

Recommendations for adding Indian Sign Language (ISL) to the National Curricular Framework (NCF) 2023:

- Incorporation of ISL as a language subject in the school curriculum from the foundation level to primary level to the higher secondary level. This has been emphasized by Hon'ble Prime Minister himself.
- Inclusion of teachers with disabilities, including trained ISL teachers and interpreters in schools to facilitate the learning and communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing students.
- Use and Development of ISL learning materials and resources, including textbooks, dictionaries, and videos, that are accessible and inclusive.
- Promotion and recognition of ISL as a medium of instruction and a subject for research and development in the field of linguistics and language teaching.
- Ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing students have equal access to educational opportunities, including extracurricular activities and career guidance, by providing necessary accommodations and support.
- Establishing partnerships with organizations working for the rights and inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing people to ensure their active participation in the development and implementation of ISL education policies.
- Conducting awareness-raising programs and training for school staff, parents, and the wider community on the importance of ISL education for the overall development and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing students.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, deaf children face struggles in education due to inappropriate learning environments. The World Federation of Deaf (WFD) has played a central role in drafting the CRPD with special attention paid to Article 24, which mentions sign language in several articles. As part of this process, the WFD took the position that bilingual education for deaf learners is a form of education within an inclusive education system.

The 2018 CRPD General Comment on Equality and Non-discrimination states, “To ensure equality and non-discrimination for deaf children in educational settings, they must be provided with sign language learning environments with deaf peers and deaf adult role models.”

Deaf learners have a unique need for instruction in sign language, opportunities to study sign language and deaf culture, and opportunities to participate with their peers in congregated settings that allow for linguistic and cultural development. Due to shared ontologism and experiences, deaf learners also have a need for instruction from deaf teachers who can advocate for their students and transmit social and cultural capital.

These rights are outlined in Article 24(3[c]) of the UNCRPD and the RPWD Act 2016, which states: ‘the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf, or deaf blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.’ Also, the act calls for States Parties to “take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language.” This means deaf learners’ right to have deaf teachers is supported by the RPWD Act 2016.

1.2.2. Libraries

Provide for Indian Sign Language version video in QR Code in textbooks.

Indian Sign Language Teachers, Interpreters and Closed captions

Schools must take measures to make the physical environment accessible for students with deaf and hard of hearing. Professional ISL teachers, & interpreters must be provided for deaf and Hard of Hearing student’s access includes closed caption.

1.3.1 Key Guiding Principles for the Foundational Stage based on NEP 2020

GUIDELINES FOR E-CONTENT DEVELOPMENT FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS (DHHS)

Introduction

The main barriers in educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (DHHS) are that of language, communication and those related to literacy aspects. Deafness, which is usually referred to as an invisible disability, has many visible effects on the overall daily life and lifecycle, as depicted diagrammatically. The DHHS mentioned in the RPWD Act, 2016 are actually two groups, categorized on the

basis of degrees of hearing loss. They are referred to as deaf (severe to profound hearing loss) or hard of hearing (moderate hearing loss). It is important to note another important aspect that the DHHS as a group may be very heterogeneous due to many other aspects. Depending upon the age of onset of their deafness, parental hearing status, philosophy that the family and the school believes in and the learning styles, along with the choices of the student themselves, there could be following preferences that DHHS may exhibit:

- Use of Indian sign language (ISL),
- Speech/lip reading,
- Speech and auditory,
- Print or reading,
- Air writing, and
- Multi modal style.

Hence the e-content may also be required in various forms, such as:

- Video lectures with option of Indian Sign language and or Closed captioning inserts,
- Audio podcasts,
- Virtual labs,
- Simulations,
- E-Books,
- Live virtual classroom.

Guidelines for Deaf learners (Indian sign language users)

General Guidelines for Content Production.

Introductory video: This may include –

1. Recapitulating related information,
2. Current topics and subtopics,
3. Objectives and
4. Outcome expected from the learners.

Summary video

Video should highlight the summary of each sub topic.

