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In the last two decades, an increasing number of U.S. high schools have begun to offer ASL as an option to meet state foreign language requirements for graduation. A national survey conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in 1996 showed that 17 (1%) of the 1,650 surveyed U.S. high schools with foreign language programs in 1987 offered ASL, and 33 (2%) in 1997 (CAL, 1997). This represented a growth of almost 100% in 10 years.

This growth of ASL as a foreign language in schools is part of a general trend in educational institutions in adopting ASL for admission and graduation purposes.¹ Welles (2002) studied foreign language enrollments in institutions of higher education and found that 552 undergraduate colleges and universities in 2002 offered ASL classes. Learner enrollment in ASL classes had grown from 1,602 learners in 1990 to 4,308 learners in 1995, 11,420 learners in 1998, and 60,849 in 2002 (Welles, 2002). The growth rates were 3,698% from 1990 to 2002, and 432% from 1998 to 2002. The Modern Language Association reported that in 2009 there were 91,763 students in ASL classes, which represented a growth of 16.4% from 2006 to 2009 (Modern Language Association, 2010), and 109,577 students in 2013 (Modern Language Association, 2015), which represented a growth of 19.4% from 2009 to 2013. In addition, Wilcox and Wilcox (1991) found that as of 1991, 48 U.S. colleges and universities accepted ASL as one of the foreign languages that meet the requirement for undergraduate admission. The number had grown to 66 in 1997 (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997) and 171 as of 2014 (Wilcox, 2014). This represented a growth rate of 256% from 1991 to 2014.

The growth had its contested beginnings. The study of the linguistic structure of ASL did not begin until 1960 (Stokoe, 1960; Stokoe,

1. This section is an abridgment of my article, "American Sign Language as a Foreign Language in U.S. High Schools: The State of the Art," which appeared in the *Modern Language Journal*, 92(1): 1–38.

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Casterline, & Croneberg, 1965). By the 1970s and 1980s, ASL had been declared as a unique language by several linguists (Baker-Schenk & Cokely, 1980; Klima & Bellugi, 1979; Liddell, 1980; Padden, 1981; Valli & Lucas, 1992; Wilbur, 1979). Linguists generally found that ASL, in spite of its distinct visual modality, carries several linguistic features that are similar to spoken languages (Fischer & Siple, 1990; Fromkin, 1988; Neidle et al., 2000; Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006). However, the “discovery” of ASL as a language was followed by arguments, particularly among government officials and school administrators, regarding whether ASL really was a language and whether it should be offered for foreign language credit in schools (Armstrong, 1988; Belka, 2000; Caccamise, Garretson, & Bellugi, 1981; Cooper, 1997; Fromkin, 1988; Sinnet, 1995; Wilcox, 1992; Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997).

The arguments against ASL were based on the visual-manual nature and the geographical scope of ASL, and the disbelief in the existence of the community and culture of signing deaf people. Some government and education officials understood it to be either a manual representation of English or a sophisticated form of gestures and pantomimes. Others felt that learning ASL was easier than learning spoken languages because it was in the manual form (Peterson, 1999; cf. Shroyer & Holmes, 1982). In addition, ASL was created in the U.S. and is used largely by American deaf people. As such, ASL was not seen as “foreign.” The reasoning was that foreign languages originate in countries outside of the U.S., and foreign language learners can visit the countries, use their languages, and study their cultures (Armstrong, 1988). In the case of ASL, there is no foreign country to go to in order to use the language (Belka, 2000; Reagan, 2000).

Another argument against ASL in schools was that the existence of a separate Deaf community is problematic. Some government and education officials considered deaf people as Americans and users of English. Their community is a subgroup of the larger American society, and its culture a subculture of American culture (Terstriep, 1993). Yet another argument against ASL was that it has no written form (Wilcox & Wilbers, 1987). This is unlike spoken foreign languages offered in high schools as they have both written and spoken forms. A final argument was that there is no cultural tradition in the Deaf community. All spoken foreign languages offered in schools carry a rich body of artistic and literary traditions that learners can study. As ASL does not have a written form, government

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and education officials argued that ASL cannot have artistic and literary works nor possess cultural traditions (Wilcox & Wilbers, 1987).

