

Every child needs a language.®

What are the ramifications of the 2022 Senate Bill 372 / House Bill 2621

The main effect of this bill is to give legislative assurance that children who gain access to hearing, will not be dismissed from Kansas School for the Deaf. With modern advancements in medicine and technology, access to hearing is more fluid today. Sixty percent of the students at KSD have some access to hearing through amplification.

The effects of incorporating children with access to hearing are already seen at KSD and other schools for the deaf around the country. Schools for the deaf have adjusted to larger numbers of students having access to sound. Programs have been developed in schools for the deaf to help students reach their individual potential in comprehending spoken language through lip reading, access to sound, or some combination of visual and auditory cues. Schools also provide individualized speech therapy to develop speech skills.



The result is a student body with wide ranging, and ever changing, abilities to “hear” and to speak.

There are challenges both academically and socially with interactions between individuals with different language abilities and preferences. To experience the social effects of this, one need only visit a school for the deaf during recess to watch children interact with a combination of ASL, sounds and speech. Educators continue to adapt to changes in the student population. Kansas School for the Deaf has tried to reach an academic balance through bilingualism, by encouraging children to reach their full potential in ASL and English (both spoken and written). This is an ongoing challenge for Deaf Education.

Ninety percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents - parents who are suddenly faced with the need to teach their child a language that they do not know. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and friends, are all left wishing that ASL had been offered as a second language in their school years.



The majority of deaf children suffer some amount of language deprivation during early childhood.

Beyond reduced social interactions, language deprivation also influences the development of brain pathways and nerve organization. Later gains in access to language, or even hearing, do not immediately negate those early developmental years. Educators of the deaf are trained to help children overcome difficulties associated with language delays.

Parents place their children at KSD or their local school district for a variety of reasons. Life is not stagnant. Parents may move their deaf or hard of hearing child between KSD and a local school district based on the child's needs, or the parent's perception of the child's needs.

The Kansas statute presented as Senate Bill 372 assures that the Kansas school for the deaf is to remain an option for school attendance for children who established ASL as their language while deaf or hard of hearing.

Current administrators already extend this privilege to children who gain access to hearing through medical intervention or amplification. Gain of access to hearing without medical intervention or amplification is rare. There is only one case known among KSD children, children treated at Children's Mercy Hospital, or Midwest Ear Institute in Kansas City. Because of this,



the ramifications of this bill are not likely to cause a change in KSD population demographics.

One child who cannot speak,
who was deaf,
but can now hear,
whose language is American Sign Language,
will feel at home and be readily accepted
as she continues her education with the other children at Kansas School for the Deaf.

This bill recognizes American Sign Language as a foundational language with social, developmental, and academic benefits to a child that go beyond the ability to access hearing spoken language. The Kansas Legislature can provide an appropriate education for a child who was deaf or hard of hearing, whose language is American Sign Language, who gained access to hearing through some unknown means.

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¹ [page 22 of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) self study report from 2019 by Kansas School for the Deaf
https://images.pcmac.org/SISFiles/Schools/KS/KansasStateSchools/SchoolForTheDeaf/Uploads/DocumentsCategories/Documents/2019_Self_Study_FINAL_%7BSIS643A637BCA41%7D.pdf]

What This Bill Does

NB: An IEP team has many considerations. This bill simply lifts a restriction.

Recognizes the importance of language in child development.

Affects children who were previously deaf or hard of hearing.

Offers the same educational considerations to children who gain access to hearing by novel medical intervention, natural or other means, as extended to children with sound amplification.

Expands options for the IEP team considering school placement for a child who gains access to hearing.

Allows an IEP team to value a child's expression in ASL as highly as the child's reception of spoken English.

What This Bill Does Not Do

Does not diminish the value of KSD as a unique educational environment.

Does not open access to KSD to all hearing children.

Does not alter KSD student language demographics.

Does not flood KSD with non-ASL children.

Does not dictate to the IEP team.

Does not force a child to stay at a school against parental choice.