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**Right and opposite page:**
Students work in the Bilingual
Multi-Media Room on video
journals and writing projects.

# bilingual students
## publish works in ASL and English

*By Petra M. Horn-Marsh and Kester L. Horn-Marsh*

The Kansas State School for the Deaf (KSD) is a bilingual school where American Sign Language (ASL) and English are used equally in the classroom and dormitory as the languages of instruction and communication. As a result, KSD has been part of bilingual education training through the Center for ASL/English Bilingual Education and Research (CAEBER) housed at Gallaudet University. The Center supplies pre-service and in-service training to teachers, schools, and universities that provide research-based bilingual education to deaf and hard of hearing students. In its eleventh year of bilingual education in-service training, KSD has successfully trained most of its personnel, including most or all classroom teachers, paraprofessional educators, school counselors, administrators, dormitory staff, the transition specialist, the audiologist, and the superintendent.



*Photos courtesy of the Kansas State School for the Deaf*

As bilingual children and teens, KSD students deal with the acquisition and learning of two languages—ASL and English. The acquisition and learning processes follow the postulates of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) set forth by Jim Cummins (1979). BICS are skills based in social language, typically acquired through conversation in the home, on the

in signacy, literacy, and oracy. Fingerspelling functions as one of the bridges to the acquisition and development of English (Bailes, 2001; Haptonstall-Nykaza & Schick, 2007; Padden, 2006; Padden & Ramsey, 1998).

Bilingual methodology (Baker, 2001) consists of five approaches, including:

- Purposeful Concurrent Use
- Preview/View/Review
- Language Separation
- Free and Literal Translation
- Translanguaging

## Special Space to Strengthen Skills

The Bilingual Multi-Media Room (BMMR) is the place where KSD students strengthen their academic skills in both ASL and English. In this technologically sophisticated and dedicated environment, students work on video journals and writing projects as well as videotape oral presentations. The BMMR has two areas—the viewing and recording room and the computer lab across the hall. The viewing area is complete with a 27-inch TV set and DVD/VCR player for groups and eight individual viewing stations for individuals, pairs, and small gatherings. Students view ASL poetry and handshape stories as well as works of fiction and nonfiction. They also view ASL translations of English short stories, poetry, and novels. Using shared, guided, interactive, and independent viewing strategies (Center for ASL/ English Bilingual Education and Research, 2004), students develop a variety of comprehension strategies, identify the cultural values and information in ASL literature, identify

playground, in the cafeteria, and in other social settings. In learning these first and basic communication skills, context is readily available; as children play games and learn social etiquette, they see the connection between the topic they are discussing and the environment they are in. It takes children approximately two years to understand and talk in context-rich situations (Cummins, 1981; 1984).

The CALP skills develop later as children, approximately 4 to 7 years old, learn to effectively communicate about topics in which the context is not immediately evident (Cummins, 1981; 1984). Because KSD students are bilingual, time spent acquiring and learning ASL and English as first and second languages—following the processes implicit in BICS and CALP—becomes a central ingredient when planning lessons and activities. Presentation and application of both languages require planning to ensure that the components of bilingual methodology are appropriately followed as each language is expressed in its separate modes. For example, the modes of ASL include attending, viewing, and signing; the modes of English include reading and writing and, for some students, listening and speaking (Center for ASL/ English Bilingual Education and Research, 2007; Nover, Christensen, & Cheng, 1998). Within the frameworks of signacy, literacy, and oracy, bilingual deaf and hard of hearing students develop their language abilities (Center for ASL/English Bilingual Education and Research, 2007; Nover et al., 1998). Fingerspelling, a special ability, is used daily by educators and students as a tool to increase language competency and comprehension

| Table 1: Five Stages of ASL Storytelling | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Stage One: Ponder, Observe, and Select** | **Stage Two: Select, Organize, and Tape** | **Stage Three: View, Reorganize, and Re-tape** | **Stage Four: View, Edit, and Re-tape** | **Stage Five: Record, Present, and Reflect** |
| View examples of a specific genre | Organize students' ideas into a story | View story with class and/or partner | View 2nd draft of story | Tape final story |
| Select a theme | Tape their first draft | Edit | Edit focusing on mechanics | Present it to audiences |
| Brainstorm | | Practice | Practice | Reflect upon work |
| Plan what students want to express in their story | | Re-tape | Re-tape | |

and describe story elements, and identify and describe ASL grammatical aspects, including classifiers, non-manual markers, and handshapes.