The above arguments were counteracted by supporters of ASL as a foreign language (Battison & Carter, 1981; Chopin, 1988; Corwin & Wilcox, 1985; Wilbers, 1987, 1988; Wilcox, 1992; Wilcox & Wilbers, 1987; Wilcox & Wilcox, 1991, 1997). The supporters devised arguments based on linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociological, and anthropological research on ASL and the American Deaf community and culture. The arguments that ASL is a manual or gestural form of English were countered by studies in ASL linguistics that pointed to phonological, morphological, and syntactical similarities and differences between ASL and spoken languages (Liddell, 1980; Fromkin, 1988; Neidle et al., 2000; Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006; Valli & Lucas, 1992). ASL contains, for instance, phonological binary opposites, morphological combinations, and word order that are comparable to the features and constructions of the world's spoken languages. The arguments that ASL has no cultural traditions because it lacks a written form were dispelled by several researchers who found that there is a rich body of cultural traditions in the arts and literature that are recorded on videotapes (VHS), digital video devices (DVDs), and other visual media (Davis, 1998; Frishberg, 1988; Rutherford, 1988; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005; Wilcox, 1992; Wilcox & Wilcox, 1997). Histories of Deaf people and their language, community, and culture have been researched since the 1980s (Baynton, 1996; Gannon, 1981; Lane, 1984; Padden & Humphries, 2005; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989) and showed that the Deaf community has not only been created but is also evolving. Deaf culture has been investigated as a sociocultural phenomenon of deaf people containing ideologies, artifacts, and social structures that revolve around ASL, visualism, manualism, deafness, and deaf-hearing relations (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988, 2005).

Furthermore, the argument that ASL is not a foreign language is based on previously-held perceptions of the terms "foreign," "nation," and "community." These perceptions have been altered by changes in the international geopolitical situation. Migration by people speaking different languages and carrying different cultures across geographic regions has broken down ties between language and nation. This leads to the concept of language use by a "community" of users, versus a "nation" of users. Individuals

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not using the language of the community are considered as “foreign” and their language as a “foreign language” (Armstrong, 1988; Wilbers, 1987). For individuals not born or enculturated into a given linguistic community, the language needs to be learned (Reagan, 2000; Wallinger, 2000). The idea that ASL is easy to learn compared to spoken languages because it is used in a manual-gestural form, had been dispelled by Shroyer and Holmes (1982), Kemp (1988), and Peterson (1999). Kemp (1988) conducted a study of the difficulties that beginning learners who speak have with learning ASL and found that the difficulties lay in the change in language processing modality. Learners needed to shift away from their oral-aural languages and process ASL visually. As such, ASL is as difficult to master as any spoken language. Since ASL shares universal linguistic principles with spoken languages (cf. Neidle et al., 2000; Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006), learning ASL may aid learners in mastering other languages (Kemp, 1989; Peterson, 1999). For supporters of ASL as a foreign language, the evidence of ASL linguistics and Deaf community and culture in scholarly and literary studies, along with post-colonialist notions of “foreign” in languages and communities, have superseded the arguments of ASL as a “manual-gestural representation” of English and that language is solely a product of user nationality. The recognition of ASL as a language and arguments in support of ASL as a foreign language empowered scholars and advocates from the Deaf community to seek its adoption as a foreign language worthy of study by state education departments and high schools.

I conducted a study in 2006 that outlined the history of the inclusion of ASL and Deaf community and culture in high schools. Through an examination of educational and historical documents, it was found that the impetus for introducing ASL for foreign language credit in public high schools was the presence of signing deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) learners in classrooms (Rosen, 2006). The mainstreaming was initially framed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) practices that favored speech and hearing for learners with deafness. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) (89 Stat. 773), passed in 1975, was one of the earliest U.S. federal laws that mandated the education of children with disabilities in public schools. The law established two definitions for deafness. “Deaf” refers to children who are unable to use any hearing to receive classroom information. “Hard of hearing” refers to children who can utilize hearing with amplification to receive information.

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Now renamed as the IDEA (20 U.S.C. Section 1400–1487), the EAHCA sets as one of its goals the integration of deaf and hard of hearing individuals into American society. This integration happened by placement of D/HH learners in classrooms with hearing learners. Before these laws were passed, most D/HH learners were placed in special schools for the deaf. Schools for the deaf use sign languages, ranging from Manually Coded English to ASL, as the main means of communication. It was hoped that by placing D/HH learners in classrooms with hearing learners, D/HH learners would acquire the hearing and speaking communication skills that are needed to interact with hearing learners, so that they could ultimately be mainstreamed effectively into the American society. From 1977 to the present, D/HH learners have increasingly been placed in public school classrooms with hearing learner peers: 46% of D/HH learners were placed in public schools in 1977–1978, 61% in 1987–88, 88% in 1999–2000, and 91% in 2002–2003 (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2004a).

