

Exploring the Skills, Qualifications and Perspectives
of American Sign Language Teachers in Manitoba

By

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Abstract

In Canada, American Sign Language (ASL) has become increasingly popular and, in fact, there has been some indication that the Canadian government is considering making ASL the country's third official language. Each province has a separate education system, but in Manitoba, a provincial ASL curriculum has been developed and approved for public high schools. In order to offer the Grade 9-12 ASL courses, instructors are needed; however, most of those currently teaching ASL have not completed a Bachelor of Education degree, which is required to teach in public schools. The purpose of this research study was to describe the skills, experience, training and qualifications of individuals currently teaching ASL in Manitoba, and to identify skills/qualifications they feel are most important in training individuals to teach ASL. Information gathered from their responses to survey questions was used to make conclusions and recommendations aimed at establishing certification standards for ASL teachers. The results suggest ASL teachers are engaged in providing quality instruction and are interested in improving their level of knowledge to become even better teachers. A significant number of the teachers responding to this survey were qualified teachers, but had never taught in public high schools. This indicates a need to investigate the awareness on the part of school divisions that the Grade 9-12 ASL courses are available and their interest in, and commitment to, offering them in their schools.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

American Sign Language (ASL) is becoming increasingly popular as an additional language. In fact, it has been identified as the fourth most popular language in the world (Lewin, 2010; Harrington, 2015). Currently, more and more students in public schools, colleges and universities are interested in taking ASL courses. A recent article in the Canadian Press indicates that “the Liberal government has been looking at the possibility of adding a third official language; sign language” (Press, December 2016). The government has reviewed signed language regulations in other countries such as New Zealand, Scotland, Finland and Sweden and is considering how to enact a similar federal law in Canada. According to the article, the goal is to protect the culture and language of Deaf people and to provide greater accessibility to services. The importance of teaching ASL is influenced by the increased awareness of its value as an additional language for the general population. However, the qualifications for ASL teachers vary significantly due to a lack of standards in ASL teaching qualifications in Canada, so the need for standardization in this area must be explored. My experience as a teacher and consultant, and piloting ASL courses in Manitoba high schools, triggered my interest in investigating the skills and qualifications necessary to teach ASL.

Personal Experiences

After more than 12 years, as a teacher consulting in public schools it became clear to me that many non-Deaf students in Manitoba have a great desire to learn ASL as an additional language. I became interested in providing these students with the opportunity to study ASL in order to communicate and gain access to the rich cultural heritage of the Deaf community. It was my hope that through learning ASL, they would become interested in the distinguished traditions

of visual poetry, narratives, and theater as well as learn about the values, perspectives and worldviews of Deaf people. They would also be made aware of the social and educational aspects of hearing loss. High school ASL challenge credits have been in place since around 1991 in Manitoba, and can be used as one of the Grade 12 credits required for entrance to post-secondary programs. However, these credits are for individuals who have learned ASL on their own and do not offer the opportunity for students to take courses. In order to offer ASL courses for students, a curriculum would be required. However, formal curriculums for teaching ASL are limited.

After much research of signed language curriculums across Canada and the world, I discovered an existing ASL curriculum designed for another Canadian province that spanned three high school levels (Edmonton Public Schools, 2000, and revised 2014). This curriculum, *ASL and Deaf Culture*, was used as a starting point for my own curriculum development and I expanded the materials to include a fourth level to match the 4 grade levels that are standard in high schools in Manitoba.

Implementation of the curriculum began when I taught a pilot Grade 9 course in two local public schools in Winnipeg. The aim was to verify how the ASL curriculum could be incorporated into the Manitoba context and how resources could be utilized. The course ran for one semester, totalling about 100 hours of class time. After the success of the first year pilot, three additional courses were developed based on the initial curriculum and the *Signing Naturally* curriculum (Smith, Lentz and Mikos, 2008) and piloted to cover each grade level from 10 to 12. The pilots were completed in June of 2013.

This ASL curriculum project garnered some success and a number of the ASL students chose to continue learning in post secondary Deaf Studies programs with goals of eventually

becoming interpreters or teachers of the Deaf. Most of the adjustments made during the pilot courses involved comparing the content of the two curricula (Edmonton and *Signing Naturally*) to incorporate them into one ASL curriculum that has been finalized and approved by the Manitoba Education Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch. The ASL courses are currently listed by the Department of Education (American Sign Language and Deaf Culture Grade 9-12) and are eligible to be taught by certified teachers in public schools throughout the province. The fact that ASL has been approved to be offered as part of the Manitoba high school curriculum shows respect for ASL and that it is valued on the same level as other languages such as French, Aboriginal languages, and international languages that are offered by schools. However, offering the recently approved ASL curriculum poses a challenge in the Manitoba Public School system because there is a lack of qualified ASL teachers. In order to teach in public schools in Manitoba, a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and teaching certificate are required. Also, it is expected by the Manitoba Deaf Community, that those teaching ASL are Deaf, and are native ASL users. So, although there is great interest in offering ASL courses in public schools, the problem is that very few Deaf individuals have completed a postsecondary degree, and specifically the B.Ed. program, so they are not qualified to teach these courses.

Statistically, 90-95% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents who usually do not know ASL (Weaver & Starner, 2011; Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). Hence, there is a lack of consistent exposure to ASL from birth for these children thereby affecting their cognitive, social and linguistic development (Marschark & Spencer, 2011). In the past, Deaf children were sent to residential schools. In fact, students from Manitoba attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf until the Manitoba School for the Deaf was established in 1965. Children at these Deaf schools were educated alongside peers who were also Deaf and communicated using ASL. There

were often instructors who were native ASL users and so the result was that these students resided and were educated in an ASL rich environment. Communication was natural and students graduating from these schools were proficient in ASL. In recent years, with the trend toward inclusion, more parents are opting to send their Deaf children to neighbourhood public schools. This has been met with opposition from members of the Deaf community for cultural and social reasons. They fear that mainstreaming Deaf children impacts the beliefs, values and language shared by members of the community which is passed on from generation to generation. Despite this opposition, more and more students have been mainstreamed and this has resulted in declining enrolment at Deaf Schools. Over the years a number of Deaf Schools across Canada have been closed; Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in 1990, Jericho Hill School for the Deaf in 1991 (it was taken over by the Burnaby School District and renamed British Columbia Provincial School for the Deaf), Halifax School for the Deaf in 1994, Amherst School for the Deaf in 1995, Newfoundland School for the Deaf in 2010. Only Centre Jules-Leger Provincial School (on the verge of the closure) in Ottawa, Montreal Oral School for the Deaf, Robarts School for the Deaf in London, Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, The Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville, Alberta School for the Deaf, British Columbia Provincial School for the Deaf and the Manitoba School for the Deaf remain. Although the Manitoba School for the Deaf still exists, the environment has changed drastically with the majority of those attending being students with additional learning needs and disabilities. The environment is still rich in ASL, but due to limited enrolment and frequent curricular modifications only a limited number of students graduate each year. As a result of closing residential schools for the deaf, intergenerational transmission of ASL has changed and is at risk,

which will lead to language endangerment as there will be fewer signers who acquire ASL at a young age.

There are some cluster programs in Manitoba where a group of Deaf students attend classes with the support of ASL-English Interpreters. There is potential for more exposure to conversational ASL on a consistent basis in these settings than for those students who are isolated in the mainstream. The students in these cluster programs have daily contact with others who communicate using ASL and most likely have connections to the Deaf community.

Deaf students who attend public schools, on their own, in the mainstream lack regular contact with others who communicate using ASL, and are often limited to communication with the ASL-English interpreter. Another complicating factor is the diversity of skill level amongst the individuals who are hired to provide these interpreting services. This has significant impact on the resulting ASL skills of the students with whom they work.

The result of these trends away from attendance at Deaf schools and towards attendance in public schools has drastically affected the overall development of ASL proficiency.

In addition to challenges regarding ASL proficiency, there are challenges that Deaf learners face when trying to attain their B.Ed. Deaf students who communicate using ASL benefit from direct instruction in ASL. However, none of the universities in Canada offer programs where the language of instruction is ASL. ASL is the language of instruction at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, but tuition costs are prohibitive to Canadian students. As a result, Manitoba Deaf students are in a position where they have to apply to attend university in mainstream programs with various resource supports. Although Deaf students are capable intellectually, because of inadequate education during the formative years, many of them do not meet academic requirements of B. Ed programs, or they find themselves competing for

entry with hearing students whose first language is English. Challenges of being accepted into programs go back to the issues of Deaf people's language, social and cognitive development. Research over the last ninety years shows the average reading level of Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) students has remained at fourth grade and only 25% read at the fifth grade or above (Allen, 1994; Wang, 2010; Kyle & Harris, 2011). This proficiency is not adequate to meet the English language levels in university programs. For students who do gain entry, statistics indicate that 30% of Deaf students graduate from four-year programs compared to 70% of hearing students (Marschark et al, 2002). There are several reasons for this. The issue is not that Deaf individuals are not capable of learning content of university programs, but rather the difficulty faced when trying to learn the content and complete assignments using English. There is a lack of accommodation of ASL as the language for learning, and a lack of resources to make this accommodation. Educators do not recognize nor teach to their unique learning styles (Marschark & Spencer, 2011).

Right from the start, Deaf students face language barriers. Resources may be put in place to support these students such as interpreting, tutoring and note taking services, but each of these lead to complex issues of their own, the main one being little direct communication between the Deaf student and the professor. Communication with peers and classroom participation are also very limited. Because of this, the opportunity to socialize, discuss, and communicate is very different and as a result, the Deaf student is not included in the university experience. The Deaf student becomes isolated and experiences loneliness, frustration and resentment about the stigma of being different. This impacts overall self-confidence.

Finally, the dependence on a third party for access to education leads to numerous related issues such as interpreter availability, interpreter costs, interpreter knowledge of course content,

interpreter skills, accuracy of interpretation, language match during interpretation, student and interpreter concentration and fatigue (Brasel, 1976; Murphy, 1978; Roy & Napier, 2015). One research study indicates that after 20 to 30 minutes of interpreting, the rate of error significantly increases compromising access to all of the information being presented (Roy, 2015). Another factor is the concentration required to attend to the interpreter. Deaf learners must keep their eyes on the interpreter and at the same time process and construct actions and meanings (Najarian, Cheryl G., 2006). This can be very tiring if breaks are not provided.

In summary, there are numerous barriers that prevent Deaf individuals from becoming qualified to teach in Manitoba. They face many challenges gaining entry to, and attending, university programs and once in these programs, their success may become dependent on the quality of resource services they receive and their ability to persevere when significant personal effort is required. A unique program needs to be designed to meet the learning needs of these students so more individuals can become qualified to satisfy the need for ASL teachers in public schools.

Interest in Learning ASL

There are many reasons why it would be beneficial for non-Deaf people, in particular high school students, to learn ASL, a few of these being family relations, communication with Deaf people, academic and employment opportunities, and personal enjoyment.

Family Relations. Sign language has been shown to benefit the learning and development of both Deaf and non-Deaf infants and toddlers. Having parents, who already have ASL knowledge from previous educational opportunities, enhances their ability to use sign language with their children from birth.

Researchers have found that using sign language with babies does help to improve their language learning and IQs. So more parents are using sign language with their infants, whether they are hearing or deaf (*sic*). It has long been known by parents of deaf children and deaf parents of hearing children that young babies can learn to sign and communicate before they learn to talk. (Berke, 2014, p.1).

Young babies, especially before the age of three, learn a second language easily and naturally, because their brains are in the stage of acquiring many new things (Kane, 1999). In addition, learning how to fingerspell the alphabet has been shown to help children read earlier (Baker, July 2015).