Glossary

This may include words with meaning and relevant examples for deaf learners to provide clarity on key concepts. Synonyms also to be shared. Grammatical concepts need to be highlighted and explained with suitable examples, wherever possible.

Check your progress

This may be done in between to ascertain the learners pace and level of understanding.

Self- assessment element

This can be done through activities (simple assessment - subjective / objective) after completion of each sub unit / module or in some cases after explanation of each concept.

Content may have relevant day to day examples from daily life.

Use of graphics and visuals must be balanced:

Too many graphics, besides distractions, may also adversely affect reading comprehension. Visuals should be clear and uncluttered in the video frame.

E-content for younger classes could have into national markings for enhancing reading skills such as: o Phrasing or syllable marking, o Emphasizing words

marking, o Poems with hyperlink for video, and o Story characters with speech balloons & thinking clouds.

Other Requirement of Deaf students

1. Indian Sign Language video content with subtitles / Closed Captions
2. Vocabulary list
3. Self-assessment through exercise/comprehension styled questions.

2.6.4 Strategies for the secondary stage (R I & R 2)

Class Room Course in Indian Sign Language (ISL)

The primary mode of communication of the deaf is not verbal. It is sign language. In our context, it is specifically the Indian Sign Language (ISL). ISL is considered as the mother tongue of Indian deaf. ISL is a fully formed language like English or Hindi or Malayalam. It can be learned and applied like any other verbal language. The intention of this course is to provide assistance for all those who wish to work or communicate with the deaf.

9.9.4 Conductive space for students with disabilities

Assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools must be made available to help students with disabilities integrate more easily into classrooms and engage with Teachers and their peers, in addition to textbooks and manuals in Braille or audio-visual formats inclusive provide for Indian Sign Language Interpreters and closing caption for students with deaf and hard of hearing.

Collaboration with specialized agencies like the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, National Deaf organizations and deaf experts.

9.9.5 Textbooks and Manuals

The **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)** and the **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to make NCERT textbooks accessible to deaf students in Indian sign language.

EFFECTIVE MODELS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In order to achieve inclusive education for deaf learners, it is critical that all deaf children, regardless of where they attend school, are able to access high-quality instruction in a sign language. This means that accommodations such as interpreters and note takers must be accompanied by opportunities to study with other deaf students and with teachers, including deaf teachers, who are themselves fluent in sign language, by the provision of bilingual learning materials, and by opportunities to study sign language as a school subject. A central issue for achieving quality inclusive education for deaf learners is the provision of teacher education that supports deaf candidates' achievement of teaching credentials, teachers' proficiency in a sign language, knowledge and development of quality bilingual curricula and pedagogy, and awareness of the need for high expectations for deaf learners as bilingual learners. There is also a need for schools to support parent and deaf community engagement. As described by several recent international studies, effective models of inclusive education for deaf learners include quality deaf schools which employ a high proportion of signing deaf teachers and administrators. Deaf schools can also provide supports and resources to deaf learners enrolled in mainstream schools, including access to a signing peer group and to deaf teachers. For deaf children living in rural areas, the role of deaf schools in supporting mainstream school environments may be especially crucial, as they can support distance learning and opportunities to attend a deaf school on a part-time basis. Inclusive education for deaf learners can also include co-enrolment models where a team of deaf and hearing teachers provide simultaneous instruction in sign language and spoken language to classrooms of deaf and hearing students. A co-enrolment model may also involve the formation of a bilingual program for deaf learners in separate classrooms within a mainstream school. In these settings, it is important for non-deaf learners to also receive instruction in sign language.

In each of these models, it is essential that deaf teachers enjoy an equal role with hearing teachers and that all teachers have near-native sign language fluency. Moreover, deaf learners should have access to a sign language curriculum in addition to the mainstream curriculum, and receive diplomas and access to further educational opportunities that are equal to those available to mainstream students. Deaf learners should also have access to a spoken language curriculum that takes a

deaf perspective in learning a spoken language; i.e., as primarily a written language and with sign language as a basis for learning.