However, the mainstreaming of signing D/HH² learners in American schools created communication and language barriers between the D/HH and hearing learners in public education classrooms. Studies since the passage of the laws have consistently showed a lack of opportunities for interaction between signing D/HH learners and their hearing teachers and peers in public schools (Foster, 1989; Gaustad & Kluwin, 1992; Stinson & Liu, 1999). This communication situation of signing D/HH learners received attention from advocates, researchers, and the American Deaf community. They fought over the definitions, evaluation, instructional program, and placements of D/HH learners concerning communication needs and language preferences, thus making the implementation of the IDEA a debate between differing ideologies about how D/HH learners should be educated (Rosen, 2006).

Deaf community advocates, particularly representatives from the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), a national advocacy organization of deaf people in the U.S., held meetings with representatives from the U.S. Congress and officials from the U.S. Department of Education, a

2. Deaf and hard of hearing learners in mainstreamed settings exhibit diversity in communication preferences. Their languages range from speech and Cued Speech, to Manually Coded English and ASL. The “signing D/HH learners” refers to a subset of the deaf and hard of hearing learner population who predominantly use ASL.

cabinet-level entity of the U.S. government charged with the responsibility of implementing federal education laws and overseeing education practices in the nation. Deaf community advocates sought to alter notions of deafness and educational practices regarding language use in classrooms, placement, diagnosis, and evaluation (Rosen, 2006). The result of the meetings was a reconceptualization of deafness for educational purposes. In the 1997 and 1999 reauthorizations of IDEA, and the formerly-named EAHCA (1975) language was revised by deleting references to speech and hearing difficulties and their role in receiving linguistic information, and by including ASL as one of the “language preferences” of D/HH learners in the law for the first time (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). As a consequence of these changes in the IDEA language, public schools found it difficult to ignore sign language, including ASL, as a primary language and preferred mode of communication for the learners (Rosen, 2006).

Another change that came with the altered IDEA language was the increased presence of sign language interpreters with signing D/HH learners in mainstreamed settings. Their presence has increased since 1999, from 22.1% in 1999–2000 to 22.9% in 2001–2002, and 23.4% in 2002–2003 (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2004a). Their presence has generated interest among hearing learners and teachers in the lives, experiences, language, community, and culture of signing D/HH learners (Rosen, 2006). Hearing learners and teachers have increasingly requested courses in ASL and about the American Deaf community and culture (Rosen, 2006). As a result, general education schools accepted ASL as one of their languages. The presence of signing D/HH learners and the hearing learners’ demand for classes in ASL have set into motion the creation of courses and programs in ASL as a foreign language in public schools (Rosen, 2006).

State legislatures and education departments needed to provide official approval so schools could offer ASL courses, which would include information on the Deaf community and culture, for foreign language credit. Beginning in the 1980s, members from the Deaf community initiated the process for meeting with and securing approval from state legislatures and state education departments. However, the process varied across states. Different sources within states initiated the process for implementing state recognition of ASL for foreign language credit in schools,

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as Pfeffier (2003) found for Virginia, Loux (1996) for Nevada, Rosen (2005) for New York, and Selover (1988) and Clary (2004) for California, but followed a similar process for all in-house program and course approval (Clary, 2004; Pfeffier, 2003). In some states, the NAD, in collaboration with the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA), a leading American organization of teachers of ASL, met with state education departments and state legislatures and received approval (Rosen, 2006). In New York State, for instance, the Empire State Association of the Deaf, a state chapter of the NAD, several representatives from the state chapter of ASLTA, and other community leaders met with members of the state legislature, received approval, drew up curriculum and assessment materials, and devised examinations for teacher certification and learner diplomas (Rosen, 2006). In other states, community members and faculty from colleges and universities carried out the process. In California, a consortium of individual members of the Deaf community, such as the California Association of the Deaf, educational institutions such as California State University at Northridge, and community organizations, initiated the process (Selover, 1988). In Maryland, Nevada (Loux, 1996), Texas, and Washington, consortia of community organizations and leaders also initiated similar processes. In a few states, the process began at the political level. For instance, a memorandum written by the superintendent of schools, a top state education official, in Virginia in 1988 led to the passage of a resolution recognizing ASL as a foreign language in the state assembly in 1998 (Pfeffier, 2003; Wallinger, 2000).