Individuals who learn ASL can better communicate with Deaf family members whether they are siblings, cousins, parents, or extended family. This is particularly important since 95% of D/HH children are born into hearing families. ASL learners may also have a Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) child in the future. Being equipped with ASL skills can be a huge benefit to parents who have a D/HH child so that they are able to entirely involve their child in family life. Non-Deaf parents who have an understanding of ASL and Deaf culture are less likely to be alarmed to discover that an addition to the family is D/HH. They are more likely to accept their child's hearing loss and treat them like part of the family in daily activities, events, and excursions. The D/HH child would have access to language in the same way non-Deaf siblings would (Shaw & Buie, 2012). This is critical for the simultaneous development of cognitive, social and linguistic skills through all stages of growth. Furthermore, already having an understanding of ASL and Deaf culture helps parents to feel less grief stricken or shocked and more able to cope with their emotions (Feher-Prout, 1996; Sass-Lehrer, 2011). They should be prepared to communicate with their baby right from birth so that the baby will not be delayed in

language development, bonding and growth. Parents already familiar with ASL may be more prepared to make decisions for their D/HH newborn; whereas parents without ASL experience may delay these decisions and their newborn may fall behind in language development, subsequently requiring lots of support and additional resources (Sass-Lehrer, 2011; California Department of Education, 2013). Communication is the cornerstone of every relationship, every social interaction and every learning experience. Being able to communicate with one's child in their natural language during the critical period for language development enhances the parent child relationship. It also helps ensure the child develops positive self-esteem and mutual respect between parent and child (Zolten & Long, 1997, 2006; Daniels, 2009). Through accessible communication, the D/HH child would feel comfortable asking for help with schoolwork or life problems thereby augmenting the child's personal growth, school experience (e.g. help with their assignments), and journey to adulthood.

Communication. Learning ASL helps students have a better understanding of the Deaf community and D/HH people. Hence, they become more aware of Deaf culture and feel more comfortable with Deaf people. This results in enhanced communication for Deaf peers, for Deaf people in general, and for Deaf coworkers.

School experiences are important and when one is not able to communicate with the general student body, they become isolated and tend not to have a very positive educational experience. Due to the inclusion policy implemented and announced in October 2005, over 75% of Deaf/HH students in U.S. are integrated with non-Deaf students (Anita, 2013). Classmates of Deaf students who learn to communicate using ASL can enhance their Deaf peer's school experience by being able to communicate with them directly. In turn, their own personal

experience is enhanced as they are exposed to the language, culture and values of Deaf individuals.

When members of the general population know ASL, it facilitates communication when they encounter signing Deaf people in a variety of situations such as shopping, buying tickets at entertainment venues, ordering food in restaurants, travelling, and banking. One never knows when the random opportunity will arise, but being able to communicate is so important at these times.

As mentioned above, those who learn ASL, have a stronger understanding of Deaf culture, and as potential employers they may be more likely to hire D/HH individuals. Effective communication amongst D/HH workers and their employer results in a more diverse work environment, and leads to more skilled individuals in the workforce. Second language learners who become employers would have the ability to provide positive training and job feedback to D/HH workers, further developing work relationships. The ability to communicate in ASL would also enhance social settings such as picnics or other gatherings, which in turn further develops relationships with D/HH employees, allowing them to work productively together to achieve their mutual goals.

The ability to communicate is something most people take for granted, but for signing Deaf people, this is a daily struggle. It is very satisfying when they come in contact with people who are able to communicate with them in ASL.

Academic and Employment Opportunities. Learning ASL as an additional language, like learning any language, is beneficial for future job opportunities, especially in the education system: teachers, interpreters, and educational assistants. One may also obtain employment as an audiologist, social worker, counsellor, medical staff member, lawyer, government worker,

interpreter, or emergency services staff in settings where Deaf individuals may seek services. Students may be able to request work experience placements or practicum at sites where ASL is used to communicate. If ASL courses were offered in high schools, students could be made more aware of these employment opportunities.

Personal Enjoyment. ASL is a language that many individuals find intriguing, and so there are those who choose to learn ASL for personal interest, enjoyment or satisfaction, even though they currently do not know any D/HH individuals (Lewin, 2010; Kane, 1999). They become exposed to it through television or interpreting of public events and develop a desire to learn how to sign. Moreover, they want to take it, because they may find it easier to learn ASL than other languages (Lewin, 2010) when they need an additional credit.

Clearly there are many reasons for trying to offer the opportunity for high school students to learn ASL, and many ways that having more non-Deaf people fluent in ASL can be beneficial.

Research Questions

There are several Deaf individuals teaching ASL in a variety of other settings in Manitoba. Many do not have university degrees let alone a B.Ed. There are no universities or colleges in Manitoba that offer ASL teacher training, except the ASL Linguistic courses that are offered at the University of Manitoba. However, these courses are more focused on the analysis of ASL linguistic structures rather than teaching conversational language skills. In some cases when ASL courses have been offered in high schools, it often happens that instructors do not meet the criteria to teach in public schools, so a regular teacher with a B. Ed. degree is required to supervise the classroom while the Deaf ASL Instructor teaches the content. Another issue is that most ASL instructors do not have experience teaching in the high school environment,

where ASL courses could be offered, which presents different challenges from the other settings they may have experienced, such as community colleges, workplaces or private businesses.

In addition, having completed my B.Ed. and experienced teaching ASL courses to non-Deaf students in the public school setting, I feel there is a need for unique training and skill development for teachers of ASL that is not available within a B.Ed. program. There are some colleges in the United States that are eager to set up programs to provide appropriate preparation for ASL instruction and certification (Rosen, 2006). There are many potential resources that support ASL in Manitoba so it is hoped that a program could be tailored to meet the academic and social needs of Deaf learners, thereby certifying them to teach ASL in public schools.

Currently, there is an interest for some non-Deaf people to learn ASL as an additional language. The reasons for this interest include: at the high school or college level where students are hoping to gain academic credit; in the workplace to facilitate communication among employees; for families with D/HH children; and in community settings for personal development and interest. Regardless of the purpose for learning ASL, the need for qualified teachers, and indeed even defining what constitutes a qualified teacher, remains a significant challenge. The purpose of this study is twofold; to explore ASL teacher qualifications from the perspectives of ASL teachers themselves, as they have had years of experience in the field, and to investigate the qualifications required for standardized and recognized ASL teacher certification. Specifically, the question that will guide this study is: What are the preparation experiences of ASL Teachers in Manitoba/Canada, and what do they perceive as important skills and qualifications for teaching ASL. Some additional questions that will be explored include:

1. What kind of training/preparation/certification programs are available for ASL teachers in Canada and the US?

2. What qualifications should be required for ASL teachers in order to prepare them to teach in public schools?
3. What do ASL teachers view as the most important skills and qualifications needed to teach ASL?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, I found very limited research conducted on the topic of American Sign Language (ASL) teacher qualifications so this is something that warrants more exploration. There are many skilled teachers with Bachelor of Education Degrees who do not have the ASL fluency to be capable of teaching ASL to D/HH or non-Deaf students. Conversely, there are many Deaf individuals who have the ASL fluency and teach ASL in other environments, but do not have the formal teaching certification required to teach in public schools. In this study, I will look more closely at the kind of requirements that should be put in place in order for a person to demonstrate the language proficiency and instructional skills required to be certified as an ASL instructor, and how a person could go about receiving such certification. Clear curriculums and standards are in place for both training to teach other languages in the K-12 setting, and for language courses that are taught to K-12 students, but similar standards do not exist for ASL.

A brief history of ASL, including a description of some of the unique grammatical and linguistic features of the language will be provided in order to demonstrate its evolution and to emphasize that ASL is a language separate from other languages. An overview of the current interest in learning ASL as a second language is revisited and finally, background information regarding existing ASL teacher preparation is discussed.

History of ASL

Many Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) people in the United States (US) and most of Canada use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language of communication. ASL is a gestural, visual, spatial, complex language that employs signs made by moving the hands, accompanied by meaningful facial expression. The distinct movements carry critical information

through the use of hand shapes, locations, placement, gestures, palm orientations and non-manual grammatical signals (Nakamura, 2008; National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders, 2011; Wilcox & Peyton, 1999). ASL is used in the US and Canada, while other countries have developed their own unique signed languages such as British Sign Language and French Sign Language. In Canada, two sign languages are commonly used; ASL and Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ). These signed languages have been recognized internationally as legitimate languages with their own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary (Canadian Association of the Deaf, 2012). Other signed languages around the world have received similar attention and recognition.

William G. Vicars (2001) wrote an article on the history of ASL. According to his article, the beginning of ASL came from a man named Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and a young Deaf girl named Alice in the early 1800's. Gallaudet was a minister, who graduated from Yale University. He began teaching Alice a few words in signed language. Dr. Magon Cogswell, Alice's father, saw this and encouraged Gallaudet to establish a school for the Deaf for his daughter to attend. Gallaudet agreed and headed to Europe, meeting with various program directors from schools such as the Braidwood schools, the London Asylum and more, but none of them were willing to share their techniques with him. However, the second director of the Paris School for the Deaf, Abbe Roch Ambroise Sicard, was in England where he was travelling with two of his Deaf pupils, Jean Massieu and Laurent Clerc, giving demonstrations on how to teach the Deaf using signed language. Gallaudet met him there and persuaded one of the students, Laurent Clerc, to return to the US with him in 1817. They established the first school for Deaf students in Hartford, Connecticut. Many of the signs that were used there are still being used today and have expanded all over the globe.

It is worthy to note that before the first school for the Deaf was founded in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817 signed language was already vastly utilized in America (Vicars, 2001; Cameron, 2005; Ryan, 2013; Berke, 2014). For example, many Deaf adults and children who emigrated from England lived on the small island of Martha's Vineyard, which is located on the southeastern coast of Massachusetts. They used their signed language from where they came from England so that their signed language influenced the Martha's Vineyard community to have exposure to another signed language. As well, two large Deaf families from Martha's Vineyard had fluent signed language that carried on throughout generations.

Almost all of the townspeople on Martha's Vineyard were Deaf and those who could hear were capable of signing. At that time, they used a natural signed language called Martha's Vineyard Sign Language. The Deaf children from Martha's Vineyard attended the Connecticut school where they brought their signed languages that Deaf and hearing people used in Martha's Vineyard, and also learned Old French Sign Language from Laurent Clerc. Consequently, both indigenous and other signed languages were incorporated to become the American Sign Language that we know today. Over time, the community of Martha's Vineyard became saturated with increasing numbers of non-Deaf people. These individuals began to take over local businesses and tourism. This, in addition to other factors such as intermarriages where Deaf people attended school, Deaf people moving away to get a higher education, and the economy caused Deaf people to leave Martha's Vineyard and the population of those who used ASL diminished. The area is now a mixture of Deaf and hearing people, similar to the rest of North America.

The signed language that was being used at the American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf/Dumb Persons in Hartford (Cabin, 1996), currently called the American

School for the Deaf, spread to many other schools in the US. Then, in September of 1880, The Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf was held in Milan, Italy. At that congress a decision was passed that favored the use of the oral method (using oral language only to instruct Deaf students), and opposed the use of signed language (Gannon, 1981; Bahan et al., 1996). Schools and Deaf communities were impacted by the controversy over the use of signed language versus oral language. This controversy has persisted throughout the years, continues today and greatly contributes to variability and impoverishment of language acquisition among Deaf children.

In the 1960's, there were three researchers, William C. Stokoe, Dorothy S. Casterline and Carl Croneberg who focused heavily on researching the linguistic components of ASL. William C. Stokoe was the first linguist to recognize ASL as a bona fide language and believed that it was a natural language; however, most other researchers were not interested, did not pay attention or did not believe that ASL was a language. So Stokoe, Casterline and Croneberg continued studying and noticed that ASL had phonology (handshape, location and movement) and they published the first dictionary of ASL in 1965. They were the first linguists to recognize ASL as a bona fide language with its own rules of grammar and vocabulary unique to ASL, unlike what was seen in English. "Like Spanish, French, Chinese and other languages, ASL is a language in and of itself, separate from English. The only difference is that ASL is visual rather than auditory" (Hands & Voices Association, 2005, p.1).

