

The Development of SASL: A Timeline

South African Sign Language (SASL) has been developed over time by several groups of Deaf people and with the influence of various formal institutions.

1863

Dominican nun used signs rooted in Irish Sign Language to teach children with hearing loss; racially mixed school for deaf learners founded in Cape Town

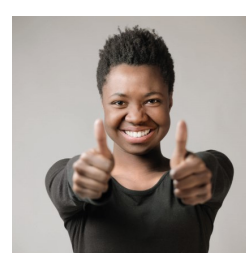


1881

NG Kerk (Church) sets up a school in Worcester in the Western Cape for White children with hearing loss; local natural signs used and Afrikaans taught as a spoken language

1888

German Dominican nuns establish a German-oralist-method school in King Williamstown for White children with hearing loss; approach focuses on lip-reading, spoken language skills, and hearing aids, ignoring SASL



1920

International practices influence development of SASL during the 1920s and the oralist method is implemented to teach deaf learners

1953

Paget-Gorman signing system, invented in Britain, allows simultaneous speaking and use of invented, not natural, signs created by hearing teachers. This leads to 3 new teaching methods: total communication, sign-supported speech systems, and signed English

1983

Signed language and its dialects once again recognised in SA

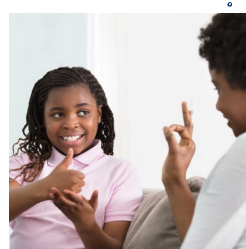


1996

SA Constitution identifies SASL as one of the languages in SA to promote and develop

2018

SASL is officially the medium of instruction at schools for Deaf learners; development towards standardising SASL



2023

SASL recognised as South Africa's 12th official language

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