As a result of Deaf community mobilization, the number of states that have formally recognized ASL as a foreign language has grown from 28 states in 1997 (Kreeft-Peyton, 1998), to 32 in 1999 (Jacobowitz, 1999), 38 in 2004 (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2004b) and 45 as of 2014. The number of recognizing states had grown 61% in 14 years since Kreeft-Peyton's (1998) study. One state, Delaware, had ASL legislation pending as of 2014. State legislation for ASL had never been proposed in 4 states also as of 2014. However, the offering of ASL for foreign language credit in high schools was not predicated on state education departments' recognition of ASL as a language. There were several states where ASL was not formally recognized, but their high schools offered ASL for foreign language credit. New Mexico and North Dakota are examples of

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states that had not formally recognized ASL as a foreign language, but high schools in these states offered ASL as a foreign language as of 2014. See figure 1 for the number of states recognizing ASL as a language. The rationale was that high schools offered foreign languages to help learners obtain college admission, which typically required at least two years of foreign language courses in high schools. In addition, there were some states, such as Alabama and Iowa, which formally recognized ASL as a foreign language, but none of their public high schools offered ASL foreign language classes. These states typically did not require foreign languages for any of its high school diplomas. In these cases, there was no relationship between state recognition of ASL and ASL offerings in its high schools. Therefore, there may be opportunity for an increase in the

Arizona	Kentucky	Ohio
Alabama	Louisiana	Oklahoma
Alaska	Maine	Oregon
Arkansas	Maryland	Pennsylvania
California	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
Connecticut	Michigan	South Carolina
Colorado	Minnesota	South Dakota
Florida	Missouri	Tennessee
Georgia	Montana	Texas
Hawaii	Nebraska	Utah
Idaho	Nevada	Vermont
Illinois	New Hampshire	Virginia
Indiana	New Jersey	Washington
Iowa	New York	West Virginia
Kansas	North Carolina	Wisconsin
States where recognition of American Sign Language is pending, as of 2014:		
Delaware		
States in which recognition of American Sign Language as a valid foreign language never proposed to state legislatures, as of 2014:		
Mississippi	North Dakota	
New Mexico	Wyoming	

Figure 1. States that recognize American Sign Language as a foreign language, as of 2014.

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number of high schools offering ASL for foreign language credit despite some state education departments' lack of recognition of ASL as a foreign language.

The results of Deaf community work in ensuring recognition of ASL and Deaf community and culture at the state government level carried over to public high schools (Rosen, 2006). However, high school principals, foreign language departments, and school districts needed to support implementation of ASL courses for credit to fulfill learner foreign language requirements in the schools. In addition, the high schools still needed to establish classes, enroll learners, and hire course teachers.

I conducted a survey in 2004–2005 to gather information about the schools, classes, learners, and teachers of ASL as a foreign language (Rosen, 2008). As mentioned, the survey's purpose was to ascertain the breadth and scope, and discern trends on ASL as a foreign language in public high schools nationwide. The specific topical areas for studying trends were the number and distribution of schools, teachers, classes, learners, and departments; types of curricula and instruction; and the process for program implementation (Rosen, 2008).

Lists of schools that offered ASL classes for foreign language credit were requested and obtained from U.S. state education departments in late 2004 and early 2005 for the survey. Of the 50 states sent the request, 38 states responded, and 31 states provided lists. Five states responded by saying that no high schools in their states offered ASL foreign language programs. Two other states responded, but did not provide lists. For these two states, an Internet search was conducted. However, this search was unreliable because of incomplete information, frequent website breakdowns, and invalid website hyperlinks while doing the searches. The 31 respondent states provided lists containing the names and addresses of close to 1,100 high schools with ASL foreign language programs. The lists included all types of high schools, including public, private, denominational, alternative, vocational-technical, specialized, and special education high schools. Due to financial and time constraints, the population of high schools with ASL foreign language programs was narrowed to a sample of public high schools.

Questionnaires were created that sought information on the number of public high schools offering ASL courses within a given state, the year

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ASL was implemented, the order of program establishment, learner enrollment, the number of teachers, types of training teachers received to become ASL teachers, the kinds of academic departments housing ASL classes, curricular materials and instructional approaches used by teachers, and the existence of ASL clubs by the academic year 2004–2005. The survey questionnaire is exhibited in Appendix A. Some survey information was requested for years other than the survey time period. In order to discern trends in learner enrollments, classes, and teachers, this information was requested for the 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 academic years. Information on program implementation was requested for the year of implementation. Information for the then-projected academic year 2005–2006 will not be discussed due to insufficient responses. In addition, survey data on curriculum and instructional approaches will not be discussed due to space limitations. Responses to the question about whether ASL was given foreign language credit in a high school or not were used to eliminate high schools that did not grant ASL foreign language credit from this analysis (Rosen, 2008).