Grammatical/Linguistic Features of American Sign Language

ASL has all the formative characteristics of any other human language, which includes some similarities and differences with regard to language rules, features, and modalities (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov>;

World Federation of the Deaf, <http://wfdeaf.org>). ASL is a natural and complex visual-spatial language that makes use of signs produced by a sequence of movements and configuration of the hands and arms, facial expression and upper torso movement. It is an integral part of Deaf culture across Canada and the US (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov>; World Federation of the Deaf, <http://wfdeaf.org>). English is an auditory-oral language that makes use of the voice to produce meaningful sounds. Both of these languages are connected to cultures that are influenced by the growth and change of the environments where the language is used. Both languages have similar purposes such as sharing information, thinking and learning, telling true stories or fiction, expressing poems, telling jokes, and everyday conversation. They both use grammatical features to change meaning, but the way these are used differs. Table 1 provides a comparison between ASL and English.

Table 1: Comparison of ASL and English

American Sign Language	English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual-spatial language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditory-verbal language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set of movements and arrangement of the hands and arms, face and upper torso (Sign Language, http://wfdeaf.org/human-rights/crpd/sign-language) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set of movements and arrangement of the mouth and vocal tract (Sign Language, http://wfdeaf.org/human-rights/crpd/sign-language)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic-comment syntax (e.g. HOUSE, WILL BUY) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject-verb-object (e.g. I will buy a house.)
<p>Multiple signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple signs for each meaning of a word (e.g. motor run, water run, boy run) 	<p>Multiple meanings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple meanings for a spoken word (e.g. run)
<p>Pluralization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By repetition of signs (Belt, 2013) 	<p>Pluralization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the addition of prefixes and suffixes (Belt, 2013)
<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use space to represent time. 	<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add tenses to the verbs (ed, ing, s) (Belt, 2013)
<p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise brows when asking Yes/No questions? (Perlmutter, 2014) Lower brows when asking WH questions and use either at the beginning or the end or both of the sentences. (Perlmutter, 2014) 	<p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add verb-do? (Perlmutter, 2014) Why? -use beginning of sentence. (Perlmutter, 2014)





ASL utilizes topic-comment syntax while English utilizes subject-verb-object (Nakamura, 2008). Topic-comment syntax is when the speaker names the topic, which is either a subject or object, then makes a comment or observation about the topic (<http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/grammar>). Consider the example of a topic-comment structure typical in ASL: “HOUSE, WILL BUY¹”. The example in English: “I will buy a house”. This differs from the subject-verb-object syntax of English (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991).

In ASL there are often different signs that correlate with the semantic meanings of multiple meaning English words (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1991). Vocabulary in different languages can have different semantic meanings. In one language a word may have multiple meanings (referred to as polysemy) whereas in another the language there may be a different word for each semantic concept. An example of this would be the word ‘run’. In English, the word ‘run’ has multiple meanings (for example: run in a stocking, run the water, run for election, run over). ASL, German and French have equivalent signs/words for run that correspond to the meaning of ‘using your legs to hurry from one place to another,’ but use signs/words to correspond with each of the other semantic meanings in English that are different from the word ‘run’. Similarly, some ASL signs may be expressed or translated into a variety of different English words.

ASL and English have different ways to express plurals. In ASL, plurals can be expressed in many ways including quantifier signs, repeated signs (reduplication) or distribution numbers (see Table 2).

¹ I use the convention of uppercase spelling to represent English words (glosses) of ASL signs.

Table 2: Pluralization in ASL

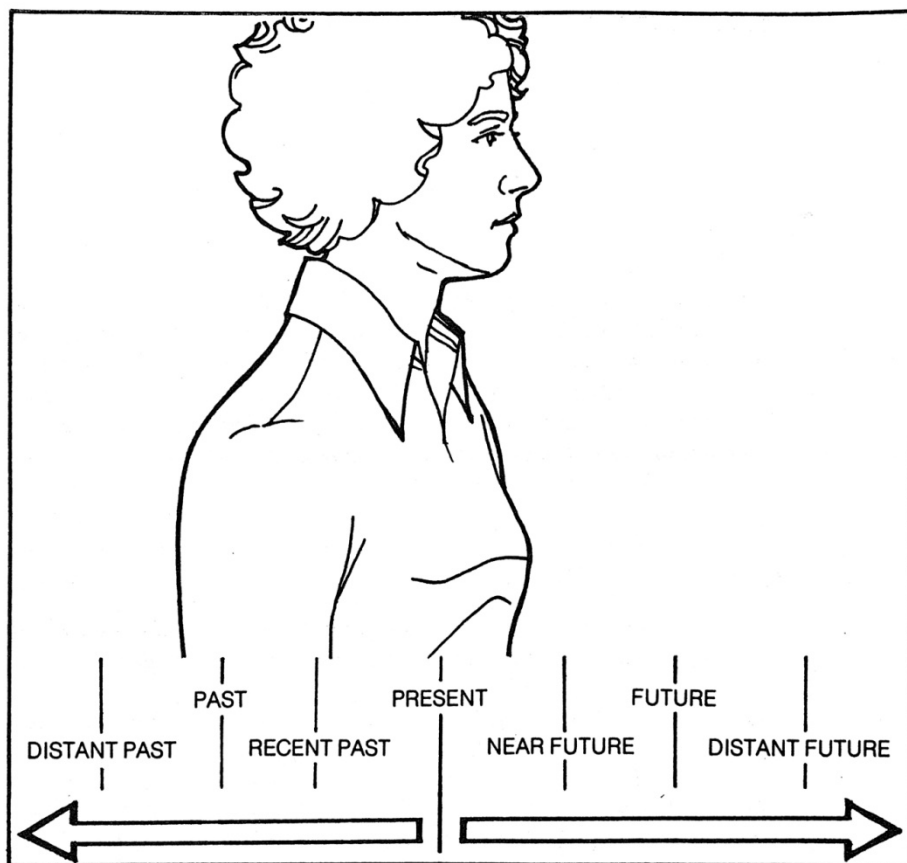
Quantifier signs	
 Few	 Many
Repeated (reduplication) signs	
 Chair	
Distribution numbers signs	
 Rows of Chairs.	

In English plurals are expressed via prefixes (for example: trimester) and suffixes (for example: carss). ASL has a unique set of numeral incorporated signs (AGE, DAY, MONTH,

YEAR, RANKING, etc.), which are not seen in English. For example, the sign for AGE is made on the chin, so when numbers are signed in this location (with a forward movement) it indicates a person's age in years.

Time is also expressed differently in these two languages. In English, tense is typically added to the end of the verb (Belt, 2013) such as 'walked' or 'walks'. Unlike English, ASL does not have tense marking on the lexical signs. It has lexical (e.g. adverbial) forms that mean NOW/PRESENT, BEFORE/PAST, and FUTURE. Instead, ASL has a rich aspectual system, which is not seen in English. In ASL, time is the first concept expressed and this is done using a special time line in space where the specific signs are placed based on when they occurred (Cokely & Baker-Shenk, 1991; Collin Matthew Belt, 2013). Past, present or future verb tenses are expressed by using the running line to the side and behind the signer's body into the area in front and forward of the body (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Use of Spatial Timeline in ASL



(Baker-Shenk& Cokely, 1991 p. 176)

The two languages are also different in how questions are asked. There are two types of questions, 1) Yes/No and 2) WH. The 'yes/no' questions are the kind of questions that only expect the answer to be either 'yes' or 'no'. As for WH questions, they are a different type, because the expected answer will be more detailed. ASL has strategies to elicit two different types of questions. The grammatical structure determines the type of question. Yes/No questions include non-manual markers such as raised eyebrows and a body, tilt forward and for WH questions it is essential to furrow the eyebrows and tilt the head.



(ASL: “Yes/No” Facial Expression)



(ASL: “WH question” Facial Expression)

Statements are different from questions based on facial expression (Perlmutter, 2014; Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991). In English, the WH words (who, what, where, when, why) are used at the beginning of questions (Perlmutter, 2014).

ASL uses space (positions around the signer) to contribute to meaning and grammar. Pronouns in ASL are represented by indexing (pointing with the index finger towards a person, object, or a space.) The person, place, or thing being referred to may be a real person or item in the signing space; for example in a conversation if someone were to point to the person to their left, it would be equivalent to the English “she.” Appropriate translations for indexing could be he, she, they, we, us, it, etc. Indexing also may refer to a space that can be agreed upon to reference a person, place, or thing not present. ASL has a unique set of highly complex constructions and they also exploit space to express meaning.

Non Manual Markers include eye gaze, body movements, and facial expressions. These are vital to ASL and it would be impossible to communicate via ‘signing’ alone – these components convey various meanings.

Facial expressions in ASL include eyebrow movement, which indicates grammatical information such as questions, and mouth movements, which indicate descriptive information such as small, large, and many other descriptors.

When referencing something in space, the eye gaze is directed toward that location. For example, a story, which involved two characters, would likely require the storyteller to gaze towards the location where either character has been placed in space.

Role Shift is a shift in the shoulders, which may represent turn taking between characters, depicting their actions or their dialogue. Body movement is very important in ASL. The body is not stiff or rigid when signing, rather it may move to describe an action such as a fall, or to support description of a place or directions.

ASL features are grammatical and emotive and involve indexing, eye gaze, role shift, non-manual markers, facial grammar, and body movements. These are interconnected into every aspect of the language system and without them, the grammar is compromised and it is not a language. In summary, these are just a few examples demonstrating linguistic features of ASL and English, but they also offer an understanding that although ASL and English are both languages with complex grammar, they are different languages. ASL is not a direct translation from English, but rather, has its own structure. It is not possible to sign ASL in English word order.

Interest in Learning ASL

ASL and la Langue des Signes Quebecoise are the two official signed languages in Canada (Canadian Association of the Deaf, 2012). ASL was recognized by the provincial legislature in Manitoba in 1988, in Alberta in 1990 and in Ontario in 2007 (Alister Cummings, 2012). Since these times, ASL has become more publicly accepted and more popular as an additional language. More students are interested in learning ASL and taking it as an additional language course in high schools, colleges and universities (Lewin, 2010; Curriculum Guide,

Signing Online 2015, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, 2004). Students are becoming more intrigued with knowing diverse languages (Manitoba Education Curriculum Framework of Outcomes, 2015; Gallimore, 2004). There is increased interest in ASL so individuals can communicate with Deaf people effectively, and feel more comfortable meeting and interacting with members of the Deaf community. As previously mentioned, students who take ASL courses develop an awareness and understanding of Deaf Culture and its values, customs, perspectives, and traditions (Manitoba Education Curriculum Framework of Outcomes, 2015; Gallimore, 2004; Curriculum Guide-Signing Online). Some students learn ASL because they have D/HH relatives and want to communicate with them. ASL also benefits students in terms of employment opportunities, allowing them the potential to work with Deaf children/people (Manitoba Education Curriculum Framework of Outcomes, 2007 and 2015; Gallimore, 2004). Students may also be interested in becoming interpreters or Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Furthermore, with the increased publicity of ASL from YouTube, and from prominent Deaf actors on television, many people are interested in learning the language despite having no personal connection to anyone from the Deaf community. ASL offers another language option to students who are not interested in spoken language courses offered in high school, such as Spanish or French. For a variety of reasons; accent issues, auditory processing difficulties, auditory memory issues, and visual learning strengths, some students have a more natural tendency toward signed languages and are able to experience more success in an ASL courses than they are in spoken language courses (Lewin, 2010). In order to offer ASL courses to interested students, certified teachers are required.

Certification

Attempts have been made by some Deaf organizations and some educational programs to establish certification standards for ASL teachers, but these vary throughout the US and across the provinces in Canada. I will begin with a review of the situation in the US and then discuss the Canadian perspective.

United States. The Bureau of Labour in the US states that in order to teach in an elementary or secondary school, one must have a bachelor's degree and state-issued certification or license and have state approval for a teaching license (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2015). Most of the states have standard teacher certification, and most colleges require a Master's degree. In the 1980's, in order to address a general teacher shortage in the District of Columbia an alternative certificate was established primarily for people of colour, older people with life experience, single people and men, where they were allowed to teach while simultaneously working toward certification. More than 250 thousand people received their teaching certificates through this alternative method. Later in 2010, a similar approach was tried, allowing people with Bachelor degrees to teach without attaining a teaching certificate (Alternative Teaching Certification, 2015)

Teacher requirements for ASL teachers vary according to individual state laws and policies, but have common facets of requiring consistent ASL proficiency and knowledge in the area of second-language learning. In some of the states, for example, Alaska, teachers can be hired to teach a high school level ASL credit course without a degree if they have teaching competency as verified by the local school district and subject matter, especially in the specified areas that are Alaska Native Language or culture, military science, and vocational or technical

course (Type M Limited Certificate, 2018) because the state does not have a teacher preparation program in these areas.

