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ASL Rose Newsletter

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The city of San Francisco is as majestic as the graphic drawing of the picture by Scott Upton. The picture "Golden Hands Bridge" illustrates several important symbols that show how important the connection of two languages--ASL and English-- is for Deaf children.

To begin, San Francisco is known as a multicultural and multilingual city. In 1969, the San Francisco Unified School District was sued for denying limited English-proficient children from equal educational opportunity in English-only classrooms because they didn't understand enough in English to make satisfactory academic progress in the classrooms. That case "Lau v. Nichols" received a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court that the school district must find ways to help those children find their classroom experiences comprehensible and meaningful. The Lau remedies included the assessment of their language ability and the establishment of a program that meets their needs. In most cases, those children received bilingual education.

Like limited English-proficient children in San Francisco and many other places in the USA, many Deaf children are lost in English-only classrooms where American Sign Language [ASL] is not encouraged. Without ASL, Deaf children often find their classroom experiences incomprehensible and not meaningful. In a sense, Deaf children need to have the aegis of the Lau case where educational programs should be enforced to apply proper remedies for

the enhancement of Deaf children's education. It is unthinkable that Deaf children can get quality education without ASL.

Let's look at the picture where the bottom of the two bridge suspensions show a hand-shape sign of "two" to provide a strong support for the bridge suspension. The "two" represents the languages of ASL and English that Deaf children should possess for obtaining their education. Suppose a hand-shape sign "one" is used to hold the bridge suspension. The bridge would definitely be shaky, become weakened, and eventually collapse into the water. The restricted use of English as the only language in classroom instruction for Deaf children is likened to their falling into the water and facing the "sink or swim" situation. Historically speaking, in the education of the Deaf, most of them sank and quite few swam.

Let's look again at the picture where a right hand is gripping on a rocky ledge. That place is the homeland of ASL where Deaf children are exposed to it on a minute basis for the build-up of their first language. They are exposed to many opportunities through a variety of ASL language arts activities where they continually build their ASL competency to reach the native or native-like level. Please see the [December 2007 issue](#) of ASL Rose newsletter where suggested activities are listed to strengthen the foundation of ASL as Deaf children's first language.

With a stronger grip, through a well-engineered ASL-based education, on the rocky ledge in the ASL homeland, the Golden Hands Bridge won't slip away to cause a breakdown. Deaf children can travel to San Francisco without feeling fear of falling into the water. Their learning of a second language, English is then less inhibited and frustrating. They can bring with them their copies of "[Have You Ever Seen...? An American Sign Language Hand shape DVD/Book](#)" into the city and proudly show it to the San Franciscans. The people of San Francisco gain appreciation of ASL and Deaf culture. The more appreciation the people of San Francisco show for ASL and Deaf culture, the more Deaf children enjoy San Francisco. It paves a big way for building on a positive ASL and English bilingualism there.

As a result, it becomes more comfortable for Deaf children to be in San Francisco.

