efficiently. Each of these components is described more fully at the beginning of the corresponding section of the *Curriculum Framework*.

### A Spiral Progression

Language learning is integrative, not merely cumulative. Each new element that is added must be integrated into the whole of what has gone before. The model that best represents the students' language learning progress is an expanding spiral. Their progression is not only vertical (e.g., increased proficiency), but also horizontal (e.g., broader range of applications, experience with more text forms and contexts). The spiral also represents how language learning

activities are best structured. Particular areas of experience, learning strategies, or language functions are revisited at different points in the curriculum, but from a different perspective, in broader contexts, or at a slightly higher level of proficiency each time. Learning is extended, reinforced, and broadened each time a point is revisited.



### Areas of Experience

The topics, themes, or areas of experience that each level is required to cover are outlined below. These areas of experience are provided to ensure a broad range of language learning experiences.

#### **ASL and DC 10F**

- People around Us
- Seasons
- School
- Food
- Sports
- Fashion
- any other areas that meet the needs and interests of the students

#### **ASL and DC 20F**

- Home and Its Layout
- Careers
- Community
- Senses and Feelings
- Social Life
- any other areas that meet the needs and interests of the students

### ASL and DC 30S

- Technology
- Vacations and Travel
- Leisure Activities
- Fine Arts
- Current Events
- any other areas that meet the needs and interests of the students

### ASL and DC 40S

- Unforgettable Moments
- Interesting Facts
- Explaining Rules
- Accidents
- Money
- Major Decisions
- Health Conditions
- ASL Storytelling
- Visit/Volunteer at Deaf Community Events/Agencies
- Employment for Members of the Deaf Community (What can Deaf people do?)
- ASL-English Interpreting as a Profession
- any other areas that meet the needs and interests of the students

## Organization of the Sequence of Studies

### Credit Allocation and Hours of Instruction

#### ASL and DC 10F:

110 hours of scheduled instruction – 1 credit

#### ASL and DC 20F:

110 hours of scheduled instruction – 1 credit

#### ASL and DC 30S:

110 hours of scheduled instruction – 1 credit

#### ASL and DC 40S:

110 hours of scheduled instruction – 1 credit

### Required Prerequisites

ASL and DC 10F: none

ASL and DC 20F: successful completion of ASL and DC 10F

ASL and DC 30S: successful completion of ASL and DC 20F

ASL and DC 40S: successful completion of ASL and DC 30S

**Students who enrol in these courses should be proficient in English, as English is required for the reading and writing components.**

## General Learning Outcomes

General learning outcomes are broad statements identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to achieve in the course of their language learning experience. Four general learning outcomes serve as the foundation for the *Curriculum Framework* and are based on the conceptual model outlined previously.

- Students will use ASL in a variety of situations and for a variety of purposes.
- Students will use ASL effectively and competently.
- Students will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be effective global citizens.
- Students will know and use strategies to maximize effectiveness of learning and communication.

The order in which the general learning outcomes are presented in this Curriculum Framework does not represent a sequential order, nor does it indicate the relative importance of each component. A jurisdiction may choose to emphasize or expand one component more than others in response to the needs and interests of its student population.

## Specific Learning Outcomes

Each general learning outcome is further broken down into specific learning outcomes that students are to achieve by the end of each level. The specific learning outcomes are interrelated and interdependent. In most classroom activities, a number of learning outcomes are addressed in an integrated manner.

The specific learning outcomes are categorized under cluster headings that show the scope of each of the four general learning outcomes. These headings are shown as bullets in the chart on page 11.

The specific learning outcomes are further categorized by strands which show the developmental flow of learning from the beginning to the end of the curriculum. However, a learning outcome for a particular level will not be dealt with only in that particular year. Learning activities in the years preceding will prepare the ground for the acquisition of skills. Learning activities in the years following will broaden the application of the learning outcome.



**General Learning Outcome for Language Competence:** Students will use ASL **effectively** and **competently**.

	ASL and DC 10F	ASL and DC 20F	
Read each page vertically for learning outcomes expected by the end of each level.	<b>LC-3 apply knowledge of the socio-cultural context</b>		
	<b>Register (LC-3.1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize register of signed communication</li> </ul>	<b>Register (LC-3.1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experiment with and use register in a variety of situations</li> </ul>	
	<b>Variations in Language (LC-3.2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experience a variety of sign styles</li> </ul>	<b>Variations in Language (LC-3.2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acknowledge and accept individual differences in signing (e.g., regional and gender variations)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Social Conventions (LC-3.3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use basic politeness conventions (e.g., greeting, eye contact)</li> </ul>	<b>Social Conventions (LC-3.3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize simple social conventions in everyday situations (e.g., calling for attention, turn-taking, interpersonal space)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Specific Learning Outcome</b> statements for each grade	<b>Cluster Heading</b> showing the scope of the general learning outcome	<b>Strand Headings</b> for specific learning outcomes
	Read each page horizontally for developmental flow of learning outcomes from grade to grade.		