Also, twenty public school districts in the state of New Jersey were teaching ASL to hearing students:

In 1995, the Assembly passed a resolution encouraging high schools and colleges to award credit for sign language courses. In 1996, the state Department of Education included American Sign Language, or ASL, among its accepted world language for public schools, and in 2004 it added teaching certification requirements for ASL. About 100 teachers were certified each year in 2005-06 and 2006-07, mainly through the emergency process, which is an immediate certification that allows teachers to teach while working to complete standard certification. (D'Amico, 2010, p. 2)

In Texas, ASL teachers can be hired if they have received ASL certification approved by the educational program, completed an educators' preparation course, passed the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES) Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Exam, and successfully completed a TExES ASL assessment and Texas Assessment of Sign Communication-ASL (TASC-ASL). If the candidate already has a Texas teaching certificate, he/she is still required to pass the TExES ASL assessment and the TASC-ASL. The candidate has to be interviewed by the experienced interviewer who rates their expressive and receptive sign communication proficiency from the Test Centre Locations which are the University of Houston in Houston, Stephen F. Austin State University in Kilgore, the University of Texas at Arlington in Fort Worth, University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Texas at San Antonio (1640 Campus) in San Antonio.

The most commonly referred to certificate for ASL teachers in the US is that of the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA), which is a large ASL accredited organization. They initially had three different levels of certification: provisional, qualified, and professional. The provisional certification includes five or more years of experience using ASL daily, one to two years experience teaching ASL, expertise in ASL, and pedagogy skills. After having the provisional certification for four years, a teacher may be eligible for the qualified certification. This requires 240 paid hours of associated teaching experience over five years, and 150 hours of professional development. Before attaining the qualified certification level, the teacher must pass a written examination in which English skills are not evaluated, but answers must be understandable and appropriate. The professional certification level requires 480 hours of ASL teaching experience, and bachelor's degree or 15 years experience teaching ASL. All certificates require passing an ASL and teaching assessment (American Sign Language Teachers Association, 2014). As of July 2012, the organization set up a new standard requiring that all ASL certificates require a bachelor's degree (Ashton, Cagle, Forestal, Greer, Jacobowitz & Newell, 2014). Recently, for simplification purposes ASLTA changed the evaluation system, which will now only have two levels: Certified (replacing provisional and qualified) and Master (replacing professional) (ASLTA, 2017).

It is important to note that any Deaf people with the appropriate education can apply to attend Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the only university in the world where the language of instruction is ASL. Education is more accessible to D/HH students, as they are not faced with the numerous challenges and barriers experienced by Deaf students in the mainstream. However, it is very expensive for Canadian students to attend this university, so attendance by students from Manitoba is rare. There are few programs that formally train Deaf

people to become ASL instructors in the United States (e.g., Gallaudet University, University of Northern Colorado). Not only do these two programs provide formal training, their programs are taught in ASL, which provides Deaf students direct communication and this results in a consistent stream of ASL instructors over a number of years. Hence more qualified teachers may be available to teach ASL in the US than in Canada.

Canada. In Canada, an individual is required to obtain a bachelor's degree in education and a provincial teacher's certificate in order to teach in public schools. Moreover, an individual must elect to train in one of the educational levels (elementary, middle or high school). Those who opt for middle or high school must choose major and minor subjects, or areas of specialization. These criteria for teachers result in less flexibility for ASL instructors to participate in K-12 system, because ASL is not recognized as a subject of specialization. Specific teacher certification requirements can vary from province to province; however, teachers certified in one province can apply to be recognized/certified in other provinces.

As mentioned previously, it can be difficult for Deaf students to access B.Ed programs and these programs do not offer courses specific to the instruction of ASL. There are examples of alternative certificates outside of ASL teaching that are comparable. In BC, a variety of alternate certificates of qualification are possible, one being the First Nations Language Teacher Certificate:

This certificate may be issued to proficient First Nations language speakers, whose proficiency is determined by a language authority. The language authority must recommend or endorse the individual to the Teacher Regulation Branch for this type of

certificate (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016) (Note: Language authority is determined by First Nations communities).

Perhaps in a similar way, those deemed proficient to teach in ASL could be recommended for consideration for an alternative certificate to teach ASL. Another language-based program that makes exceptions with regard to certification is the Teacher of Anishnaabemwin as a Second Language Program (The Ontario Curriculum Grade 11 and 12, Native Language, 2000). For this Program, you must:

- be of Aboriginal descent
- have completed Grade 12 or equivalent
- submit a one page statement outlining desire to be a teacher of Anishnaabemwin
- provide two letters of reference, one of which is from an individual in a professional capacity who can attest to your level of fluency
- submit completed Statement of Fluency Form

This is another situation that recognizes the unique importance of language fluency required to instruct language classes allowing an alternative form of certification. The Teacher of Anishnaabemwin Program components allow for educational requirements different from a B.Ed.

The program consists of two parts: three consecutive summer sessions at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario, and three in-school internships with a qualified teacher, in a classroom setting, during the school year. Summer classes are held for 6 weeks starting the first week of July and ending early August. Students are enrolled in

mandatory courses for the program. All courses are held during the week from Monday to Friday evenings and weekends. (Office of Aboriginal Initiatives, p.3)

This is an example of an academic program that has been tailored to meet the educational needs of students, who can subsequently become certified teachers of the designated language.

The Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) is the oldest national consumer organization of, by and for Deaf individuals in Canada. CAD strongly recommends that ASL teachers be Deaf, and that organizations providing ASL courses implement qualifications similar to those already established in institutions for teachers of other languages. The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) is a non-profit charitable organization funded through private donations. They established a standardized instrument recognized as American Sign Language Instructors of Canada Evaluation (ASLICE) to assess ASL and LSQ skills for instructors of signed languages. ASLICE differs from ASLTA. ASLICE evaluates and assigns certification to ASL teachers who have been teaching ASL for several years, but do not have any formal training. Applicants are required to be involved in their local Deaf community or provincial cultural society of the Deaf, have more than 400 hours of teaching experience within a three-year period, and use ASL as their first language. Applicants also need to submit a reference letter from the provincial Cultural Society of the Deaf stating that they are members in good standing. As well, they need to submit a list of ASL or ASL related workshops and courses that they have attended, or in which they have participated (<http://deafculture.ca>). In addition, they must submit certified proof of an American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) rating of 4 or 5. The ASLPI was adapted from the Educational Testing Service's Language Proficiency Interview for spoken languages by Mel Carter in the late 1980s, and is now maintained by Gallaudet

University. Candidates take the ASPLI at a suitable location with an interviewer from Winnipeg, Manitoba and the conversation is video recorded. When it is completed, the video is sent out of the province to the rater to avoid a conflict interest. The ASPLI is based on an interview model and is designed to evaluate ASL proficiency levels. A candidate receives a rating out of 5. The ASPLI interviewers and raters are taught by ASL users, with a Masters in Teaching ASL, and they are accredited and certified by York University in collaboration with CCSD. Finally, applicants are evaluated based on a three-part test. Part I tests knowledge of the structure of ASL (multiple choice questions based on a video). Part II is a knowledge test based on required readings and videos that are provided 5 months prior to the examination, and Part III is a face-to-face interview where the applicant's ASL skills are rated by the interviewer. Once the applicants have successfully met all of the criteria, they receive a certificate showing they are qualified to teach ASL (<http://deafculture.ca>). Despite all of this, there is no indication that this certification will be accepted as qualifying someone for a provincial teaching certificate allowing them to teach in public schools or colleges.

Provinces across Canada are dealing with the shortage of ASL teachers in different ways. Because secondary schools in British Columbia (BC) require a B.Ed. degree and a provincial teaching certificate, there are a number of challenges to overcome to offer ASL as a second language in those schools. BC does have a three-level ASL curriculum for secondary schools, including, Intro to ASL, ASL 11, and ASL 12. These courses do meet the second language requirements for BC Universities; however, they are more expensive to offer in the secondary schools than other second language courses. There are several reasons for this: 1) ASL is a visual language so class sizes must be small, and 2) ASL instructors without a degree or a teaching certificate must be paired with a certified teacher (usually hearing without any ASL skills), who

is then responsible for the course. Currently, Burnaby and Kelowna school districts are the most active, as indicated by 5 out of 41 districts that responded to a survey to offer ASL courses to high school students (Gordon & Hardy, 2009). Douglas College in Westminister, BC has offered an ASL provincial instructor program through its Continuing Education Department for individuals fluent in ASL since 1990. The original group completed the program and is working throughout the province. Subsequent offerings of the program had seen declining enrolment because, while there is interest on the part of the Deaf Community in this program, Deaf individuals are unwilling and/or unable to pay the tuition fees (Gordon & Hardy, 2009). The program is currently not offered for that reason. Since the program was successful, and there is a need for ASL teachers, perhaps there may be some way in the future to establish formal financial support for those interested in the training.

In BC there is a critical shortage of qualified ASL instructors. This shortage has lead to ASL courses in high schools being cancelled. Qualified instructors are in huge demand and are often pressured to teach for other organizations and/or institutions, above regular workloads. The Deaf community, however, does not generally support hearing teachers of ASL; their feeling is that teachers of ASL should be a Deaf instructor, native signer, to provide students with an authentic learning experience.

In Alberta, the ASL curriculum has been taught in three different high schools over the past 15 years (Linda Cundy, personal communications, November 17 – December 9, 2016). When it was initially introduced, a Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA) taught the course. This person had their teaching certificate and was considered a native ASL user having been born to Deaf parents. Over the years, the course was taught by a variety of different people, most of them being CODAs, who met the Alberta criteria to teach in high schools. The reason for this was because many individuals who are Deaf do not have their teaching certificate and therefore do

not have the qualifications to perform this job, or many of them were not available during the time that was required. In one instance an individual who was Deaf was hired, but because they did not have their teaching certificate, another teacher had to sit in class during lessons to supervise. That teacher was also the one responsible for marking and keeping track of the students' scores. Because Alberta requires that all instructors for the course have their teaching certificate, there is a shortage of qualified staff and as a result, the course is no longer being taught in three schools and is now only being taught in two.

In Ontario, Joyce Lange, who is the manager of ASL Education under the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), has offered ASL teacher training for using the Signing Naturally Teacher's Curriculum Guide that was developed by Cheri Smith, Ella Mae Lentz and Ken Mikos (2008) and is the most widely used ASL instructional curriculum in the US and Canada. The CHS hires two Deaf freelance trainers, who are fluent in ASL, to provide this training to potential instructors. Currently, one of the freelance trainers has a master's degree in ASL and Deaf Studies from Gallaudet University and has about 10 years of experience teaching ASL. The other freelance trainer has a diploma from George Brown College's ASL Instructor Program and has over 20 years of teaching experience. It is important to point out that neither of these trainers have a B.Ed. degree, so would not be qualified to teach in K-12 public schools. The CHS courses are divided into three parts. For the first part (Units 1-6), there is no prerequisite training or certificate required. Once training is complete, participants receive a certificate indicating they are certified to teach ASL 101 and 102. For the second part (Units 7-12), certification in part one is required to be eligible for the training. Upon completion participants receive a certificate indicating they are able to teach ASL 103 and 104. Certification in the first two parts is required in order to train for the third part (Units 18-25), which prepares participants to teach ASL 301-304 (CHS Training for ASL Instructors, 2016). A CHS certificate is issued only for the *Signing*

Naturally curriculum and only received for successfully completing the training, but does not address the need for ASL teachers in high school classrooms because these graduates still require a B.Ed. The settings where certified individuals can teach ASL are not specified, and the contact person for CHS indicates that it is up to organizations wanting to offer ASL courses to interview and screen applicants.

