

Framework for basic skills in Norwegian sign language

The framework defines the three skills, i.e. oral skills in sign language, reading sign language texts and producing sign language text, and it describes the progression through five levels.

The framework is first and foremost to be used by subject curricula groups supposed to develop and revise curricula, but can also be applied by teachers as a useful source to information about what sign language is and how it develops.

Matrices have been developed in connection with definitions of the three sign language skills that specify progression in the skills. The matrices are described in levels.

The cells in the matrices describe what is typical of the various levels as regards oral skills, reading sign language texts and producing sign language texts.

Introduction

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has developed a framework for basic skills in sign language. The framework is a supplement to the framework for the hearing.

The framework defines the three skills, i.e. oral skills in sign language, reading sign language texts and producing sign language text, and it describes the progression through five levels.

The basic skills in sign language are integrated in the competence aims in the curricula for the hearing and based on the premises for each subject.

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Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has developed a framework for the five basic skills, namely digital skills, oral skills, reading, writing and numeracy. This supplement for sign language has been developed on the basis of Section 2-6 of the Norwegian Education Act, which covers the basic skills, i.e. oral skills in sign language, reading sign language texts and producing sign language text.

Norwegian sign language is a visual-gestural language developed by the Norwegian deaf community. The language is called visual because it is experienced visually and works without using sound. It is called gestural because it is performed by moving one's hands, eyes, face, eyebrows, mouth, head and body. Norwegian sign language has geographical and social variations, and it develops over time and in different arenas where there are several sign language users.

What are the basic sign language skills in the Knowledge Promotion Reform?

The Knowledge Promotion Reform defines five skills that make up the basic prerequisites for learning and development at school, work and in social life. Three basic sign language skills have been defined to provide pupils being trained in sign language with the same preconditions for learning and development. For sign language users, basic skills in sign language are also essential for learning in all subjects and are at the same time a precondition to enable pupils to demonstrate their competence.

Pursuant to Section 2-6 of the Education Act, separate curricula have been developed in the subjects Norwegian sign language, Norwegian for the hearing-impaired, English for the hearing-impaired, as well as drama and rhythmic. Each curriculum contains a description of how basic sign language skills shall contribute to developing the pupils' competence in the subject, and how these skills are part of this competence.

The basic sign language skills are incorporated in the competence aims in the curricula on the premises of the individual subject. Sign language skills are expressed in different ways and to varying degrees in the individual subject, depending on how these skills are understood, and what function they serve as part of competence in the subject. The hearing-impaired use digital aids to a large extent in combination with sign language in their communication with

others. Digital partial skills are therefore incorporated in the three basic sign language skills.

What is the Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills?

The Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills is a foundation document that defines the three basic skills, outlines their function and describes progression in each of them across five levels. The Framework is designed at a general level, and must be used as a tool and reference for developing and revising curricula for subjects in the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training. Furthermore it shall help clarify the basic sign language skills based on the subjects' distinctive character and purpose.

Matrices have been developed in connection with definitions of the three sign language skills that specify progression in the skills. The matrices are described in levels and not on grades, because the skills are expressed differently in individual subjects. The cells in the matrices describe what is typical of the various levels as regards oral skills, reading sign language texts and producing sign language texts.

How is the Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills to be used?

The Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills will primarily be used by subject curricula groups appointed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to assist in the effort to develop and revise curricula in the Knowledge Promotion Reform.

Definitions and progression descriptions in the Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills will be reflected in the curricula for sign language pupils and will be adapted to the subjects' distinctive character and objectives. This means that the individual curricula groups will have to assess which cells in the different matrices are to be incorporated, and how this will be formulated in the curricula.

Definitions of key terms

A number of key terms are used in the descriptions of individual skills in the Framework for Basic Sign Language Skills. These terms may overlap somewhat, but they are defined as follows in the Framework:

Listen means to perceive, interpret and reflect on something expressed in sign language in spontaneous oral interaction with others, either in direct communication or through digital media.

A sign language statement is something expressed spontaneously in oral interaction with others, either in direct communication or through digital media.

Read can also be linked to oral interaction, but is used in the Framework for perceiving, interpreting and reflecting on sign language texts communicated in direct communication or through digital media.

A sign language text is a coherent and intentionally designed text in sign language that can be both read and produced. Sign language texts amount to a parallel to written texts.

Manual components comprise everything the hands do in sign language; hand form, hand orientation and movement.

Non-manual components comprise everything included in sign language, but which is not carried out by the hands; use of mouth position, eyebrows, head and body movement.