Survey questionnaires were mailed in early 2005 to 628 schools in 31 states.³ The response rates were 36% for respondents and 58% for the states in general. The responses were tabulated for analysis of trends. The following depiction of survey results is based on responses from 226 respondent schools in 18 states. Trends on the national number of public high schools with ASL foreign language programs, learner enrollments, classes, and teachers were based on information from respondent public high schools and were multiplied in proportion to the overall number of high schools in the respondent states to show the current status of ASL as a foreign language at the schools (Rosen, 2008). Figures for some states may be skewed due to insufficient responses from high schools and any interpretation of the results should take this into account.

Survey results showed that the total number of high schools with ASL foreign language programs and classes in the U.S. was 701 as of the 2004–2005 academic year for the 31 respondent states. These 701 high schools

3. The survey was made possible by financial and logistical support from the Department of Health and Behavior Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University.

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represented less than 64% of all the 1,100 high schools, regardless of type, which responded to the survey (Rosen, 2008).

The 1997 CAL survey showed that 33 high schools offered ASL as a foreign language. The increase in the number of high schools with ASL programs in 2004 as compared with 1997 is over 2100%. Not every state had the same number of high schools with ASL programs and classes. Washington State had the highest number of such high schools, followed by Texas, Florida, California, Ohio, and New York. A few states had only one such high school. These states were Alaska, Michigan, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Colorado, and North Carolina. Alabama, Delaware, Iowa, Tennessee, and Wyoming all have no high schools that offered ASL programs.

The number of high schools offering ASL for foreign language credit are meaningful only when compared with the number of high schools offering foreign languages in general. This comparison would help discern the number of these high school ASL programs, and would measure the extent of ASL penetration in high school foreign language programs. Unfortunately, it is not possible to discern relative sizes of ASL programs due to insufficient data about high school foreign language programs in general. No national statistics exist for the early 2000s about high school foreign language programs. Only the states of California and Indiana provided statistics about their high school foreign language classes during this period. California provided statistics on the number of schools, teachers, and foreign language classes at all levels, from kindergarten to high school. Indiana provided statistics on learner enrollments for all grades. However, these statistics were not sufficient in scope and, therefore, not helpful in assessing the extent of ASL penetration in American high school foreign language programs.

While the causal relationship between high school ASL programs and individual colleges granting foreign language credit for prior language study to fulfill admission and graduation requirements could not be discerned from this survey, increased high school enrollment in ASL classes seemed to parallel increasing college enrollment. As of 2005, about 150 national research universities accepted high school credit courses in ASL for admission purposes (Wilcox, 2006). Comparing the numbers between this list and earlier similar lists of Wilcox and Wilcox's (1997), it is clear that the number

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of such colleges and universities was growing. Increases in high school and college learner enrollments in ASL courses seems to suggest an increasing number of colleges and universities that grant foreign language credit for high school ASL courses.

Survey results are presented here regarding the questionnaire topics (Rosen, 2008). Respondents were asked about the number of learners enrolled in high school ASL foreign language classes for the academic years of 2002–2003 and 2004–2005. Survey results show that the number of learners enrolled in ASL classes nationwide had risen exponentially. Nationally, 56,783 high school learners enrolled in ASL classes during the 2002–2003 school year and 73,473 enrolled in such classes in the 2004–2005 school year. Learner enrollment in high school ASL courses rose 29.4% between 2002 and 2005. The states with the highest number of learner enrollments in the 2004–2005 school year were Texas, Florida, California, and Washington. The states with the fewest learner enrollments were Connecticut and Oregon. Almost all states, however, showed increases in learner enrollments. The states with the highest rate of increase in learner enrollments from 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 academic years were New Jersey, with a 212% increase, followed by Texas with a 51.7% increase, Utah with a 45% increase, Ohio with a 42.3% increase, and California with an increase of 37.4%. No state showed decreases in learner enrollment between the academic years 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 except for Virginia. Oregon showed a decline from 2002–2003 to the 2003–2004 school years, and Utah, Illinois, Maine, and Ohio showed a decline in 2004–2005 as compared with the 2003–2004 school years. Arizona and Connecticut exhibited no growth in learner enrollments across the same years (Rosen, 2008).