In Manitoba, Deaf organizations want to maintain control of their language and prefer courses be taught by native ASL users. They believe it is a more authentic and enriching experience to learn ASL from Deaf teachers (Newell & Cagle, 2013). In 1985, members from the Manitoba Cultural Society of the Deaf (MCSD) initiated a small organization called ASL Instructors of Manitoba (ASLIM) and they established an ASL teacher-training program. First, they sent two delegates, myself and a colleague, to Berkeley, California where we were trained by Ella Mae Lentz, who was one of the three people who developed the *Signing Naturally Teacher's Curriculum Guide for Instruction of ASL as a Second Language, Level One and Level Two*. We were trained to use the guides, which include classroom materials such as lesson plans, Power Point slides, worksheets, activities, and culture lessons. There are currently three *Signing Naturally Teacher's Curriculum Guides*: Level One, Level Two and Level Three. Each level consists of about 100 hours of ASL instruction. After we were trained and returned to Winnipeg, we were able to train approximately 15 ASL teachers at Red River College to use the curriculum guide. Those who successfully completed the training program were given transcripts indicating they passed and were considered certified to teach that level. Over time, different levels of training were made available, certifying participants to teach. However, in the early 2000s ASLIM folded and efforts by MCSD a few years ago to reestablish it were unsuccessful.

Currently the focus of this organization has shifted to support the arts, heritage, language and culture of Deaf people rather than the instruction of ASL (<http://www.mcsd-dam.com>).

In 1993, St James Collegiate in Winnipeg offered ASL credit courses to Grade 9 students for the first and second semester and I was hired to teach for both semesters. At that time I did not have a university degree, however, I was a native ASL user and I had many years experience working at the Manitoba School for the Deaf as an Educational Assistant. I had also completed all levels of the certification required by ASLIM and had taught ASL at Red River College under the Continuing Education program, in the St. Vital School Division for the Continuing Education program, and for the ASL Immersion Program under the Society Manitobans with Disabilities. I was able to teach without a B.Ed. because I was granted a Limited Teaching Permit. A Manitoba employer is only allowed to hire a person with a Limited Teaching Permit when there is no qualified staff with a Manitoba Teaching Certificate (Manitoba Education and Training, 2003). It is required that they follow the guidelines, one of which states that the position can only be held for one year at which time it must be advertised to see if a qualified teacher has become available.

Another example where an exception to the rule was made is when I was piloting the ASL curriculum as mentioned previously. After the first year, one of the public schools hired an ASL teacher who did not have a B.Ed. degree to teach the Grade 9 ASL course. She was granted a Limited Teaching Permit. Another teacher was not required to supervise during lessons, but an Educational Assistant was assigned to provide support in class.

It has been difficult to promote the recently developed ASL curriculums and initiate ASL courses in schools. There is now an approved ASL curriculum in place, but there is a need for

appropriately trained teachers to implement the curriculum so these courses can be offered. There are currently only 14 Deaf or hard of hearing teachers in the province who have their B.Ed. degrees and are therefore, qualified to teach ASL courses in public schools. However, all of these teachers are currently employed full time in programs/services for, or related to, people who are Deaf/hard of hearing. There are many other ASL teachers who provide evening and weekend courses at Red River College, Deaf Centre Manitoba (where the ASL Teaching Service Program is offered), and Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, Assiniboine Community College and other venues, but they do not have qualifications required to work in the public school setting. Even though Manitoba Education and Training wants all school administrations to ensure and attempt to hire certified teachers (Teacher Certification, 2003), there is a drastic shortage of qualified ASL teachers. The Limited Teaching Permit is an avenue that can be investigated once appropriate qualifications and expected certification processes are clearly outlined, but may be a disadvantage to the teacher.

To provide the best possible instruction to students in high school ASL courses, it is important to clarify the skills, training and experience that lead to success for ASL teachers and this is the purpose of my study. With this information perhaps an alternative approach (culturally relevant and community-based) of recognized certification can be established so courses can be offered to students in public schools in the near future. In order to determine the requirements of such a certification, this research study will survey current teachers of ASL in Manitoba regarding the skills and qualifications that they have and consider to be important for effective ASL instruction.

In the next chapter I will explain the methods I used to survey ASL teachers regarding the research questions.

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter will outline the survey research design that was selected for the study, as well as the procedures for recruiting participants, development of the survey, and the collection and analysis of the data.

Design

The purpose of this research study was to explore the skills, experience, training and qualifications of individuals currently teaching ASL in Manitoba, and to identify areas that these individuals feel should be included in a training program for ASL teachers. The goal was to employ a survey of concise, short, simple questions to gather quantitative data from participants. A survey research design was chosen because it is economical, practical, time efficient, effective, and more confidential and anonymous than interviews. Surveys are one of the most affordable ways to gather quantitative data, especially with recent paperless technology. They are practical because of the easy mode of delivery. Questions can be designed by the researcher and administered to members of a specific target group. The survey can be distributed to the target group at the same time, participants can take their time answering the questions, and there is a short turnaround before the researcher receives the resulting data. Surveys are effective because participants can remain anonymous and feel more confident that their answers will be confidential. They should not feel pressured to answer in a certain way, as they complete the survey independently. Since the Deaf Community is small, it is most likely that the researcher will be familiar with participants who may feel uncomfortable openly sharing information about their ASL certification, experience, skills and teaching abilities. It was expected that participants may feel awkward in an interview situation and not respond honestly to questions. Arranging for

someone else to interview the participants was also not feasible because it would be best to conduct interviews in ASL rather than through an interpreter, so again, participants would most likely be familiar with the interviewer. A survey minimized the possibility that participants felt judged. One aspect that was considered was the language of the survey. Questions were short, and to the point, so that most participants were able to respond to the English version of the survey. In order to ensure comprehension of the survey instructions and content, an ASL version was made available to address access and literacy issues.

The decision was made to focus my research on Manitoba because education is governed differently in each province in Canada, and Manitoba is where I have worked to develop the provincial curriculum, which has been approved for public high schools.

Participants

The number of people teaching ASL in Manitoba is not large, so the target population for this study was approximately 30 people. Currently, an individual must have completed a B.Ed. in order to be able to teach ASL in a public school. However, as mentioned previously, the B.Ed. program is not readily accessible to Deaf students and it does not allow for training specific to the instruction of ASL. Hence, the number of Deaf individuals who have completed a B.Ed. is limited, which results in a lack of teachers considered qualified to teach ASL. However, as discussed before, a number of Deaf individuals are teaching ASL in a variety of other settings. My goal was to devise a list of all of these individuals and invite them to complete a survey. I drafted this list of most individuals teaching in the province, using personal knowledge and through my Deaf community network, asking that people contact me because I know them. In order to avoid missing individuals through this process, I also contacted (by email) continuing education programs, public school divisions, the Department of Education, Red River College,

universities (Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon) the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, and Deaf Community organizations to try to ensure the list was as complete as possible. The email message (Appendix A) included information about my research and an attachment (Appendix B) that they could forward to individuals asking them to contact me to take part in the survey. A reminder was sent to those who did not respond two weeks after the deadline, indicating an extension to the deadline. I had hoped that individuals would be motivated to participate and complete the survey if they understood that the goal was to establish potential employment for ASL teachers in public schools. Unfortunately, recruitment for the study was slow and several reminder emails were necessary. Although I did manage to identify 27 individuals teaching ASL in Manitoba, I only received 11 responses to the survey.

Instrument

The instrument of this study was a survey I developed based on the research questions (Appendix D). Questions asked participants to provide information about their teaching and training experiences, specify knowledge and skill levels in relevant areas, provide information about hiring processes, and demographic information, such as age range, gender, first language, and education level: a university degree, B.Ed. or provincial teaching certificate. In the survey, 3 were closed ended questions, 5 required additional information based on the initial response, and only 3 questions were completely opened ended requiring answers that were a few sentences long. This was done in order to get concise answers, and to minimize the amount of writing involved. The Open-ended questions included; list of training, and additional comments, did not require lengthy answers. It should be noted that one of the questions required the participant to answer the question on a scale (none – expert), and another required the items in the question to be ranked from most important to least important. Because English is most likely not the primary

language for signing Deaf individuals, it was anticipated that they might feel intimidated understanding and responding to a written survey. As a result, some individuals may have avoided completing the survey. Participants were also given information on how to access an ASL version of the survey on-line if they desired, but they still needed to submit written answers.

Procedure

Once the list of ASL teachers was completed, a cover letter (Appendix C) was sent to the 27 intended participants along with information regarding the website address where they could access, complete and submit the survey anonymously (Appendix D). Subjects were informed that their participation was optional and they were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. All information and on-line survey responses were kept confidential and secure. The Manitoba Deaf community is close-knit and it is culturally natural for Deaf community members to keep each other informed. A request was made that participants not discuss the survey with others; however, it may not have been possible to prevent attempts to discuss it. A deadline for completion of the survey was indicated (two weeks following distribution); however, it was necessary to extend this deadline in order to recruit an appropriate number of responses. Participants were informed that they could receive a copy of the survey results.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, a descriptive analysis was completed. Responses to the survey questions were tallied and reported in numbers and percentages shown in tables. The analysis focused on the trends, qualifications, skills and characteristics of ASL teachers that are most typical. The results were finalized and used to identify the most important of skills and qualifications that should be required for ASL teachers. The goal was to determine if programs in

Manitoba could be encouraged to collaborate to offer a program that would adequately prepare Deaf individuals to teach ASL in public high schools.

Chapter 4

Results

A total of 27 individuals were invited to complete the on-line survey on November 28, 2017 and 5 responses were received by the initial January 12, 2018 deadline. Reminders were sent on December 17, 2017 and January 15, 2018 with a new deadline of January 22, 2018 and in the end, 41% of the surveys (11 of 27) were received, which is a good rate of return. All of the respondents matched the characteristics of the target population, so all of the responses were included in the results of this study. The one anomaly was the highest number of participants with postsecondary education, but overall, it was felt that results obtained from the respondent population were representative and valid.

Demographics

Age and Gender. Table 3 displays the personal characteristics of age and gender. The largest portion of respondents (82%) reported being over 45 years of age, with 18% between the ages of 36 and 45 years. There were no respondents in the 18 to 35 years of age range.

Of the 11 participants who completed the survey, 8 (73%) were female and 3 (27%) were male.

Table 3: Demographics – Gender & Age

Age (Years)	# Of Responses	Percentage	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
36-45	2	18%		0%	2	18%
46-older	9	82%	3	27%	6	55%
Totals	11	100%	3	27%	8	73%

Education. Table 4 illustrates the levels of formal education and certification achieved. Participants were instructed to check all that applied. All of the respondents had attended post-

secondary education, and had either attended college or university: 6/11 (55%) had a university degree and 3/11 (27%) had a B.Ed. and teaching certificate. Some participants responded Yes to a University Degree but did not check High School Diploma, it would seem they only marked their highest Education level.

Table 4: Formal Education by Age and Gender

	36 - 45		Older than 45								
Education	1F	2F	3M	4F	5F	6M	7M	8F	9F	10F	11F
High School Diploma	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		
College Certificate		✓						✓	✓		
College Diploma						✓					✓
University Certificate	✓			✓							
University Diploma											
University Degree	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Bachelor of Education				✓	✓					✓	
Teacher's Certificate				✓	✓					✓	
Note: F = Female; M = Male; ✓ = Yes											

Language Acquisition and Deaf School Attendance. Respondents were asked to indicate if they acquired ASL or English first, and to state whether they had attended a school for the Deaf. Table 5 reflects the responses of participants: 8/11 (73%) had acquired ASL first and 3/11(27%) acquired English as a first language. Only 2 respondents had not attended a Deaf school.

Table 5: First Language Acquired by Age Group and Gender

Age Group	36-45	36-45	Over 46	Over 46
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
ASL First	1	0	5	2
English First	1 (SEE) *	0	1 *	1

- Did not attended a Deaf school
- SEE is Signed Exact English

Survey Findings

Experience Teaching ASL. Table 6 indicates the number of years respondents reported they have taught ASL. The majority (73%) had taught for more than 10 years while 9% had taught for less than 3 years, 9% for 3 to 6 years and 9% for 7 to 10 years.

