



## RIFLA Position Statement on American Sign Language (ASL)

May 2016

The Rhode Island Foreign Language Association (RIFLA), as an affiliate of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), provides guidance to the profession and to the general Rhode Island public regarding issues, policies, and best practices related to the teaching and learning of languages and culture.

RIFLA and its members respect American Sign Language<sup>1</sup> equally to other world languages, and are of the position that:

- American Sign Language should be accepted for language credit equally with other languages in accordance with RIGL § 16-25.4-5.<sup>2</sup>
- American Sign Language instruction should be aligned to the [ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages](#).
- American Sign Language should be housed or have representation in the same department as other languages, or be housed in its own American Sign Language/Deaf Studies department when appropriate.
- American Sign Language courses for credit should be offered in line with demand from students and taught by qualified instructors.
- American Sign Language instruction should be offered for children in PK-16, including Deaf and hard of hearing children and family members.
- Language and linguistics programs should commit to increasing awareness and respect for global sign languages by including information about them in their curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ASL definition from the [National Association of the Deaf](#).

<sup>2</sup> **RIGL § 16-25.4-5 Educational credits.** – (a) A public elementary and secondary student may count credit for satisfactorily completing a course in American Sign Language towards the fulfillment of a foreign language requirement in the public education system under rules made by the state board of elementary and secondary education.

(b) If a course in American Sign Language is offered by a state university, college, or community college, it shall be accepted as a foreign language credit. Successful completion of any American Sign Language course in the common schools shall satisfy the foreign language entrance requirements for a state institution of higher education.

<sup>3</sup> According to [Ethnologue](#), there are 138 documented sign languages around the world.