

SB

420

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date referred: 4/19/88

FURTHER REFERRALS:

DATE: 4-26-88

The Health, Education and Social Services Committee has considered SB 420

"An Act relating to the curriculum required in public schools."

RECOMMENDS:

- replace with _____ the same title
- attached amendment(s) a new title
- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations
- additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

- fiscal impact same as previous fiscal note published _____
- zero fiscal note
- zero with analysis same as previous zero fiscal note published 2/23/88, 4/19/88

~~SIGNING DO PASS~~

Nick Kozma
Bill Hudson
Mark Hummer
J. Ellis
Robert E. HCC

SIGNING OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

J. Ellis
 Co. Chairman's signature
Nick Kozma

my name is

4/18/88

LAURA HILLARY

I support S.B. 420 to offer American Sign Language classes for credit as a foreign language at the high school level. ASL has ^{long} been established as a language by nationally- and internationally- renowned linguists, such as William Stokoe.

I personally have completed 4 semesters of American Sign Language at Anchorage Community College. The courses were very well structured, and are taught based upon linguistic analysis of ASL structure. ~~My~~ This sign language training was invaluable to me in my work as an instructor of deaf adults and as a sign language interpreter.

I feel that ASL classes offered at the high school level will potentially increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters in our state, a need that is felt not only in Anchorage, Fairbanks, but in Juneau, Kotzebue, Barrow, Bethel -- literally statewide. High school students who are interested in pursuing careers in education (particularly Special Ed), or social services will find their future employability enhanced by learning sign language.

Lastly, there is the benefit of increasing potential for human communication. Since there is a high incidence of deafness among Alaska's native population, there is a need for sign language fluency in the schools and communities across our state.

Th. 19-

Laura Hillary

STATE OF ALASKA THE LEGISLATURE

POUCH Y - STATE CAPITOL
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811
907-465-3800

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY

May, 1988

Copies of minutes listed below were originally included in this file. The minutes are available on the STAIRS database CMPR. In order to save space copies of minutes have not been left in the files.

Mary Van Nimwegen

HHESS	4-26-88
HSA	4-18-88



Official Business

Alaska State Legislature

Senate

P.O. BOX V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Sponsor Summary

SB-420: "An act relating to the curriculum required in public schools."

SB-420 would require school districts to give credit for American Sign Language (ASL) as a foreign language if it is taught.

California and Ohio both have laws similar to that proposed by SB-420 and more than 300 institutions of higher learning across the United States offer classes in sign language.

The Commission on Education of the Deaf recognizes American Sign Language as a legitimate language. After extensive examination, researchers have concluded that ASL's linguistic structure is that of a natural and complete language.

Schools will not be required to teach sign language classes if this legislation passes. But, if the class is offered, schools will have to give credit to students who successfully complete the course. Presently many school districts offer courses in ASL, but often the courses are not given for credit.

The Anchorage Association of the Deaf, the National Education Association (NEA), and the Louise Rude Center for the Blind and Deaf all support this legislation.

We should recognize that the Deaf Community is part of our society. For far too long we have chosen to ignore and discriminate against the deaf. This legislation is one small step toward encouraging our students to learn an important communication skill, and toward recognition of the Deaf Community as part of us.

JK/emt

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: _____
Title: curriculum required in
public schools.
Sponsor: Kerttula
Requestor: Senate HESS

Agency Affected: Education
BRU: _____
Components: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING		0	0	0	0	0
CAPITAL						
REVENUE						

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND		0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Steve Holel
Division: Commissioner's Office

Phone: 465-2800
Date: 2-19-88

Approved by Commissioner: William G. DeMert
Agency: Department of Education

Date: 2-19-88

- Distribution (by preparer):
- Legislative Finance
 - Legislative Sponsor
 - Requestor
 - Office of Management and Budget
 - Impacted Agency(ies)

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: _____
Title: relating to the curriculum
required in public schools
Sponsor: Kerttula
Requestor: _____

Agency Affected: Health & Social Services
BRU: _____
Components: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)


GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-


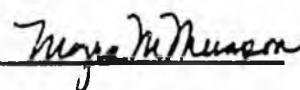
POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The passage of SB 420 would have no direct fiscal impact on the Department of Health & Social Services.