Table 6: Experience Teaching ASL

Years of Experience	# Of responses	%
<3	1	9%
3-6	1	9%
7-10	1	9%
>10	8	73%
Total	11	100%

Experience in Teaching ASL in Public High Schools. None of the respondents reported having experience teaching ASL in public high schools.

Settings Where Respondents Have Taught ASL. All of the respondents had experience teaching ASL in some of the settings listed on the survey. Table 7 indicates that most of the subjects taught ASL Immersion (an annual one-week intensive course offered through the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities) and in private homes (73% each). These were followed by Community College (64%), and School Division Continuing Education (36%). Public School, University, Community Agencies, Deaf Centre and places of employment for Deaf workers were all 27%. Respondents had the least amount of experience (18%) teaching at Community Centres. Four of the respondents reported teaching ASL in settings other than those listed on the survey,

which were Manitoba Education and Training, School for the Deaf, Baby Sign/Talk Class, and at a workplace where a participant was employed and taught hearing workers ASL.

Table 7: Settings Where Respondents Have Taught ASL

Place or Setting	# Of Respondents	%
Community College	7	64%
Public School	3	27%
University	3	27%
Community Agency	3	27%
School Division Continuing Education	4	36%
Community Center	2	18%
Deaf Center	3	27%
ASL Immersion	8	73%
Private Home	8	73%
Place of Employment for Deaf Workers	3	27%
Other	4	36%

Groups of ASL Students. Table 8 indicates that all of the respondents (100%) had taught ASL to adults. This was followed by 82% teaching ASL to children. Family members were next at 64%. Students pursuing careers and coworkers of Deaf individuals were both 45% while teaching babies and public school students were both 36%. Only 27% had taught students ASL in ASL in a workplace. None of the respondents reported teaching ASL to groups other than those listed in the survey.

ASL Teaching Positions. Six of 11 respondents (55%) reported that their position had been advertised. Seven of 11 (64%) reported that there was a role description for their position. Seven of 11 (64%) had been interviewed for their position.

Table 8: Groups of ASL Students

Description	# Of Responses	%
Adults (18 and up)	11	100%
Children (5-17)	9	82%
Babies (0-4)	4	36%
ASL related fields	3	27%
Family Members (Parents/siblings of Deaf children)	7	64%
Public School Students	4	36%
Students Pursuing Careers	5	45%
Co-workers of Deaf Individuals	5	45%
Other	0	0%

ASL Curricula. Only 1 of 11 (9%) of respondents reported not following a curriculum to teach ASL. Ten of 11 (91%) reported following a curriculum; 7 of 11 (64%) indicated following Signing Naturally; 1 (9%) followed Signs Book; 1 (9%) followed SMD's CCC ASL Curriculum and ASL Family Curriculum; and 1 (9%) did not state the title of the curriculum followed but indicated finding a curriculum helpful for both instruction and to the students.

Training to Teach ASL. Respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 0 to 4 with regard to a list of knowledge and skills related to teaching ASL provided in the survey. Table 9 indicates the number of respondents who selected each rating level for each item. It is noteworthy that all participants rated their ASL Proficiency as high, with 7/11 indicating they were at the expert level in this area. In general, most respondents felt they had good – expert level of all knowledge/skill areas.

Perceived Importance of Knowledge/Skills in Areas Related to Teaching ASL.

Respondents were asked to rate knowledge and skills in order of importance by numbering the

items from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important) to be successful as an ASL teacher. Table 10 reflects their responses. Some respondents did not order the importance by numbering the items fully. There was considerable variation in how respondents rated the knowledge/skills areas, but 5/11 (45%) indicated that ASL Proficiency was the most important.

Table 9: Teachers' Perceived Knowledge/Skill Level in Areas Related to ASL Instruction (n=11)

Knowledge/Skill	0 (None)	1 (Low)	2 (Moderate)	3 (Good)	4 (Expert)
ASL Proficiency	0	0	1	3	7
ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity with Lesson Plans	0	0	1	4	6
ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity without Lesson Plans	0	0	2	4	5
Deaf Studies	0	1	2	5	3
Cognitive & Learning Theory	0	0	3	4	4
Lesson Planning	0	1	3	2	5
Teaching Principles	0	0	4	3	4
Classroom Management	0	2	1	3	5
Assessment/Evaluation	3	0	2	3	3
Record Keeping & Academic Reporting	1	0	2	3	5

Table 10: Teachers' Perceived Level of Importance of Knowledge/Skills Related to Teaching ASL

Knowledge/Skills	Level of Importance (Highest = 1)										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
ASL Proficiency	5	1		1			2				74
ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity with Lesson Plans		4	3	1					1		69
ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity without Lesson Plans		1	2	1	1	1	1			1	48
Deaf Studies	1	2	1	1	1			2			55
Cognitive & Learning Theory	1			2	2	2	1				50
Lesson Planning			1	1	3	3	1				52
Teaching Principles					1		2	3	2	1	28
Classroom Management				1	1	2	1	1	2	1	35
Assessment/Evaluation	1		1			1	1	2	2	1	38
Record Keeping & Academic Reporting	1	1			1			1	2	4	36

Interest in Teaching ASL in Public Schools. Eight of the 11 (73%) respondents indicated they would attend an ASL Teacher Training Program if one were established.

Additional Comments. Respondents volunteered the following comments in the space provided on the survey.

- “It would be wonderful if there were training offered for Deaf individuals to take. There is a very high demand to offer training. Maybe Red River College could consider offering this training.”
- “It would be nice if I could teach at the ASL teacher-training program in the future if the program will be established. It also would be nice to see many youth taking this program to continue preserving ASL for next few generations.”
- “I strongly believe it is very important for ASL Instructors to take ASL teacher-training program to understand fully about curriculum and how to use it. Also, they should learn the proper way for assessment and evaluation students' ASL skills, and give feedback to

the students. They will need to understand how students learn and get information from instructor.”

Summary

These additional comments emphasize the importance of, and interest in, training to teach ASL. There is also a focus on the importance of encouraging Deaf youth to take ASL teacher-training programs so that ASL continues to exist for future generations. As well, the additional comments strongly emphasize the skills of assessment, evaluation, learning (Cognitive Theory), and the use of a curriculum.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The results presented in the previous chapter were analyzed according to the key research questions of exploring the preparation experiences of ASL Teachers in Manitoba, and how these various factors and experiences contribute to success with their students. Specifically, the teacher demographics, preparation, and perceptions of the importance of various knowledge/skill areas are discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study.

Demographics

Age. Table 3 displays that all of the respondents were over 35 years of age with 82% of them over 45 years of age. This indicates that younger members of the target population did not respond to the survey or, for some reason, younger people have not become involved in teaching ASL. Two reasons why younger people may not have become ASL teachers are that ASLIM no longer exists to encourage training in this area and there is a lack of programs specific to ASL instruction for people in this younger age range. Another possibility is job security, as frequently teaching ASL in Manitoba does not necessarily involve a permanent, full time position.

Results of the survey indicate that most of the participants were ASL instructors over the age of 46. The study found there is a growing gap between the younger and older generation of ASL instructors and this is a concern for the future of teaching ASL. One reason for this trend is because the older generation grew up in dorms at residential schools for the Deaf and this provided them exposure to the language, whereas, most of today's Deaf youth are educated in mainstream settings and may not have the same opportunities to become as immersed and proficient in ASL. Conversely, this can be compared with Indigenous communities; youth were taken from their homes to attend residential schools where they lacked exposure to their native

languages. Over time, more and more youth are not proficient in Indigenous languages (Settee, 2008). Elders are the only link to traditions, values, language, and history for those communities. Also, as younger members leave their communities, the languages continue to be at great risk. There is a need to investigate why young Deaf people are seemingly not involved in the instruction of ASL.

Gender. As indicated in Table 3, 73% of the respondents were female and 27% were male. As a result, gender bias may have influenced some of the study results, but should not play a factor with the main purpose of this study. With the respondents being in an older age range, the predominance of females may be a result of aptitude, minimal salary levels for this kind of work, and shortage of full-time work in this area. Teaching ASL would accommodate part-time work, allow a break from household duties and an opportunity to socialize outside the home.

Primary Language/Education. All of the respondents used ASL as their language of communication with only three of them having learned English first (Table 5). It is remarkable that all of them had completed college or university certificate or degree programs with 6/11 (55%) of them holding a university degree, including three with B.Ed. degrees (Table 4). This is not representative of the general Deaf population where the overall percent of individuals with university degrees would be lower. The individuals participating in this study are well educated and have acquired full-time employment outside the public school system. They are not interested in positions where the work and pay are inconsistent at this time. They may be interested in teaching ASL in public schools if the courses were offered on a regular basis and they could acquire full-time permanent teaching positions.

Experience Teaching ASL. Table 6 indicates that 73% of the respondents had taught ASL for more than 10 years which was reflected in the fact that all of them were at least 36 years of

age or older. Those who had taught for less than 10 years were in the lowest age range 36-45. Only one respondent had taught for less than three years, so responses to the survey were provided by experienced ASL teachers. This again, may demonstrate that the older generation has learned the importance of continuing the language of their culture because of how they were raised, in Deaf schools, going to Deaf clubs and socializing with Deaf peers. The younger generation have grown up in a different environment: mainstreamed schools with non-deaf peers. There is a need to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of older ASL teachers before it is too late.

Experience in Public High Schools. Although it is interesting, it is not that surprising that none of the respondents had taught ASL in a public high school. This is most likely because the number of Deaf individuals completing a B.Ed. is limited, and those who do often pursue careers where there is consistent, full-time work (school for the Deaf, consulting, teaching for ASL-English Interpretation Program), which also happens to be in high demand. In this study, three individuals reported having their B.Ed. and teaching certificate, but despite having the necessary qualifications, they did not secure full-time positions in public school ASL instruction so are working in other positions that may or may not include ASL instruction. Also, the ASL curriculum was recently established and piloted by Manitoba Education and Training, so perhaps schools are not aware of the opportunity to offer ASL courses for credit. There is a need to investigate the interest in and commitment to offering these courses to determine if there would be the potential for consistent, well-paid positions.

Settings Where Respondents Teach ASL. Table 7 indicates that ASL classes are offered in a variety of settings, other than public schools, and all of the respondents had experience teaching in some of these settings. It is most likely that the qualifications required for these

positions do not include the completion of a B.Ed. or teacher certification. There is probably a lack of standardization with regard to lesson content, with the instructors having the ability to tailor their teaching to meet the needs of the people being taught. The certificates achieved by the students are probably also not for credit. However, the individuals responding to this survey were well experienced teaching ASL in a wide variety of settings. It should be possible to take advantage of their experience teaching in these different settings and apply it to the instruction of ASL courses in high school classrooms.

Groups of ASL Students. All of the respondents indicated that they have taught ASL to non-Deaf adults. Most of them have probably been involved as instructors in the long-standing ASL Immersion program (intensive one-week course) that was established in 1991 and offered by the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities. 82% of the respondents had taught children. Many of the respondents may have been employed privately to tutor children who are learning ASL. Children are also able to attend the ASL Immersion in which the respondents may have been teaching. The respondents had experience teaching people of all ages, but the earlier students can be exposed to ASL the better. In addition to establishing courses at the high school level, it would be desirable to get consistent ASL instruction into public schools at the earlier grade levels. This early exposure would lead to greater success with the Grade 9-12 courses outlined by the approved curriculum.

ASL Teaching Positions. It was positive that the majority of positions had been advertised, that there was a role description for the positions, and that the majority of respondents had been interviewed for their positions. Implementing these formal hiring practices ensures that qualifications and expectations are similar across positions and provides equal opportunities to applicants. Should courses be established in public high schools, all of these

things would need to be in place to ensure that courses were being taught by individuals fluent in ASL. The Winnipeg School Division has set an example with their recent advertisement for an ASL tutor position (See Appendix E).

