



Resolution in Support of having an American Sign Language (ASL) fluent teacher in every class and the development, support, and implementation of a dual language model of instruction at PS 347 The American Sign Language and English Lower School.

Whereas:

1. The PS 347 “47” The American Sign Language and English Lower School (02M347) has approximately 200 students and is the only city-funded public school in NYC serving Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students who are Children of Deaf Adults (CODA);
2. PS 347 serves children from Pre-K to 8th grade and is a Title I school. There are three 3-K classrooms, three 4-K and one class per grade level from kindergarten through eighth grade. Every class is an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) model with two teachers;
3. PS 347 is an important option for families who have d/Deaf (lowercase “d” to represent hearing status and uppercase “D” to represent cultural connections to the Deaf community), or hard-of-hearing children and want the child’s siblings to attend the same school, for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing students who communicate using both Aural/Oral methods and ASL, and for CODAs whose parents want a school community that understands and respects their home language and culture;
4. PS 347 is already American Sign Language (ASL) friendly: some, but not all, members of the staff are ASL proficient.;
5. Currently, 3-K and 4-K students receive instruction in ASL and English. In later grades, however, most classes are in English only. ASL interpretation is provided via Individualized Education Plan (IEP) mandates;

6. To fully and adequately support the needs of the d/Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and CODA students each classroom must have Dual Language instruction in ASL and English;
7. Deaf students who do not have an ASL fluent teacher must rely on an interpreter for the delivery of core instruction and every aspect of their communication with their teacher;
8. In the past, some efforts were made to pair d/Deaf and hearing teachers to provide bilingual instruction in the classroom, however in recent years, the school has not always been able (or required) to hire d/Deaf, native ASL, or ASL proficient teachers;
9. Over the last several years, a significant number of fluent signing teachers have retired or otherwise left the school. Ideally, they would have been replaced with d/Deaf or ASL proficient teachers, but it can be challenging to find appropriate candidates, especially without a mandate. PS 347 needs the DOE's support to assure all classrooms provide fluent instruction in both English and ASL throughout the day.
10. ASL is not currently a daily part of the PS 347 curriculum. The school has not been required to provide any formal instruction in ASL linguistics, which is especially detrimental to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and CODA students who may lack access to proper ASL role models outside the school and/or opportunities to engage in deepening their understanding of this visual language. Lack of access to ASL often equals language deprivation for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, which can lead to neurological, learning, and mental health issues. The United Nations has called for state parties to facilitate the learning of signed language and promote the linguistic identity of the Deaf community (Article 24);
11. More and more deaf children have cochlear implants from a young age. Typically, deaf students with cochlear implants are educated in mainstream settings where they are likely to have little to no contact with other deaf peers. Having access to both spoken and sign languages offer them the best of both worlds (positive identity development, improving literacy, academic, and communication skills) and opportunities to make deeper connections with other children through shared identity and language. Additionally, hard-of-hearing children who use hearing aids are almost always mainstreamed with no connection to the d/Deaf community.
12. In New York State, students must be profoundly deaf to attend state Schools for the Deaf, further limiting the options available to HoH children. Increasing the number of ASL-fluent staff and students would potentially attract more deaf students who may be struggling in the mainstream or otherwise not consider PS 347 due to language access. There are over 1500 deaf and hard-of-hearing students receiving hearing education services in NYC public elementary schools. PS 347 already serves all five boroughs and

has the potential to attract more DHoH students from across the city, thereby sustaining the student population to support the dual language model in the years ahead.

13. Providing ASL instruction in every class via a Dual Language curriculum model will significantly benefit our d/Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students, as well as their families and the community at large by supporting ASL fluency for all students. These positive impacts include:
  - a. Improved social and emotional well-being because students will be able to communicate seamlessly amongst themselves and with their teachers.
  - b. Empowering students, inside and outside of school, and fueling their sense of independence by enabling them to play and converse with others freely regardless of their hearing status.
  - c. More engagement of parents with the school: Both d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing parents and guardians will feel fully welcomed at school, and will be able to communicate face-to-face directly with their children's teachers. This improvement will help both teachers and parents better support the education of the children.
  - d. Improvement of academic outcomes: With Dual Language instruction in ASL and English, learning will become easier for students whose first language is ASL, enabling them to succeed at school through the mandated use of their home language and an understanding of their culture;
  - e. Cultural enrichment: Students and their parents and guardians can exchange their experiences without a language barrier, which promotes cross-cultural understanding;
  - f. Broader career opportunities: Developing proficiency in more than one language improves communication skills and enhances professional opportunities.
  
14. The students and families who attend PS 347 and rely on the school to educate and prepare their children for high school and beyond are entitled to instruction which is culturally responsive and sustaining and a school environment which is welcoming, affirming, and supportive.

**Therefore be it resolved** that CEC D2 requests that the DOE provide a full time ASL fluent teacher in every class at PS 347 effective for the school year 2021-22. Teacher class assignments decisions should be made to accommodate this and Deaf/native/fluent signers should be prioritized for future hires

**Therefore be it further resolved** that CEC 2 urges the DOE to support the development and implementation of dual language curriculum for PS 347 to best support the students and families of the school community. In addition to having a fluent signing teacher in every class, there should be an ASL Program Coordinator to develop and oversee a robust ASL curriculum for every grade, including Deaf culture. All students will be regularly evaluated and taught with the goal of reaching and maintaining grade-level ASL fluency. With the dual language designation, there is an expectation to measure students' progress in language acquisition. This position would spearhead the program and teach ASL classes. PS 347 has a great potential to become a model school for dual language instruction in ASL and English nationwide.

**Therefore be it further resolved** that CEC 2 requests support for the current teachers at PS 347 to receive ongoing Professional Development focused on American Sign Language and Deaf culture, including weekly ASL classes. Having a dual language designation incentivizes the school's teachers and related service staff to seek relevant PD and staff training related to Deaf Education and other content areas. Additionally, orientation for new staff needs to be offered on the topic of deaf culture and language.