

ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

ARDB Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear standards for American Sign Language (ASL) proficiency for staff at the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind (ARDB). This ensures that Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students have consistent access to communication in their native language supporting academic, social, and vocational development. This also allows for stronger interdepartmental collaboration and connection.

II. COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY & JUSTIFICATION

ARDB is committed to maintaining a barrier-free communication environment for all students and staff who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Deaf children require consistent access to proficient language models in their native language of ASL to acquire age-appropriate language skills, develop cognitive and social competencies, and fully participate in their education.

To assess proficiency, ARDB has selected the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI), a criterion-referenced tool comparing staff skills to a standard of highly skilled, native-like signers. This ensures reliable, valid measurement of functional ASL communication skills, which is essential for effective instruction and interaction with students.

III. REQUIREMENTS & TIMELINES

Teaching staff and direct service providers (e.g., teachers, counselors, SLPs, PTs, OTs) working primarily with DHH students must achieve:

- Survival within 6 months of employment
- Intermediate within 12 months of employment
- Intermediate Plus within 24 months of employment
- Advanced within 30 months of employment
- Advanced Plus within 36 months of employment

All other staff must achieve:

- Novice within 6 months of employment
- Survival within 12 months of employment

Effective Date: [Board Approval Date]

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In the event a member a staff's role, title, or expectations should change, they will be afforded the same grace as a newly hired employee to attain the required level for their new position.

The superintendent may at any time require a higher level of competency and fluency for a position if two members of administration propose it and she approves.

The SLPI will be administered up to six (6) times annually on campus.

Extensions for attaining fluency requirement past termination/ deadlines may only be approved upon recommendation from immediate supervisor and approval of the superintendent.

IV. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

1. Initial Assessment – Conducted within first 60 days of employment (or upon policy adoption for existing staff).
2. Failure to Meet Standard – If a staff member does not meet the required level:
 - A projected termination/transfer date will be set immediately in accordance with their fluency requirement timelines.
 - Staff must submit SLPI feedback results to the campus SLPI committee who will provide a targeted improvement plan.
 - Retest eligibility: 6-month waiting period.
3. Second Failure – If the second retest does not meet the standard, the employee will be terminated or transferred to a less student-facing position effective the previously determined date.

V. COMPENSATION INCENTIVES

SLPI Level	Compensation
Superior or Superior Plus	10% increase to base salary
Advanced or Advanced Plus	8% increase to base salary
Intermediate or Intermediate Plus	6% increase to base salary
Survival Plus	2% increase to base salary

To qualify for compensation:

- Staff must have completed at least one year of employment,
- Received a “Meets Expectations” or better on their performance evaluation
- And shown satisfactory performance of written English communication skills

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VI. STAFF POSITION REQUIREMENTS CHART

Position Category	Required SLPI Level
Superintendent	Advanced Plus
Executive Assistant to Superintendent	Intermediate Plus
Principal/Vice Principal (Deaf Dept.)	Advanced Plus
Teacher Supervisor (Deaf Dept.)	Advanced Plus
Teachers of DHH students	(New Hire) 24 months to achieve Intermediate Plus 36 months to achieve Advanced Plus
Paraprofessionals for DHH students	Advanced
Education Specialists for DHH students	Advanced
Counselors (all types) working with DHH students	Advanced Plus
Audiologist	Advanced
Speech Pathologist working with DHH students	Advanced
Special Education Coordinator	Intermediate Plus
Librarian/Library Assistant	Intermediate Plus
Administrative Specialists	Intermediate Plus
Nursing Staff (all positions)	Intermediate Plus
Dorm Staff working with DHH students	Advanced
Business/Finance Personnel	Survival
Security	Survival

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Central Supply	Survival
Food Services Department	Intermediate
Maintenance Department	Survival
Transportation Department	Survival
Technology Department	Intermediate
Development Department	Intermediate
All Other Staff (and those in the Blind Department who do <i>not</i> work primarily with DHH students)	Survival

7) POLICY REVISIONS

The Board of Trustees may revise this policy at any time as requested by the Superintendent, with changes submitted to the Office of Personnel Management for review and approval before becoming effective.

APPROVED BY:

Nicole Walsh, Superintendent Date

Chairperson, ASD/ASB Board of Trustees Date

Effective Date: [Board Approval Date]