ASL Curricula. It was clear that following a curriculum was beneficial to those teaching ASL in Manitoba, and the majority reported using the *Signing Naturally* curriculum, which was one of the curricula used to design the Grade 9-12 courses, that are approved for Manitoba public high schools. Training in this curriculum would be beneficial for future ASL teachers.

Preparation to Teach ASL. Results indicate that this group of respondents felt well-prepared to teach ASL, and seven of them rated their skills as good or at the expert level for most of the items listed in the survey. There were some respondents who felt their skills were moderate in some areas, however, they were all confident, with very few responses of none or low. The only area where they seemed to indicate no, low or moderate skill levels was Assessment and Evaluation. Again, the fact that most of the respondents in this group were well educated, had a university degree or B.Ed., and were experienced teachers most likely explains these results. It would be interesting to know if those not responding to the survey would have similar characteristics, as this group is more educated and experienced than expected. The preparation of ASL teachers may not be the main issue, but rather the availability of teaching positions (full-time employment) might be contributing to the lack of high school courses in ASL.

Perceived Importance of Knowledge/Skills in Areas Related to Teaching ASL. It may have been helpful to have requested that the respondents use all of the numbers from 1-10 when responding to this question, thereby ranking all of the skills on the list (Table 10). Some of the

respondents did not do so, leaving some of the items blank. This may be because they do not perceive the item as important at all for ASL teachers. In order to determine the resulting level of importance for the items as perceived by the respondents, a value of 10 was assigned to each response of 1, as this was the most important, and a value of 1 was assigned to each response of 10, as this was the least important, with all of the other numbers assigned accordingly in descending order. In calculating the order of importance in this manner, the results were as follows:

1. ASL Proficiency: 74
2. ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity with Lesson Plans: 69
3. Deaf Studies: 55
4. Lesson Planning: 52
5. Cognitive & Learning Theory: 50
6. ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity without Lesson Plans: 48
7. Record Keeping: 39
8. Assessment/Evaluation: 38
9. Classroom Management: 35
10. Teaching Principles: 28

It is not surprising that ASL Proficiency was viewed as the most important with 6/9 respondents numbering it with 1 or 2. It has been clear in the Manitoba Deaf Community that native ASL users should be teaching ASL and this value is clearly held by those responding to this survey. In the past, the sense was that if you have ASL proficiency and knowledge of Deaf Culture and the *Signing Naturally* curriculum, you are able to teach ASL. It was also viewed as important to have knowledge of a curriculum, and there was a preference if lesson

plans were available, with 7/9 respondents assigning a 2 or 3 to this item. Most of the respondents were familiar with the *Signing Naturally* curriculum, which provides lesson plans, and it is clear they view this as important. Deaf Studies was viewed as important and this may be because of the desire to share Deaf history and traditions as part of ASL courses. Lesson planning was next with 5/9 assigning a 3-5 to this item. Cognitive Theory was only viewed as most important by one respondent, but then of moderate importance by the rest with 6/9 assigning a 4-6 to this item. It was interesting that the items viewed as the least important are some of the ones that are stressed in public schools. Specifically, 8/9 respondents assigned a 7-10 to Teaching Principles indicating they did not feel this knowledge was important; and 7/9 respondents assigned a 6-10 to Classroom Management. Perhaps this is because they have been teaching students who are attending classes because they want to learn ASL and so management has not been an issue. Teaching high school does require classroom management skills. Similarly, 7/10 respondents assigned 7-10 to Record Keeping and Academic Reporting. Perhaps this is because they have not been required to do these activities for the courses they have been teaching and have not felt the level of accountability that exists in public schools. Assessment and Evaluation was assigned 6-10 by 7/9 respondents, which may indicate that they have not been made aware of the emphasis placed on this within the public school system, or that they did not associate formative, practical assessment with this category. Again, the fact that more than half of the respondents in this group had a university degree or B.Ed., and a number of those were experienced teachers strongly influences these results. It would be interesting to know if those not responding to the survey would have assigned similar importance to the items, as this group was more educated and experienced than expected.

Summary

It was positive that a majority (73%) of the respondents indicated they would attend an ASL Teacher Program if one were established. Some of them already have the qualifications necessary to teach in public schools, so either the lack of consistent work teaching in high schools or a preference to work in other related settings keeps them from working as teachers for the Grade 9-12 ASL courses. Much work is needed to determine the desire on the part of high schools to commit to offering the courses and the commitment of individuals to train as ASL Teachers if consistent work as teachers was to be made available.

The majority of individuals working as ASL teachers were females, most were 45 years and over, and they had taught for over ten years in a variety of different settings. There is a real concern about the lack of respondents in the younger age ranges because this could indicate the gradual dissipation of ASL. Essentially, this is related to language vitality – increasing ASL instruction in schools may strengthen ASL vitality, and yet, the use of ASL among Deaf people is decreasing due to educational and community practices. There was strong overlap in how the participants ranked their top skills and which skills they perceived as most important, with ASL proficiency and Curriculum with lessons plans as the top two items in both survey questions. This again, emphasizes that ASL fluency is critical for teaching ASL, and the importance of curriculum. It is interesting to note that the fourth and fifth top skills of participants and perceived top skills were also the same: lesson plans and cognitive learning. So the top five skills and perceived skills were closely matched. The skills that the respondents perceived as least important were Assessment and Evaluation, Class Management and Teaching Principles. This may be due to their limited experience teaching within the public high school system. This group of ASL teachers considered themselves well prepared to teach ASL, and they identified

proficiency in ASL and knowledge of ASL instruction and curriculum as the most important skills for ASL teachers. Even though some of the ASL teachers had their B.Ed. and Manitoba Teaching Certificate, none of the respondents had any experience teaching credit ASL courses to non-Deaf students in public schools. This is most likely because their career preference was to work at a school for the Deaf, in the Deaf Community, or in other ASL environments, or the opportunity to teach ASL courses in public high schools has not been made readily available to date.

Limitations:

A major limitation in conducting this study is the limitation of the field that was available to review because ASL courses have not yet been offered in very many public schools. It is hoped this study will encourage future research to enhance the training of ASL teachers so courses can be offered in public schools.

Another possible limitation may be the language used in the survey. The target audience is Deaf, which suggests that their first language is not English. The survey may have been at a level of English that was too advanced and discouraged some people from responding. The survey was provided in ASL through a video as well, however the respondents still needed to reply through written documents. In addition to not participating at all, there could have been misunderstandings of the questions or an error made when responding.

The low response rate is another limitation. One reason for this may be the result of releasing the survey just prior to the Christmas break and closing into January; the recipients of the survey may have been busy with holiday planning, vacations, or just simply forgot in the hustle and bustle of the season. Though effort was put into the distribution lists to ensure the

maximum number of individuals were targeted and contacted to participate in the study, some potential individuals could have been missed, impacting the size of the target population and number of responses to the survey.

Unconscious personal bias may have affected the review of the data. The total population for this study was small and even though survey responses were returned anonymously, it was possible for me to identify individuals based on circumstantial information. It is important to note that after the survey was sent out, I was contacted by two individuals on separate occasions. Both were unsure how the survey process worked and needed to meet me in person for further clarification. We did not discuss the specific questions or their responses. After our discussion they were able to fill out the survey online. Two other individuals informed me once they were finished the survey. There is also the question of anonymity, as the Deaf community is quite small, and people may not have trusted that their information would remain confidential.

Finally, individuals who received the survey may have limited experience teaching ASL and did not feel qualified in responding to these questions, even though their responses would have been valuable in this research.

Despite these limitations, the results from this study provide an important contribution to understanding the qualifications and experiences of ASL teachers in Manitoba. The implications of these results will be outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

One of the key findings of this study is the fact that none of the respondents had taught ASL in public schools. There is a need to follow up on this issue and determine the reasons why this is the case. ASL courses are approved and ready to be taught at the high school level in Manitoba, but they are not being offered. Both the desire on the part of school divisions to offer courses, and the skills and qualifications of potential ASL teachers require follow up. I suggest the following recommendations as potential starting points for this process.

Recommendation 1: There is a Grade 9-12 ASL curriculum available through Manitoba Education and Training; however, this information may not be available to all school divisions. Future research could include a survey of administrators, teachers and students in school divisions in Manitoba to determine the interest in and commitment to offering ASL credit courses. This could also determine the potential for consistent well-paid positions for ASL teachers.

Recommendation 2: There is a need to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of older ASL teachers before they retire or are no longer teaching. It should be possible to take advantage of their experience teaching in a variety of settings and apply it to the instruction of ASL courses in high school classrooms. There should be a focus on encouraging younger individuals to become ASL teachers. Having older teachers acting as mentors might be one way to involve the youth in teaching ASL.

Recommendation 3: There is a need to encourage individuals to become trained ASL teachers. A working relationship could be established between the Red River College Deaf Studies

Department and the University of Manitoba Education Faculty to tailor a program for accessibility to Deaf individuals.

Recommendation 4: Since the population responding to the survey was very small, and most of the respondents were more educated than expected, perhaps others did not respond because of the language barrier they face with written English. It may be beneficial to follow up with one-to-one interviews using ASL to increase the response rate and to glean more detailed results. Using a qualitative method may be more successful in obtaining more respondents and representative results.

Recommendation 5: Perhaps offering an ASL Immersion week intensive format, similar to the one offered by SMD, would allow school divisions to send interested students to complete the required hours of the high school credit courses. The ASL Immersion could be offered once a year and gradually expand to include all levels. This would require the involvement of the Deaf Community to recruit appropriate instructors.

Recommendation 6: If it is not possible to establish an ASL Teacher Program, then a process should be developed to oversee the hiring of ASL Teachers on limited teaching permits, or to alter the certification of ASL teachers allowing permanent contracts, so the courses can be offered to Grade 9-12 students in Manitoba.

Recommendation 7: Since there is a shortage of ASL teachers, perhaps the government of Manitoba could offer some financial support or subsidy to people who are interested in taking ASL teacher training.

In addition to these recommendations, I feel there are implications to my study that compel me to take action in the following ways:

- a) Arrange a meeting with (and prepare a report for) the Director of Program and Student Services Branch and the Coordinator of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services under Manitoba Education and Training to discuss the findings of this survey and the potential for hiring qualified, Deaf, ASL instructors to tutor or teach the Grade 9-12 curriculum.
- b) Arrange a meeting with (and prepare a report for) the Manitoba Cultural Society of the Deaf to discuss the findings of the survey and my recommendations, specifically to re-establish a training program for ASL teachers. Mobilizing advocacy from the Deaf community will be important in moving towards establishing an alternative process for ASL teacher preparation.

Conclusion

The Manitoba ASL teachers who responded to my survey are in an older age group, have been teaching for more than 10 years, and are quite confident they are skilled as teachers. Most would be interested in more education, if it was offered, leading to certification, which would allow them to teach in a school environment. It is difficult to get a large sampling of the ASL teacher population using the email method, as evidenced by only 11 responses from the 27 individuals who expressed interest in participating in the survey. Perhaps individual interviews would yield a higher level of participation. There was a definite lack of younger aged respondents, which might be due to the method used to conduct the survey, or there are not many younger ASL teachers in the province. The ASL teachers are confident in their abilities, and some had the required training to teach in public schools. However, they most likely already have careers teaching at the School for the Deaf, and the community college. Moreover, there should be concern that most of the ASL teachers appear to be older. These older teachers are not as likely to enter a Certified ASL teacher program since they are close to

retiring. So there is a need for younger people, who are motivated to be involved in teaching ASL, to enter such a training program should it become available. Part of the reason for this lack of involvement by younger people might be that they did not attend the Manitoba School for the Deaf, but attended a hearing school where they were the only Deaf person, and were not exposed to the language in an ASL environment. This might impact them in several ways; their lack of confidence in using ASL, and their isolation from the Deaf community, which could affect their awareness of this potential career.

At present there is no program for preparing certified ASL teachers. The problem then becomes two-fold, we need to attract more young people and we need establish a process to train them as Certified ASL teachers so they can teach ASL credit courses in public high schools. Overall this study shows that ASL teachers are engaged in providing quality instruction, are confident about their abilities as teachers, are interested in improving their level of knowledge to become even better teachers, and are interested in teaching courses in public high schools.

