



# Daviess County Public Schools

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## PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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## CHES brings students together with ASL Club

Deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing students have come together to create an American Sign Language Club at Country Heights Elementary School. Students gather from 2:45 to 3:30 p.m. every Thursday to teach and learn from one another, as well as instruction guided by members of the CHES staff and parent volunteers. School leaders include Crystal Corum, a teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing at CHES; interpreter Madison Koller; and deaf assistant Lisa Howe.

Second- and third-grade students are currently meeting for four weeks of instruction. After that, the ALS Club will welcome students in kindergarten and first grade. Fourth- and fifth-grade students will participate for four weeks following Spring Break.

The school has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of enthusiasm and interest demonstrated by students. Last week, the club had six groups of seven or eight students each. Each group focused on learning and practicing basic fingerspelling, ABC's, colors and numbers, as well as Valentine theme signs and conversational practice, and then rotated to another group. Upcoming lessons will include identifying animals, family members and more practice in conversational phrases. Children will also practice colors and numbers by playing the card game "Uno" – without speaking verbally!

Corum said the students' response is symbolic of the spirit of Country Heights Elementary School. "CHES has always had a culture of inclusion and respect for diversity," she said. "Our students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) naturally feel comfortable in this environment. The students who are not DHH have always had an interest in learning ASL. In previous years, we had ASL Sharpen the Saw activities, ASL lunch in my classroom, and Sign of the Day for the school. Students throughout the school love to communicate with our deaf assistant Mrs. Lisa, who has been working in DCPS for 16 years, and they often come to her showing what signs they've learned. I had several students tell me and our interpreter Ms. Madison that they want to grow up to become a teacher of the deaf, or an interpreter for the deaf! Several kids throughout the building had asked when they can learn ASL with us again, so we decided we would offer it to two grade levels for about a month at a time. The immediate interest was amazing! We have 63 kids signed up to learn with us each week. I am excited about the other grade levels getting to know some more ASL too!"

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In addition to strengthening the bonds of friendship between students at Country Heights, the club provides instruction in a valuable skill that will benefit all students for a lifetime. “The ultimate goal is to encourage students to learn the basics of ASL so they can communicate with our students and staff in our building and with those in our community who use this as a primary means for communication,” Corum said.

The goal of nurturing friendships is already successful, Corum said. “One of my DHH students told me this morning that another third-grade student walked up to her this morning and signed a full conversation that we had practiced last week! ‘Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. How are you?’ My student was so thrilled that she quickly signed back, ‘Nice to meet you! My name is \_\_\_\_\_.’ This club is opening up communication barriers for our hearing and deaf students and making it possible for them to build strong friendships with others outside of their regular classrooms.”

Corum also believes these learning opportunities are inspiring students to think about potential careers, especially because they are introduced to American Sign Language and become comfortable with this communications forum at a young age. “CHES students go on to middle school knowing that interpreting is a career option, whereas some students may never have that kind of exposure or experience until college,” she said.

**Note to Media** – Our media partners are invited to visit Country Heights Elementary School and share this wonderful and unique teaching and learning experience with our community. The ASL Club meets from 2:45 to 3:30 p.m. every Thursday. CHES is located at 4961 Kentucky 54. For more information, contact Crystal Corum at [crystal.corum@daviess.kyschools.us](mailto:crystal.corum@daviess.kyschools.us)

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