While the last two decades have seen exponential growth in ASL taught as a foreign language in U.S. schools, including elementary, high, and collegiate institutions (Wilcox, 2014; Rosen, 2008), it also saw an increasing number of learners with learning disabilities taking foreign language classes (Sparks & Javorsky 1999; Sparks, 2006), including ASL (Rosen, 2008). These learners taking foreign languages experienced learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and perceptual processing disorders. They were typically designated in the schools as “504” learners as defined in Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This law mandated that public schools had to provide accommodations for learners with

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disabilities. For learners with disabilities, federal regulations, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), were the motivation for their enrollment into foreign language classes. The growth in ASL classes provided opportunities for learners with disabilities to interact with regular education learners.

According to respondents' comments in the survey, ASL courses attracted a relatively high percentage of learners with learning disabilities. These learners included those with deafness and other physical and learning disabilities. Table 1 shows the percentage of learners with learning disabilities taking ASL classes for foreign language credit. These percentages only cover the 2004–2005 school year.

Nationally, 13% of the learners in ASL classes were learners with learning disabilities (Rosen, 2008). Numerical variations across states can be seen in the percentage of learners with learning disabilities taking ASL

Table 1. Percentage of Learners Taking ASL Classes for Foreign Language Credit Identified as Learners with Learning Disabilities by State, for the 2004–2005 School Year.

State	Number of Special Education Learners, per State in the 2004–2005 School Year
Arizona	5
California	8
Connecticut	25
Florida	6
Illinois	10
Indiana	11
Maine	10
Maryland	1
Massachusetts	34
New Jersey	16
New York	15
Ohio	12
Oregon	15
Pennsylvania	N/A
Texas	14
Utah	10
Virginia	10
Washington State	9
National mean	13

Note: No school from the State of Pennsylvania provided information on the number of special education learners who take ASL classes.

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classes. Massachusetts had the highest percentage of these learners in ASL classes, followed by Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon. Maryland had the lowest percentage of learners with learning disabilities taking ASL classes, followed by Arizona and Florida.

However, the percentage of ASL learners who have physical and/or learning disabilities as compared with the total number of high school ASL learners could not be discerned from the survey. The impact of mainstreaming of D/HH learners in hearing classrooms on learning ASL and other languages could not be determined from the available survey results.

There was also an increase in the number of levels of ASL classes offered in public high schools during this period. Each course level corresponds to one year of study. For instance, if a learner's response is that they have taken 2 levels of ASL, it means 2 years of study. Respondents were asked about the number of levels of ASL classes for the 2002–2003 and 2004–2005 academic years. Survey results showed that the average number of levels of ASL classes has grown from 2.3 levels in 2002–2003 to 2.4 in 2004–2005 nationwide. This represented a growth rate of a little more than 4% from 2002 to 2005. In other words, an overall average of about two to two and a half years of study in ASL was offered in American public high schools. The states with the highest number of levels of ASL classes in the last school year of the survey, 2004–2005, were Pennsylvania, with four levels, followed by Utah with more than three levels, and Virginia and Texas with close to three levels. Connecticut had the lowest number of levels of ASL classes, with one level, followed by Maine, with close to two levels. The states with the highest rate of increase in the number of levels of ASL classes from the 2002–2003 to 2004–2005 academic years were Maryland with a 100% increase and California, Washington, New York, and Indiana with a range of 13% to 17% increase. Some states, such as New Jersey and Utah, showed declines in the number of course levels. A few states, such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, exhibited no growth (Rosen, 2008).

To sum, there has been growth in the number of high schools that offer ASL for foreign language credit since 2000. There were increases in the number and distribution of ASL programs, number and levels of classes, and number of ASL teachers and D/HH learners in public secondary schools in the 2002 to 2005 academic years covered in this survey.

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Survey results suggest that the schools drew teachers largely from deafness-related teaching programs to teach ASL. The teachers needed to understand ASL, ASL and English linguistics, second language acquisition, ASL curricula, ASL instructional methods, and assessment forms and procedures, and know about the history, sociology, and anthropology of Deaf community and culture, and ASL and Deaf arts and literature. Teachers of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and signing D/HH people were the original creators of the idea that ASL was a valid foreign language to be taught in public high schools (Rosen, 2006).