

SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (SASL)

- South African Sign Language (SASL) is an integral part and an identifying feature of membership in the Deaf Culture.
- SASL has its own grammatical structure independent of any spoken/written language, e.g. English, Zulu, Xhosa, etc.
- The majority of Deaf people (95.6%) are born to hearing parents and therefore do not acquire SASL as a mother tongue. They acquire SASL at school from peers. SASL is the first language of the majority of South African Deaf children.
- A minority of Deaf children are born to Deaf parents and these children acquire SASL as a mother tongue.
- SASL, despite regional differences and variations, has the same grammatical structure countrywide.
- There is not a one-to-one relationship between SASL and English. One sign may be translated into English by more than one word (perhaps a phrase or a sentence). Likewise an English word may be represented by more than one sign.
- SASL is not more or less abstract than any spoken language. It is capable of expressing all that natural human language is capable of expressing with all its subtlety and complexity. That is, SASL can be used to tell jokes, ask riddles, express sarcasm, tell lies, create idioms, make poetry, etc.

ENQUIRIES:

Bianca.Potts@westerncape.gov.za

DCAS Language Services

Tel: 021 483 9681