

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW TIP SHEET

A strong ASL/English bilingual classroom environment is intentional, visually rich, culturally grounded, and designed to maximize access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. The environment is not just décor — it is an instructional tool that shapes how students see, interact, and learn.

1

Visual Access

The foundation of all Deaf education. The classroom should maximize clear sightlines, lighting, and visual cues so students can fully participate in ASL conversations, instruction, peer discussions, and daily routines.

2

Recognition of ASL & English

Bilingualism is visible and celebrated. Both languages appear naturally in instruction, wall displays, routines, and resources. Students see ASL as a full language—not a support for English—and English literacy is built through strong ASL conceptual understanding.

3

Deaf Culture Integration

Deaf culture is not a “special event”; it’s part of daily learning. Students regularly see Deaf role models, learn Deaf history, practice Deaf norms, and develop positive identity. Deaf culture helps anchor belonging and pride.

4

Classroom Library

Books and ASL resources support identity, literacy, and bilingualism. A robust library includes Deaf authors, Deaf characters, and resources that reflect Deaf experiences, plus a wide range of genres and reading levels. ASL stories and digital texts are equally important.

5

Accessibility & Climate

The classroom feels safe, inclusive, and empowering. Students should be able to navigate the room easily, interact visually, and feel respected. Visual expectations, routines, and communication supports help students understand how to participate confidently and independently.

