

## BC School for the Deaf School Plan

### Our Story

#### Who we are?

**The BC School for the Deaf (BCSD)** is the only specialized school for Deaf students in the entire province of British Columbia. As the sole school of its kind, BCSD plays a crucial role in providing Deaf and hard-of-hearing students with an inclusive and supportive educational environment that uses both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. This bilingual approach ensures that students have full access to communication, learning, and identity development.

The school serves as a hub for fostering a strong sense of Deaf culture and pride in ASL, while also offering a wide range of academic programs, extracurricular activities, and support services to help each student succeed. Given its central role, BCSD also serves as a focal point for connecting students and families to the broader Deaf community from across the province, promoting advocacy, social engagement, and a strong sense of belonging within Deaf culture.

#### What are we doing well?

We are proud to offer an inclusive and bilingual learning environment where students have access to both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. We actively promote Deaf culture and identity, ensuring that students feel seen, valued, and supported. Our staff is committed to building strong relationships with students and families, listening to Deaf voices, and creating learning experiences that are engaging, personalized, and meaningful. We also provide access to extracurricular activities, leadership opportunities, and community connections that enrich each student's experience.

#### How do we know?

We see students confidently improving both ASL and English to express themselves and connect with others. We have hosted several events featuring Deaf role models from the Deaf community, as well as organized field or special trips to help students visualize and enhance their world knowledge skills. Additionally, student progress reports, IEP goals, ASL class participation, and involvement in leadership and cultural activities provide valuable insights into where we are making a positive impact and where we can continue to grow.

We have successfully integrated assessments for ASL receptive skills and reading proficiency, using data to guide instructional planning and support. **Moving forward**, we aim to broaden our assessment framework to include ASL expressive skills and numeracy, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of student learning. This approach will allow us to better identify student strengths and areas for growth, and to tailor instruction to support all learners effectively.

## Our focus:

### 1) Rationale for Developing Linguistically Accessible and Inclusive Assessments

The rationale for developing linguistically accessible and inclusive assessments for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH) students is grounded in the understanding that traditional assessment methods may not fully capture the abilities and knowledge of these learners. D/HH students often have unique communication needs and diverse language profiles, including sign language as their primary mode of communication, or a preference for visual learning strategies, as well as most students experiencing varying levels of language deprivation. By assessing both languages and providing access to written English assessments through ASL alongside visual aids and assistive technologies, we create an accessible learning environment where every student can be opportunity to succeed. Tailoring assessments to meet these needs ensures accurate measurement of student learning and progress, fosters inclusion, and validates students' cultural and linguistic identities.

### 2) Rationale for Providing Professional Development to Educators

Providing professional development to educators and support staff is essential to equip all staff with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to effectively assess Deaf and HH students. Teachers and staff must be proficient in designing and implementing assessments that account for the unique linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of these students. Without proper training, assessments may unintentionally exclude or misrepresent student abilities. Professional development focused on bilingual literacy, inclusive assessment practices, and culturally responsive teaching ensures educators can meaningfully support student growth. Ongoing training and access to resources enable staff to continuously refine their approaches, guaranteeing assessments remain fair and truly reflective of each student's potential.

## STRATEGIES: (to support Focus)

Goal 1: Develop and implement linguistically accessible and inclusive assessment practices

### *Strategies:*

- Expand current assessment tools to include ASL expressive skills and numeracy.
- Collaborate with Deaf educators and specialists to ensure assessments are culturally and linguistically responsive.

### *Success Indicators:*

- Implementation of ASL expressive and numeracy assessments
- Increased accuracy and depth of student learning data across language and numeracy domains.

Goal 2: Strengthen staff capacity to design and deliver effective, inclusive assessments

### *Strategies:*

- Provide targeted professional development on bilingual literacy, inclusive assessment strategies, and culturally responsive practices.
- Facilitate learning sessions led by experts in Deaf education and assessment.

### *Success Indicators:*

- Increased staff participation in professional development sessions related to inclusive assessments.
- Observable shifts in assessment practices that reflect bilingual and culturally responsive approaches.