

Listening and Spoken Language Knowledge Center

For children and adults with hearing loss, their families and the professionals who support them



AG Bell Responds to Letters About Nyle DiMarco

The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing ([AG Bell](#)), Washington, D.C., has received many responses to its letter to *The Washington Post's* "The Reliable Source."

AG Bell again wishes to recognize the tremendous success achieved by Nyle DiMarco, as well as successes achieved by many other deaf individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL).

AG Bell continues to recognize ASL as a fully accessible, visual language. However, recent statements which indicate that deaf children who do not use ASL are language deprived or that all children should learn ASL remain as concerns. We believe that the view that all children should be required to learn a particular language is inconsistent with the ability of parents to make individual choices for their families and children who are deaf or hard of hearing. AG Bell has long advocated for the right of parents to make informed decisions for their children in consultation with professionals, adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, and other families/children. We also believe that families should be made aware of all communication and language options, including listening and spoken language (LSL), ASL, total communication, and other recognized approaches.

AG Bell does not discourage families who choose ASL for their child based on the wants and needs of such child and his or her family. Just as the ASL community works to advance their belief in ASL and its benefits, AG Bell's mission is to advance listening and spoken language for families, children and adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. We provide information and resources, including data from recent studies on learning language through listening and spoken language, to those who are in the process of making decisions for their child and who have decided to pursue listening and spoken language. For families and adults who choose listening and spoken language, AG Bell strives to provide a community of support from infancy through adulthood.

Our mission is backed by a body of research which supports that the learning of language through listening and speaking is a proven and frequently successful path for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, often resulting in children attaining LSL skills on par with their typical peers.

AG Bell believes that all deaf or hard of hearing children should receive dedicated, quality services to develop and maintain communication, language and literacy skills. It is our hope that no family, child or

adult who is deaf or hard of hearing will ever be criticized for their communication or language choice, whether it is LSL, ASL or a combination of approaches and/or languages. We believe that respectful open discussion will help us find common ground and ultimately achieve the best education, public access and communication outcomes for each individual with hearing loss.

Respectfully,

Meredith K. Sugar, Esq.

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