Prepared by: Mel Henry, Director  Phone: 465-3370
Division: Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities Date: 3-1-88

 Approved by Commissioner: Myra M. Munson  Date: 3-7-88
Agency: Health & Social Services

Distribution (by preparer):

- Legislative Finance
- Legislative Sponsor
- Requestor
- Office of Management and Budget
- Impacted Agency(ies)

Louise Rude Center for Blind and Deaf Adults

MAR 14 1988

CENTER FOR BLIND ADULTS
3903 Taft Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99517
(907) 248-7770

JAMES H. OMVIG, Director
March 8, 1988

CENTER FOR DEAF ADULTS
1020 E. 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 276-3456

Alaska State Legislature
P.O. Box F
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Soon you will be considering the passage of SB 420, which relates to giving credit for American Sign Language (ASL) when it is taught in public schools and which was sponsored by Senator Kerttula.

Here are a few facts about American Sign Language (ASL):

1. ASL is a visual/gestural language.
2. Its roots are in French Sign Language and Old American Sign Language.
3. It is used in both the U.S. and some parts of Canada.
4. Approximately 500,000 deaf persons use ASL as their primary language. Roughly 600 deaf persons residing in Alaska use it regularly.
5. ASL has its own syntax, grammar, and structural properties.
6. Like all languages, whether oral/auditory (spoken) or visual/gestural (signed), ASL sprang from a group's need to share information, feelings, values, and norms of behavior.
7. ASL is taught and used in every state of the union.
8. ASL has no written form, but advances in technology (video) enable users and instructors to record language samples for posterity and instructional purposes.
9. Although ASL has been used by deaf persons since about 1820, it has been studied by linguists only since the late 1950s.

March 8, 1988

Page 2

10. ASL can be referred to as an uncommonly taught language and thus usually is found in foreign language departments along with Navajo, Yupik, and most North American Indian languages.
11. ASL is not a foreign language in the strict sense of the term but for lack of other department choices; i.e. Modern Language Department; it would fit in the language department where other than English is taught.
12. Sign language is not universal. There are unique sign languages in all countries where deaf persons live: Spanish Sign Language; Filipino Sign Language; Korean Sign Language, etc.
13. The study of language is an enriching experience which introduces the student to a world view which is different from their own. It also provides a new discipline with which to challenge the mind.
14. We have a dearth of interpreters of ASL in Alaska. By allowing high school students to earn credit, we may be opening new career options for them.

I am very eager to see SB 420 become law in Alaska. It would not require the teaching of ASL but would give ASL the additional status it deserves in the language community by requiring that credit be earned when it is offered.

As a student of ASL for the last twenty years, I know firsthand of the benefits of learning a visual/gestural language. Knowing this language has enabled me to converse with deaf persons in education, rehabilitation, human service, and social settings. It has truly enriched my life. I encourage you to support the passage of SB 420.

If I can provide you with any further information regarding this or other pieces of legislation related to deafness, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolynn J. Whitcher
Director

CJW:cp

Education

MAINSTREAMING OF DEAF CHILDREN -- FROM BAD TO WORSE

by Harlan Lane, Ph.D.
(exerpted from THE DEAF AMERICAN)
(Spring 1987)

Ten years ago Congress passed the Education for All handicapped Children Act, which has led to growing integration of deaf children with hearing children in local public schools. More than half of the estimated 80,000 deaf school children in the United States have now been "mainstreamed" to some extent, and the specialized schools for the deaf they would have attended are starting to close.

Yet the attempt to educate deaf children with teaching methods appropriate for hearing children has repeatedly proved a failure. In a classroom where spoken and written English are the basic means of communication, deaf children are baffled and withdrawn, since eight out of ten became deaf before they could learn English at home. These children lack the knowledge of English and the skills of articulation and lipreading required to succeed; studies have shown that speech teachers find two-thirds of their own deaf pupils hard to understand or utterly unintelligible, and deaf high school students can lipread no better than the man in the street -- that is, scarcely at all.

