



Position Statement on the Rights of Deaf Learners to Acquire Full Proficiency in a Native Signed Language

TESOL supports multilingualism and the right to advanced literacy in both native and second languages. In the case of Deaf students, TESOL recognizes and supports Deaf learners' right to become proficient in a signed language or written or spoken language(s), including English. For learners who are hearing impaired, the learning of signed language and the promotion of the Deaf community's linguistic identity are fundamental to engagement in the second language acquisition process and their need to participate fully in the Deaf community.

TESOL supports individual language rights and an accessible high-quality education for all learners of English, including Deaf students. TESOL advocates that adequate support and resources be allocated for bilingual education programs, including programs for Deaf students that utilize a native signed language. Furthermore, TESOL supports teaching methods and materials that recognize Deaf learners' right to become proficient in a native signed language and in written or spoken language(s), including English.

*Approved by the Executive Committee
June 2009*