The videotaping area in the viewing and videotaping room consists of a digital camera, two VHS cameras, three backdrops, and stage lights as well as a computer with video editing capability. There is also a videophone available for students who need to do research on their presentation topics. In addition, the videotaping area has two rooms with full-length mirrors with which to practice ASL presentation techniques such as role-shifting and non-manual markers. Students participate in shared, interactive, guided, and independent signing to develop their ASL stories, poetry, and presentations (Center for ASL/English Bilingual Education and Research, 2004).

When doing their final recordings, the students wear black smocks to give a professional look to their performances. Following the ASL storytelling model (Byrne, 1997-2002), students think about their work, select and organize a topic, tape, edit, re-tape, and present their work. (See Table 1.) Draft and final presentations are filmed in the studio. Students apply what they have learned and use effective openings and closings, various genres, appropriate prosody, and sign concepts and structure. Across the hall, the computer lab has 12 computers with two communal printers as well as a 25-inch TV set with a DVD/VCR machine on wheels. Students have the option of writing their papers using traditional models of the writing process or transcribing their videos to develop their papers using the bilingual writing process (Togioka, Wolf, & Culbreath, 1994). (See Tables 2 and 3.)

### From Planning to Presentation

As part of the bilingual writing process, students develop their ideas in ASL using story maps and other graphic organizers. Then they videotape themselves signing their essays and have their videotaped segments peer edited and/or edited by the teacher. Next, students and the teacher have conferences to revise and strengthen their videotaped segments before videotaping second drafts. Then students begin the actual writing of their papers in English. Before students type their final English drafts, their work will be peer edited at least once and perhaps twice and the young authors will conference with their teachers. Once the written drafts become final, the students will videotape them in ASL.

An example of the signing process involves students signing in front of a camera presenting a novel or a short story that they have read. Some apply a sandwiching technique—fingerspelling,

then signing, then fingerspelling—in their presentations to emphasize or highlight vocabulary and concepts in the story. This process helps students gain a better understanding of the story and internalize new vocabulary and concepts. In addition, the students continue to develop their academic ASL skills. Students are able to use academic ASL when they are able to:

- Use abstract sign vocabulary
- Present intelligibly in details
- Incorporate ASL grammar and syntax
- Incorporate body shifting, spatial set-up, and eye gaze
- Retell/translate in ASL what they have read
- Retell a story after viewing ASL videotapes
- Narrate a short story that has a beginning, middle, and end following the ASL discourse and genre formats
- Incorporate fingerspelled words and concepts
- Express explicitly a variety of relationships between events, involving time and using and/so/then/before/until
- Incorporate ASL aspects, non-manual markers, classifiers, and use of space
- Pose academic and personal problems
- Refer to principles to influence people
- Use different signs to say the same thing

### In Class: Process Leads to Understanding

An instance of a typical high school English class using the bilingual writing process provides insight into a complex event. First, students are exposed to a genre—perhaps science fiction, fairy tales, classic novels, news, or drama—that they will study. The students then plan their ideas using a graphic organizer provided by the teacher. After viewing both acceptable and unacceptable videotaped versions of ASL presentations, the students conference one-on-one with the teacher. After the teacher approves their ideas, the students record themselves on practice videotapes; they use a teacher-developed rubric usually focused on content to give each other feedback in the viewing room and then record a second draft.

All subsequent recordings focus on signing skills. Since the students have clarified the idea for their project through developing a videotape in ASL, it is much easier for them to type a rough draft in English. Now begins the peer-editing process using the 6+1 Trait Writing (2007), a process where students prewrite, draft, respond, revise, edit, and publish following the 6+1 Trait model: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions and presentation. The co-author of this article, Kester Horn-Marsh, has classes where each student

| Table 2: Traditional Writing Process | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Step One:** Pre-Writing | **Step Two:** Writing | **Step Three:** Revising | **Step Four:** Editing | **Step Five:** Publishing |
| Brainstorming | Topic & Supporting Details | Clarifying | Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling | Final copy |