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Appendix A
Email Request for Names of ASL Teachers



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

To: Whom It May Concern

Re: Master's Thesis Research Study

I am currently in the process of completing the requirements for my Master's Degree at the University of Manitoba (U of MB) and I am working on my thesis under the instruction of my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns who is the professor and Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and Research under the Faculty of Education. She can be contacted via email at charlotte.enns@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-9009. This study has been approved by the Human Ethics Research Ethics Board (ENREB), and the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) can be contacted via email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-7122.

The purpose of my research is to investigate the skills, experience, training and qualifications of individuals who teach American Sign Language (ASL) in various settings in Manitoba. A provincial curriculum has been developed and approved, and there is a desire to have ASL classes taught in public high schools, but there is a shortage of individuals deemed qualified to teach these classes. My goal is to identify critical components that could be included in a potential teacher-training program, so standards could be established.

My aim is to include all potential individuals in my study, so I am writing to request that you send the attached email request to anyone, of whom you are aware, who teaches ASL classes

in Manitoba (MB). Please let me know by (insert date) how many people you sent the request to, including if you did not send it to anyone (nil report), as this will assist with my record keeping.

I appreciate your support and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Goertzen

goertzed@myumanitoba.ca

Appendix B
Email to Potential Participants



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Dear ASL teacher,

I am currently in the process of completing the requirements for my Master's Degree at the University of Manitoba (U of MB) and I am working on my thesis under the instruction of my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns who is the professor and Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and Research under the Faculty of Education. She can be contacted via email at charlotte.enns@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-9009. This study has been approved by the Human Ethics Research Ethics Board (ENREB), and the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) can be contacted via email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or by phone at 204-474-7122.

My goal is to try to find ways that Deaf instructors can teach Grade 9-12 ASL classes in public schools. I need to gather information about training, experience and qualifications that should be required to teach ASL. I hope you will participate in my research. You will need to complete a short, confidential and anonymous survey (an ASL version will be provided) that should take about 10 - 15 minutes. An ASL version will be provided. I encourage you to contact me through email by (DATE) if you are willing to participate. I will forward the survey to you, and you will complete the survey, anonymously, online. Thank you for considering participation in my survey. My email address is goertzed@myumanitoba.ca . I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Goertzen

goertzed@myumanitoba.ca

Appendix C
Survey Consent Letter



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Research Project Title: Exploring the Necessary Skills and Qualifications of American Sign Language (ASL) Teachers in Manitoba

Principal Investigator and Contact Information: Deborah Goertzen;

Email: goertzed@myumanitoba.ca

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Charlotte Enns; charlotte.enns@umanitoba.ca; 204-474-9009

Dear Participant,

I am writing to invite you to participate in the above-mentioned study. The purpose of my research is to investigate the skills, experience, training and qualifications of individuals who teach ASL in various settings in Manitoba. A provincial curriculum has been developed and approved, and there is a desire to have ASL classes taught in public high schools, but there is a lack of individuals deemed qualified to teach these courses. My goal is to determine if it would be possible to establish standards so individuals can become qualified, and made available, to teach Grade 9-12 ASL courses in Manitoba schools.

Once you read this letter and become informed about this study, you will indicate your consent to participate by completing and submitting the survey. This letter should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.

Participation in my study will require the completion of a survey using Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a United States of America company. As such, responses are subject to American laws. Risks associated with participation are minimal and are similar to those associated with many email and social media websites such as Hotmail and Facebook.

The survey is short and should only require about 10-15 minutes of your time. If you desire, an ASL version of this survey is available at www.aslwise.ca. Try your best to answer all of the questions, but you may choose not to complete them all. Please complete and return the survey to me as soon as possible, but no later than (insert date). Your participation is voluntary, you can opt out of any questions, and your responses will be anonymous and confidential. Your responses will help me compile data that will help determine future direction for ASL teacher training. A summary of the results will be provided to you once they are available around May 2018. The results will be used for my M.Ed. thesis. They may also be shared with the Department of Education and Manitoba Cultural Society of the Deaf to encourage follow up with regard to ensuring ASL classes become available in public schools. Conferences may be scheduled as another form of dissemination, and the results may be written up in relevant journals. Identifiable data and information will be kept on an encrypted USB throughout the study and stored in a locked file cabinet. When done around May 2018, the identifiable data and information will be destroyed.

The Human Ethics Research Ethics Board (ENREB) has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122.

I hope you will choose to complete and submit the survey and I thank you for your participation. You will receive a separate email from me, via survey monkey that will include a link to the survey. Click on the link to begin the survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5PNLXYJ>

Sincerely,

Deborah Goertzen

Appendix D

Survey

This questionnaire is intended to assist in determining the experience, qualifications and skills required to teach ASL to high school students in Manitoba. Your contribution is valued. Please complete the survey as soon as possible, but no later than (insert date). Answer all questions as completely as possible and press “submit” when you are finished. If you require an ASL interpretation of the questions,

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been teaching ASL?

_____ Less than 3 years

_____ 7-10 years

_____ 3 – 6 years

_____ More than 10 years

2. Have you ever taught ASL credit courses in a public high school?

_____ Yes If yes, what qualifications were required? _____

_____ No

3. In what settings have you taught ASL? (Check all that apply)

_____ Community college

_____ Community centre

_____ Public school

_____ Deaf Centre

_____ University

_____ ASL Immersion

_____ Community agency

_____ Private home

_____ School division continuing
education classroom

_____ Place of employment for Deaf
workers

_____ Others Specify; _____

4. Indicate to which hearing people you have taught ASL. (Check all that apply)

_____ adults (18 and up year old)

_____ children (5 – 17 year old)

_____ babies (0 – 4 year old) _____ ASL related fields
_____ family members (parents/siblings) _____ public school students
_____ of Deaf children _____ co-workers of Deaf individuals
_____ students pursuing careers in
_____ Others Specify: _____

5. Tell me about your teaching position. (Check all that apply).

_____ Your teaching position was advertised.
_____ There was a role description for this position.
_____ You were interviewed for this position.
_____ None of the above.

6. Do you follow a curriculum for your ASL classes?

_____ Yes Specify; _____
_____ No

7. List training you received which is relevant to ASL instruction.

Date: _____

Place/Organization: _____

Activity: _____

8. Rate your level of knowledge/skill in each of the following areas by marking an X in the appropriate box based on the following scale:

0 – None (I have no knowledge in this area)

1 – Low (limited knowledge in this area, recently started learning this)

2 – Moderate (good general knowledge of common, make occasional errors)

3 – Good (developing advanced knowledge, errors are rare)

4 – Expert (have known this very well for a long time, could easily teach others)

a) ASL Proficiency – Do you have ASL grammatical structure, proper use of facial and body movement and ASL fluency skills?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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b) ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity – Do you know how to teach, read and understand the ASL curriculum, including the lesson plans?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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c) ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity – Do you know how to read and understand the ASL curriculum without lesson plans?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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d) Deaf Studies – Do you know about Deaf culture, history, values, and traditions?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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e) Cognitive and Learning Theory – Do you understand how students learn and retain information?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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f) Lesson Planning - from a curriculum without lesson plans set of curriculum goals – Do you know how to plan lessons including objectives, overview, timeline, students’ needs and ability, practice and motivation?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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g) Teaching Principles – Do you have the ability to track progress for multiple students and ensure the lesson goals are met for each student?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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h) Classroom Management – Do you have experience dealing with students’ behaviour and keeping them motivated in the classroom setting?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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i) Assessment and Evaluation – Are you familiar with student assessment and evaluation practices used in public schools?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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j) Record Keeping and Academic Reporting – Do you have experience with recording students’ attendance and marks, and reporting achievement?

None (0) Low (1) Moderate (2) Good (3) Expert (4)

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k) Other relevant areas? Specify; _____

9. Following is a list of possible skills/qualifications for training to teach ASL. Number the list starting with 1 (most important) in order of importance.

_____ a) ASL Proficiency – ASL grammatical structure, proper use of facial and body movement and ASL fluency.

_____ b) ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity – Teach, read and understand the ASL curriculum, including the lesson plans.

_____ c) ASL Instruction/Curriculum Familiarity – Read and understand the ASL curriculum without the lesson plans.

_____ d) Deaf Studies – the Deaf culture, history, values, and traditions.

_____ e) Cognitive and Learning Theory – How students learn and retain information.

_____ f) Lesson Planning - from a curriculum without lesson plans or set of curriculum goals – on planning lessons including objectives, overview, timeline, students’ needs and ability, practice and motivation.

_____ g) Teaching Principles – Track progress for multiple students and ensure the lesson goals are met for each student.

_____ h) Classroom Management – Deal students’ behaviour and keep them motivated in the classroom setting.

_____ i) Assessment and Evaluation – Student assessment and evaluation practices used in public schools.

_____ j) Record Keeping and Academic Reporting – Recording students’ attendance, marks and reporting achievement.

10. If an ASL teacher-training program were established, would you attend in order to become qualified to teach in public schools?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Explain why you would or would not be interested.

11. Additional comments, feedback or opinions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

12. What is your age range?

_____ 18 – 25

_____ 36 – 45

_____ 26 – 35

_____ 46 or older

13. What is your gender?

_____ Female

_____ Male

14. What language did you acquire first?

_____ American Sign Language

_____ English

_____ Other? Specify; _____

15. Did you attend a school for the Deaf for any period of your education?

_____ Yes

_____ No

16. What formal education have you completed? (Check all that apply)

_____ High school diploma

_____ University degree

_____ College certificate

_____ College diploma

_____ University certificate

_____ University diploma

17. Have you completed your B.Ed.?

_____ Yes

_____ No

18. Do you have a Manitoba Teacher's Certificate?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Appendix E

Sample of ASL Tutor Advertisement

Winnipeg School Division (WSD) nurtures a welcoming and inclusive culture of people committed to working together to inspire students to reach goals and achieve academic success. WSD is the largest school division in the Province of Manitoba with over 33,000 students and 5,000 employees. To ensure WSD's continued success as a leader in education and innovation, we're committed to finding and developing the right people to join our team.

ASL TUTOR

This position involves developing the ASL skills of Deaf/Hard of Hearing students in the Winnipeg School Division. The position also includes acting as an adult Deaf role model and exposing students to aspects of Deaf Culture. The ASL tutor schedule is coordinated by the Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- visiting a variety of Winnipeg School Divisions schools on a regularly scheduled basis to work with Deaf/hard of hearing students in K to Grade 12 who are using ASL
- working with students individually or in small groups, in class or out of class for a period of 30-60 minutes (as determined by the school)
- instructing students in ASL e.g. vocabulary, facial expression, non-manual markers, classifiers, attention getting techniques, topicalization, grammar rules etc. This may be done through class work and specific ASL lessons or activities
- consulting with the Teacher of the Deaf and classroom teacher to establish instructional goals based on formal and informal assessments and observations
- preparing lessons and materials in advance for use with the Deaf/hard of hearing students
- maintaining records of students' progress in ASL skills attainment
- sharing information regarding the student's progress in ASL with the school team via written lesson/progress logs and via participation in meetings as requested
- sharing information on Deaf culture
- being a positive role model for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students

Qualifications:

- must be a native user of ASL and have knowledge of Deaf Culture
- training as an ASL instructor (Signing Naturally [Vista] Curriculum) would be an asset
- experience teaching ASL to school age students would be an asset
- ability to work independently and as a team member
- good organizational skills
- knowledge of elementary/secondary curriculum is an asset

Candidates must have access to their own vehicle for travel between schools.

As this is a casual position, reimbursement for expenses related to the tutor's vehicle is not available.

How to apply

Interested individuals may apply either online (www.winnipegsd.ca/careers) or in writing including a résumé outlining qualifications and experience to:

Staffing Office – Human Resource Services
The Winnipeg School Division
Fax: 204-779-5633

We thank all interested individuals, however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Employment subject to a clear Child Abuse Registry check and Criminal Record search.

Winnipeg School Division has an Employment Equity policy which strives toward a fair representation of women, Indigenous peoples, persons living with a disability and minorities at all levels within WSD.