

ASL Signers on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*

Pilot Research Findings

National Parent Survey – Collaboration with University of Colorado

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Introduction

In 2008 ASL Friends, Inc. partnered with DeBee Communications, Corp., to produce a 30-minute pilot DVD of *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends*. Fluent Deaf signers acting in American Sign Language (ASL) were inserted onto the original *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* "Talks About Love" episode #1661. The purpose of *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* was to serve as home ASL language model for young deaf children and their families. In 2009 ASL Friends, Inc. collaborated with Brenda Schick, Ph.D. at the University of Colorado to evaluate the pilot *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* DVD.

Purpose

To evaluate the pilot *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* DVD and to determine the need for future productions.

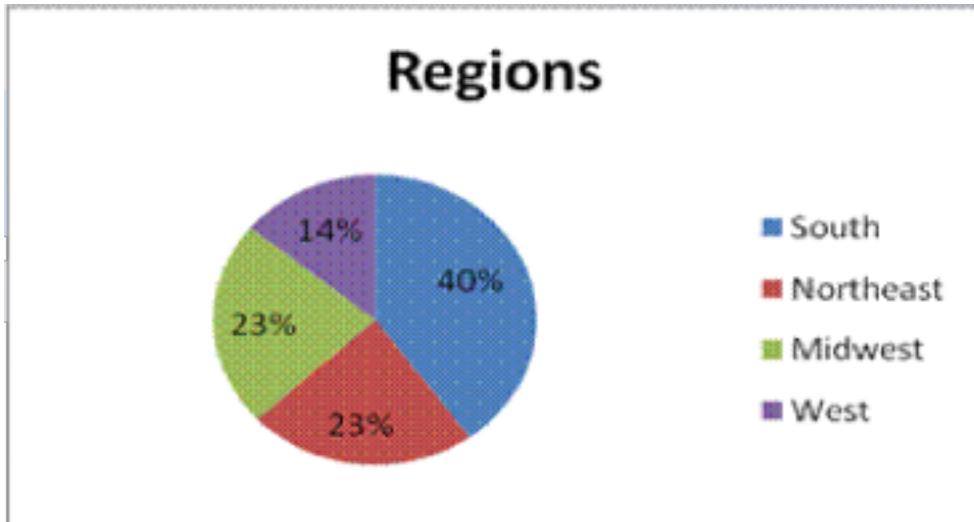
Method

Schools for the deaf across the nation were contacted and asked to participate. Participating schools received a complimentary pilot *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* DVD for their media centers. National Family Surveys were distributed to schools for the deaf. Hearing parents were asked to view the pilot *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* DVD with their deaf children ages three to eight years old and complete a two-page survey.

Subjects

Of the 190 surveys distributed to 38 schools, 78 families returned surveys from 23 schools for a return rate of 41%. The average age of

the children was five years, nine months with 46 female and 32 male participants. Ohio completed additional surveys. The regional representation included: 40% South, 23% Northeast, 23% Midwest, and 14% West.



There were 46 girls and 32 boys between the ages of three and eight years old with hearing loss. Fifty-nine percent of the children were described as ASL being their first language, 27% identified English, 9% ASL/English, and 5% blank. The average age of the child respondents was five years nine months. The children’s reading levels were described as 31% Word level, 29% ABCs/123s, 23% Sentences, 9% Paragraphs, and 8% blank.

Parents rated their own signing skills on average as 1.6 Beginning to Intermediate on a scale of 1-3 (1=Beginning 2=Intermediate 3=Advance).

Results

The following deciding factor helped determine the need for future *Mister Rogers’ ASL Friends* programming:

QUESTION	ANSWER
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How long does child attend to the pilot DVD?	4.40 Avg (Scale 1-5, 5=100%)
Does child like the pilot DVD?	4.15 Avg (Scale 1-5, 5=Positive)
Does the parent like the pilot DVD?	4.27 Avg*
Would the parent recommend the program to other families with deaf children?	4.31 Avg*
Would parent like to see more ASL Signers on MRN episodes produced?	4.58 Avg*

* (Scale 1-5, 5=Positive)

Lessons Learned

Producing the pilot *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends* DVD and conducting parent research provided the following suggestions for improving future episodes of *Mister Rogers' ASL Friends*:

- slower signing
- repetition
- individual signers for each character to match gender, abilities, and ethnicity
- costumes for the ASL signers to match the MRN characters
- supplemental educational video/support/curriculum

Conclusion

The pilot was determined to have a positive impact and a need for more early childhood ASL acquisition materials was fully recognized.

Source:

Nussbaum, K., & Schick, B. (Fall, 2010). [It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood](#). *The Endeavor*, 51.