An educational disaster has thus resulted from using English to instruct deaf children; the average twelfth grade student reads at fourth grade level and does arithmetic (his best subject) at sixth grade level. Thus most deaf students leave school unable to read a newspaper readily; the manual trades await them, but the manual trades are dying out. The future is bleak for most of today's deaf students.

As a remedy, many deaf leaders want to keep the residential schools for the deaf and to reintroduce sign language and deaf teachers in their classrooms -- successful practices.

in the last century, when American deaf children studied all their subjects in their most fluent language, the American Sign Language of the Deaf. In a school with a signing community, the deaf student is able not only to understand and respond to the instruction, but also to get help after class with course work, to discuss local, national and international events, to participate in student activities, to develop friendships with other deaf students (most deaf people chose a deaf partner when marrying), to emulate older students and deaf teachers, to acquire self-respect as a deaf person.

None of these advantages are available to the deaf child in an ordinary public school where sign language, deaf teachers, and a deaf community are absent. The poor conditions therefor social and emotional growth are not offset by enhanced conditions for learning: the first report cards on mainstreamed deaf children show no improvement in English or mathematics attributable to mainstreaming (even though the first to be mainstreamed were the children with the best speech and hearing).

The deaf children who do best in school are the fortunate 10 percent who learned sign language as a native language from their deaf classmates from hearing homes in most subjects, even in learning to read and write English. They are also better adjusted, better socialized and have more positive attitudes. The superior performance of deaf children of deaf parents highlights the changes that most need to be made in the education of deaf children, namely, a return to sign language, deaf teachers and deaf administrators. These changes have long been advocated by many of the deaf community and by the National Association of the Deaf.

A recent UNESCO report on the education of the deaf concludes that deaf adults have an important role to play in the development and education of deaf children, and finds that the interaction of deaf adults with the

parents, the deaf children and the teachers also "enriches the socialization of the deaf child." Here is what these experts had to say about sign language: We must recognize the legitimacy of sign language as a linguistic system and it should be accorded the same status as other languages. Now that the importance of the national sign languages for deaf education is better understood, it is no longer admissible to overlook them or to fail to encourage their integration into deaf education. The old idea that the use of sign language interferes with the acquisition of spoken and written language is no longer considered valid.

If deaf adults were once again substantially involved in the education of deaf children, there would be role models for those children, American Sign Language would be introduced. English language skills would take their appropriate priority, English literacy would improve, schools would no longer be unsuccessful speech clinics but successful educational institutions.

Unfortunately, the very professions created to serve the interests of the deaf have been totally at odds for over a century with what the deaf perceive as their interests. These professions have vainly pursued the assimilation of deaf children into the hearing majority at the expense of their individual growth; thus, many special educators embraced mainstreaming precisely because it would help to close the residential schools the deaf hold dear. Congress was wiser, recognizing (in the words of the Supreme Court) that "regular classrooms simply would not be a suitable setting for the education of many handicapped children" and providing for alternative placements. But educators have largely ignored this provision of the 1975 act.

To achieve intellectual and emotional maturity and full participation in society most deaf children require an education conducted in their primary language, American

Sign Language, with the participation of deaf adults, in the setting of a specialized school. The state association should bring their case to their statehouse.

Alaska
Association of the
Deaf

1345 Rudakof Circle, Suite 107
Anchorage, Alaska 99508
907-333-7545 (TTY)

April 1, 1988

Representative Fran Ulmer
Chairman, State Affairs Committee
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Ulmer:

We would like to request your support of Senate Bill 420. This bill advocates for the introduction of American Sign Language in the Alaska public school system as a foreign language credit. We feel that this bill is very important as it deals with deaf communication. We are strongly in support of this bill and hope that you will also advocate for its passage.

We have learned that Senate Bill 420 has passed the Senate and is now in the House. It is our understanding that in the House it will have two committee assignments: House State Affairs and House Health, Education, and Social Services. We have been informed by another staff member of the Alaska legislature that Senate Bill 420 will be brought up for public hearing sometime in April 1988. Since you are the chairman of the House State Affairs committee we would be most grateful if you would notify us of the date of that hearing and we would also like to request that the hearing be held in Anchorage, or through teleconference with an interpreter provided by your committee, so that the deaf community here could have some input on this legislation.

