

Welcome back to the 2009-10 school year. I will again be sending the Deaf Culture Question of the Week on Mondays each week throughout the school year. Please do share these with our students. Students need to learn about their natural ASL and the culture of Deaf people. Learning about ASL (how it works, the rules etc.) will help students be better language learners in general and reach higher levels of proficiency in English. Learning about the culture of Deaf people students will have the opportunity to develop knowledge of themselves and other people who are deaf. The accomplishments of Deaf people and their potential to contribute to the world as competent, bilingual Deaf graduates of WSD.

Deaf Culture Question of the Week - August 31 - Sept. 4, 2009
Bill Newell, Principal Washington School for the Deaf

Which is the more frequently taught language in the United States?

- a. Italian
- b. ASL
- c. Arabic
- d. Chinese

Scroll to the bottom of this email for the answer.

Answer: “b” - ASL. ASL remains highly popular as a choice of students studying languages other than English (so called “foreign” languages). ASL ranks 4th among all foreign languages taught in the United States and beats Italian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. The 10 languages with the most students enrolled in rank order as of the latest survey of foreign language enrollments conducted by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 2006 were as follows:

Rank Language Students Enrolled in 2006

1. Spanish 822,985
2. French 206,426
3. German 94,264
4. ASL 78,829
5. Italian 78,368
6. Japanese 66,605
7. Chinese 51,582
8. Latin 32,191
9. Russian 24,845
10. Arabic 23,978

The full report from the Modern Language Association (MLA) can be accessed here:

http://www.mla.org/pdf/06enrollmentsurvey_final.pdf

ASL was also in fourth place in the MLA survey conducted in 2002. (The survey is conducted every four years). ASL had a 29.7% increase in enrollment from 2002 - 2006. Spanish had a 10.3% increase, French 2.2% increase, German 3.5% increase and Italian 22.6% increase. These figures show that ASL is growing in popularity and may in the next survey surpass German and become the 3rd most studied language other than English in the United States.