Human rights instruments that focus on disability rights often take an individualized approach that runs counter to the aims of deaf communities who desire recognition of sign languages and provision of bilingual education for deaf children. The CRPD, with its explicit recognition of deaf learners' linguistic and cultural identity needs, has offered an exception to this approach. However, recent interpretations of Article 24 of the CRPD in regard to education suggest that a stronger focus is needed in terms of the recognition and achievement of the human right to sign language in education.

EDUCATION (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016)

16. The appropriate Government and the local authorities shall Endeavour that all educational institutions funded or recognized by them provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities and towards that end shall—

- (i) admit them without discrimination and provide education and opportunities for sports and recreation activities equally with others;
- (ii) Make building, campus and various facilities accessible;
- (iii) Provide reasonable accommodation according to the individual's requirements;
- (iv) Provide necessary support individualized or otherwise in environments that maximize academic and social development consistent with the goal of full inclusion;
- (v) ensure that the education to persons who are blind or deaf or both is imparted in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication;
- (vi) Detect specific learning disabilities in children at the earliest and take suitable pedagogical and other measures to overcome them;
- (vii) Monitor participation, progress in terms of attainment levels and completion of education in respect of every student with disability;

(viii) Provide transportation facilities to the children with disabilities and also the attendant of the children with disabilities having high support needs.

17. The appropriate Government and the local authorities shall take the following measures for the purpose of section 16, namely:—

(a) to conduct survey of school going children in every five years for identifying children with disabilities, ascertaining their special needs and the extent to which these are being met: Provided that the first survey shall be conducted within a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act;

(b) To establish adequate number of teacher training institutions;

(c) To train and employ teachers, including teachers with disability who are qualified in sign language and Braille and also teachers who are trained in teaching children with intellectual disability;

(d) To train professionals and staff to support inclusive education at all levels of school education;

(e) to establish adequate number of resource centers to support educational institutions at all levels of school education;

(f) to promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes including means and formats of communication, Braille and sign language to supplement the use of one's own speech to fulfill the daily communication needs of persons with speech, communication or language disabilities and enables them to participate and contribute to their community and society;

(g) to provide books, other learning materials and appropriate assistive devices to students with benchmark disabilities free of cost up to the age of eighteen years;

(h) to provide scholarships in appropriate cases to students with benchmark disability;

(i) to make suitable modifications in the curriculum and examination system to meet the needs of students with disabilities such as extra time for completion of examination paper, facility of scribe or amanuensis, exemption from second and third language courses;

(j) To promote research to improve learning; and

(k) Any other measures, as may be required.

18. The appropriate Government and the local authorities shall take measures to promote, protect and ensure participation of persons with disabilities in adult education and continuing education programmes equally with others

Role & Responsibility of Teacher in Inclusive Education

1. Inclusive education is about meeting the learning needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in the best possible way. Teacher in inclusive class rooms is expected to welcome all children without discrimination by making necessary accommodations (Provide for Indian Sign Language Interpreter and closed caption) and arrangements for their education in the same school or classes along with the non-disabled peers.
2. Helping the child to grow his/ her potentiality to the maximum.
3. Using specialized equipments such as computers, interactive educational software programs and audio tapes to assist children include using of Indian Sign Language.
4. Prepare maximum number of activities to involve the entire class.
5. Ensuring progress by continuous assessment.
6. Working closely with parents to inform of their children's progress and suggestion techniques to promote learning at home.
7. Preparing non-disabled students to welcome & cooperate disabled students in classrooms.
8. Encouraging cordial relations between non-disabled & disabled students.
9. Collaborating with parents by involving them in the educational progress of the children.

Some other roles Responsibilities of teacher in inclusive education.

1. Alerting the children to be independence their daily life.
2. Fostering positive attitude among students
3. Determining students strengths and weakness
4. Determining goals for each student that is appropriate and realistic
5. To help & work for creating a cooperative and collaborative environment of group learning for the learners of inclusive classes helping each other in their own way for the growth & development of all.
6. Designing appropriate curriculum, assigning work at class and home as per student's needs and abilities, grading papers etc.
7. Providing students career- counseling or help them to learn routine skills.
8. Developing self-confidence & encouraging them to meet the challenges of life.

References:

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