



AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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The Deaf Community proudly embraces American Sign Language as their native language. Today, ASL can be found in schools, workplaces, events, and even on White House briefings on television! ASL is growing in popularity, and the Deaf Community is honored to share its language and culture with those who are interested in learning it. Thus, recognizing when and where to engage appropriately with native ASL users becomes necessary.

ASL Zone

American Sign Language (ASL) and English are two separate languages. Research has repeatedly shown that students learn best when classes are taught in the target language (ACTFL, n.d.), specifically ASL. When instructors follow this philosophy, their classrooms become ASL Zones, an immersive environment that fosters the acquisition of ASL and Deaf Culture. These instructors lead immersion activities for the reciprocal language development and incidental learning opportunities that are needed for language acquisition to occur (Krashen, 1982). In these environments, which also include ASL student organizations and student-led events, instructors and students should refrain from using spoken language and should engage with one another in ASL to the fullest extent possible. In addition, ASL zones are immersive environments that allow for ASL learners to practice in an environment that is not burdensome to the Deaf community. (See Deaf Space.)

Deaf Space/ASL Community Space

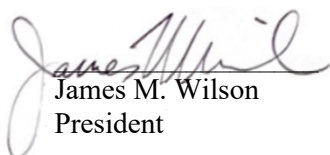
Deaf Space is a space that is reserved for Deaf community members. In this space, community members are able to interact with one another in fluent ASL, without running into students, clients, employers, teachers, and whatnot. This space is a place for community members to comfortably meet and engage with one another as themselves in their native language, allowing for sensitive cultural conversations leading to personal and professional growth and development. Hearing individuals may participate by invitation.

Rather than utilizing Deaf Spaces to learn ASL, the Deaf Community encourages students to learn ASL from native language users by taking courses taught by qualified ASL instructors, preferably those with ASLTA certifications. These instructors will be able to provide ASL Zones with direct language instruction and immersion opportunities that will maximize language acquisition. (See ASL Zone.)

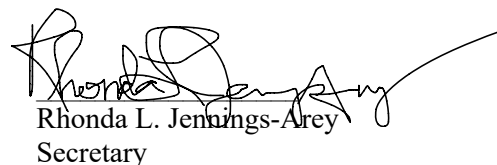
References:

ACTFL. (n.d.). Facilitate Target Language Use. Retrieved from <https://www.actfl.org/resources/guiding-principles-language-learning/target-language>.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition. Oxford, UK: Pergamon.



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