| Table 3: Bilingual Writing Process | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Step One: ASL Brainstorming | Step Two: Glossing, Drawing, & Videotaping | Step Three: Translating (Transcribing) | Step Four: Revising | Step Five: Editing English | Step Six: Publishing |
| Live or Videotaped | Clarifying | ASL into English | Adding English for detailed ASL features | Punctuation, capitalization, spelling grammar, vocabulary choice | Written English version |
| | Adding ASL features | | Checking for English equivalence to ASL meanings | | Videotaped ASL version |
| | Video replaying | | | | |

has 6+1 Trait binders in which information on all six traits can be referenced when needed. He also has developed a step-by-step process of peer editing and author revision for each of the six traits. After students have edited and revised each other's papers, they must find a competent adult to edit their papers to assure that the conventions of English are followed. The final draft of each paper is printed and filed in individual portfolios or submitted to contests or literary magazines. Then an additional draft of the ASL version is recorded. This recording is viewed and evaluated by the entire class for signing skills. Using this feedback, each student wears a black smock to prepare his or her final videotape. These videos are saved and catalogued. All students have access and use them for a multitude of functions, such as previewing literature, practicing oratorical skills, studying persuasion, and focusing on ASL signing traits. During the students' senior year, they may go back and find both works in ASL and English to use in their senior portfolios.

## A Look at Process

The process—both the ASL presentation, developed through the Five Stages of ASL Storysigning Process, and the writing process used to generate the final print document—is consistent with Cummins's Common Underlying Proficiency theory showing the interdependence of an individual's first language on his or her second language; competencies in the two languages affect each other (Baker, 2006). Second language acquisition is influenced considerably by the extent to which the first language has developed. When a first language has developed sufficiently to cope with decontextualized classroom learning, a second language may be relatively easy to acquire (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 1979; 1981).

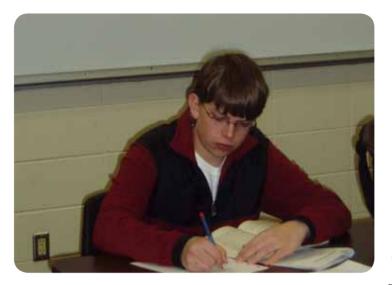Consistent with the findings of Thomas and Collier (2002), the strongest predictor of a student's achievement in his or her second language is the amount of formal schooling the student received in his or her first language. The more grade-level schooling students received in their first language, the higher their achievement in their second language. Also, when comparably matched, bilingually schooled students outperform monolingually schooled students in academic achievement in all subjects after four to seven years of dual language schooling (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The results have been overwhelming. Student response has been very positive and students have shown steady leaps in bilingual growth. In 2006, 60 percent of students in kindergarten through eighth grades and 39 percent of students in high school met or exceeded the state standards in reading. In 2008, 86 percent of elementary students and 73 percent of secondary students met or exceeded the state standards in reading. Students from KSD have won awards in the Gallaudet National Essay, Art, and ASL Contest for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students for the last four years. KSD students have also won almost every year in the Marie Jean Philip ASL Poetry, Storytelling, and Deaf Art Competition.

While the equipment may be expensive, the school's annual fundraiser, Dining for Educational Accessibility for the Future



**Above:** Students work both in front of the camera and behind it.

(DEAF), enables its purchase. Through DEAF, KSD manages to purchase appropriate educational technology to fund the BMMR as well as provide all classrooms with LCD projectors, document cameras, Smart Boards, individual white boards, TVs, VCR and DVD players, digital cameras, and other technology-based equipment.

Functioning much like a computer lab, the BMMR has provided students with opportunities to develop and refine their ASL and English skills. Available to all grade levels across the curriculum on a sign-up basis, the room provides access to the Deaf Studies curriculum or formally taught ASL classes. Any teacher or student interested in viewing core-curriculum material in ASL may use this room. The work produced manifests the validity of Livingston's argument (1997): "The reason why reading and writing have not proved successful for the learning of subject-specific information in schools for Deaf students is due more to inappropriate ways of using reading and writing to learn than to the abilities of Deaf students" (p. 128). At KSD, reading and writing—and signing—are developed and used appropriately to the fullest extent of the student's abilities.

For more information, visit *www.ksdeaf.org* and click on "Bilingual Multi-Media Room."

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