Your attention to this matter is welcomed and greatly appreciated. Thank you for all the time and effort you may place in your advocacy of this bill and all others that deal with deaf issues. We strongly urge you to fully investigate Senate

Alaska
Association of the
Deaf

1345 Rudakof Circle, Suite 107
Anchorage, Alaska 99508
907-333-7545 (TTY)

March 3, 1988

Representative Fran Ulmer
Chairperson State Affairs
Room 102
P.O. Box V
Juneau, AK. 99811

Dear Representative Ulmer:

We understand that Senate Bill 420 which has passed out of the Senate recently will come to the State Affairs Committee. Senate Bill 420 advocates for the introduction of American Sign Language in a high school curriculum to be given credit as a foreign language.

The Alaska Association of the Deaf feels that this bill is very important in the areas of education and public awareness for the deaf community in Alaska. We are very supportive of this bill and hope that you and the State Affairs Committee will give it prompt attention and favorable action. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Albert Berke
Secretary

AB: cjp

POSITION PAPER
SENATE BILL NO. 420

"An Act relating to the curriculum required in public schools."

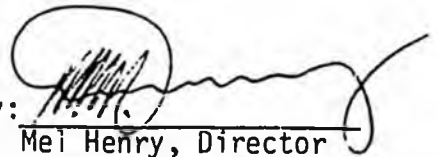
EFFECT OF BILL

SB420 would require that American Sign Language, if taught in a public school, would be given foreign language credit.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Health and Social Services recommends passage of SB420.

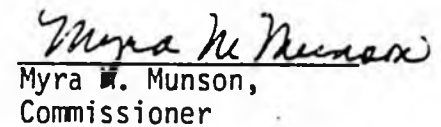
Recommended by:


Mei Henry, Director

Date:

15th March, 1988

Approved by:


Myra W. Munson,
Commissioner

Date:

March 7, 1988



Official Business

Alaska State Legislature

Senate

P.O. BOX V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

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JK/emt

1

Arden Neisser
1983

Prologue

My first glimpse of deaf life came while listening to a research paper about **American Sign Language (ASL)** at a university conference on language and linguistics in the mid-1970s. This remarkable language had only recently been discovered by academic linguists; the auditorium was filled, and interest was very high. Before making the presentation, the speaker gave a brief and startling history of ASL in America: Among educators of the deaf, ASL is not considered a language. It is never taught, is forbidden in the classroom, and strongly discouraged outside of school. The aim of deaf education for close to a century has been teaching the deaf to speak and to lipread. Despite the fact that few deaf students have ever achieved these goals, it still is.

Although ASL was discouraged and even suppressed, deaf people throughout the country have continued to use it. It is the fourth most commonly used language in the United States—after English, Spanish, and Italian—with a signing population of nearly 500,000.

Deaf people have always used sign language. Even uninstructed and isolated deaf people use signs. In 1972, a Danish anthropologist came across a single deaf man on a Polynesian island—the only one ever recorded in the island's twenty-four generations of oral history—and *he* was using a sign language to communicate with his family and friends. In schools for the deaf where a strictly oral method is pursued, and the prohibition against sign language is zealously enforced, children are still

2

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

known to sign among themselves at every opportunity. Observers have commented on this phenomenon for centuries, and modern psychologists have begun studying it. There is now experimental data showing that young deaf children who have had no exposure to any kind of sign language will indeed invent their own system of signs.

My own experience with ASL and the deaf community began with reading articles and attending lectures; I had never known a deaf person, never met a deaf child. I enrolled in a sign language course, and subsequently spent an entire, frustrating season signing nursery rhymes. What I was learning was not American Sign Language, but I did acquire a small vocabulary of standard signs borrowed from ASL and used in all sign systems. It was like learning a list of French words before taking a trip to Paris. Of course, it's better to go to Paris with a small list of French words than with none, and my signs, though pathetic by linguistic standards, were better than no signs at all. Later, when I began interviewing deaf people, I always used an interpreter.

