

POLICY  
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

COMMUNICATION POLICY

At all times, language access is of paramount importance for students' cognitive, academic, social and emotional growth. Incidental learning plays an important role in the education and language development of all children. As a bilingual school, where American Sign Language and English are the languages of instruction and community interaction, it is critical that all faculty and staff be vigilant in ensuring that communication is fully accessible to our students at all times. Faculty and staff should sign as clearly as possible at all times when school is in session.

Since all deaf and hard of hearing students and staff at RISD can access information visually, American Sign Language shall be used in all general campus communication interactions that are occurring in common areas throughout the school.

Common areas are defined as follows:

- All Hallways
- Cafeteria
- Department common areas
- Faculty rooms
- Gym
- Library
- Soccer field and school grounds and
- To whatever extent possible: Main Foyer

The expectation is that students and staff will understand that the two languages, spoken English and American Sign Language, are not to be used simultaneously and have two different sets of grammatical rules. Using ASL and English together (simultaneous communication) is strongly discouraged and should never be used by faculty and staff when working with students. Sign supported English is acceptable when accompanying a non-signing person or family through hallways or during any event where many attendees may not sign.

RI School for the Deaf's enrollment includes a number of students who have auditory access to spoken English through the use of cochlear implants and digital hearing aids. When necessary for these students, specially designed instruction, whereby spoken and written English might be the necessary language of instruction in the classroom, can be provided on a case-by-case basis and must be noted on the student's IEP. This will be determined after an assessment by the School's Language Planning Team.

American Sign Language is then utilized as a second language to support instruction. At no time will a student of RI School for the Deaf be deprived of access to information, regardless of his/her primary language.

The School will periodically provide opportunities for faculty and staff to take the ASL Proficiency Inventory through Gallaudet University at no cost to the staff member. This opportunity allows staff to continually and confidentially assess their own ASL skill level as they seek to increase their professional fluency.

Classroom personnel are expected to attain a standard of Advanced Proficiency or a score of 4 on the ASLPI within 3-4 years of hire. All school personnel are encouraged to use this opportunity to assess and improve their own skills.

FINAL READING: July 2012

ADOPTED August 2012

REVISED: March 2014