ASL was a topic of considerable interest to scholars, but I wanted to know what it meant to the deaf; to understand the deaf point of view. I wondered if the recognition of ASL had improved their lives. I started with the children, and with the conviction that the new information, when filtered down to the level of the schools, could only lead to constructive action.

Most schools for the deaf are currently using some variety of sign language in the classroom as part of a new method called "total communication." When the decision was made, during the 1970s, to lift the ban on signing, no change in philosophy took place; to all other methods, techniques, training, and curricula, signs were merely added. Amoeba-like, these institutions are always eager to extend themselves, to increase their bulk and their budgets. The teachers have their own interests and traditions; their opinions were formed at teachers training colleges and special education departments. In some states, a single sequence of courses certifies a teacher to work with *my* handicapped child:

3

Prologue

crippled, retarded, disturbed, autistic, deaf, or blind. (There are almost no deaf teachers in schools for the deaf.) Though a sort of sign language is used in the schools, it isn't ASL. A peculiar kind of trade-off has taken place: the kids don't learn to speak very well, and the teachers don't learn to sign.

For five years, I made regular visits to schools and agencies, institutions dedicated to the education and welfare of the deaf. They were all public institutions, and ranged from well-staffed federal committees in Washington to a rural school with one deaf child and a part-time hearing specialist. Few professionals in the world of the deaf have ever thought seriously about deafness. They think only about hearing: hearing loss, partial hearing, residual hearing, and the conduction of sound. They spend a great deal of time describing to their deaf clients and pupils all the things that they are missing, like music, and poetry, and bird-song. I never heard so much talk about string quartets, sonnets, and the uplifting murmurings of nature as I did at the schools for the deaf! Everybody seems obsessed with sound. They know nothing at all about silence, and have never stopped to wonder how competent and intelligent people might go about coping with it.

Although the deaf live in a world without sound, it is the same world we all inhabit. To the problems of living in the environment they bring the full range of human resourcefulness, intelligence, and ingenuity. They have created for themselves a language that is not only comparable to all the world's great languages, but is perfectly adapted to their lives and needs. They have created for themselves as well a strong sense of identity, an authentic social community, and many cultural traditions. They do not speculate long about the nature of sound, or the mechanics of normal hearing. No living creature organizes its behavior around something it doesn't have. The deaf perceive the world through skilled and practiced eyes; language is at their fingertips.

When I wanted to learn about silence and sign language, I went to talk to the deaf.

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date referred: 3/2/88

FURTHER REFERRALS: HESS

DATE: 4-18-88

The State Affairs Committee has considered SB 420

"An Act relating to the curriculum required in public schools."

RECOMMENDS:

- replace with _____ the same title
- attached amendment(s) a new title
- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations
- additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

- fiscal impact same as previous fiscal note published _____
- zero fiscal note same as previous zero fiscal note published 2-23-88
- zero with analysis

SIGNING DO PASS:

[Handwritten signatures]

SIGNING OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

[Handwritten signature]

Chairman's signature

P. O. Box 635
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-4446

April 26, 1988

TO: House HESS Committee
House RULES Committee

FROM: Jeanne Rasmussen *Jeanne Rasmussen*

RE: SB 420 - SIGN LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I support SB420, however, I would like to see S.E.E. (SIGNING EXACT ENGLISH) or S.E. (SIGNING ENGLISH) included as sign language for which credit will be given.

I feel very strongly about this because S.E.E. is a more advanced language, and has the same syntax as spoken English. A.S.L. deals in concepts only, with no thought of sentence structure. ASL is likened to the Indian picture language and is really not translatable.

I am a parent of a girl who went deaf at age nine. We were recommended by the staff at the University of Washington Hospital as well as Alaska agents of the deaf to keep her in S.E.E. because it is signed the same as the spoken word. It has helped her in her schooling at the primary and secondary level, and will be most valuable for higher education. If students don't learn correct grammar, it is most difficult for them to write and speak it.

There are many deaf people who prefer S.E.E. So, I would ask your support in having credit given for S.E.E. classes as well as A.S.L. (AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE).