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The editorial is an opinion held by the editorial board of the newspaper and is a collaboration of the board. It needs a simple majority to pass. This month's vote was 6-0.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE SIGNS

In our nation, whether it be on a grand scale like the United States, or on a small scale like Johnston, Iowa, it is not uncommon to hear many mindless complaints and remarks be made about our school system or the Common Core curriculum. Ranging from the rigidity of classes to the unfairness of grades, students from all over have expressed a common dislike in our current school system. But, in this age of making progressive changes to class options and grading practices, new and previously overlooked classes should be considered for some attention. Among these changes, one in particular stands out: ASL (American Sign Language) should be offered as a class in schools.

ASL, while not as commonly spoken in the United States as Spanish or French, is still the sixth most spoken language in the United States. The option to learn such a prevalent and useful language should be at least offered to students in this country, and could even help those new to this country and still in the process of learning English. "It's a less overwhelming approach to getting that foreign language credit for students who may already be bilingual, trilingual, and come and be expected to learn either Spanish or French," Anna Janni '20, the student leader of ASL Club, said. "We could offer this, which could supplement their English learning."

For as long as public education has existed, student interests have been given little regard in deciding what classes are taught at schools. High school in particular is the most opportune time to explore such interests. Instead of demanding that students learn either Spanish or French, which, a lot of the time, prove especially futile in their use in the real world, students should have the opportunity to be fully engaged in a course that teaches ASL, a language that allows those who learn it to communicate in the simplest ways with the deaf or hearing-impaired.

An interesting feature of an ASL class would be the lessons and the exams. Standardized testing,

fill-in bubble sheets and lengthy multiple choice questions can become very tedious after a certain amount of time and discourage an interest in learning. However, less of a standardized test and more of an interactive conversation, ASL learning would most likely be much more enjoyable for students and teachers alike. Lisa Noe, a sponsor of the ASL Club, confirms this idea. "I think it's much easier to learn from a teacher as opposed to a book, so you can see the movement and place of your hands," Noe said. "It really would be all communication instead of paper and pencil."

Regardless of student interest and unique teaching styles, learning ASL could prove very beneficial for students in their future careers or livelihoods. Not only in teaching or interpreting, as ASL provides a whole range of opportunities in terms of communicating with others, including careers in healthcare or encounters with different groups of people who may be deaf or hearing-impaired. "It's not a handicap, it's a way of life," Noe said. "I think anytime you can learn more about someone's culture or their language and be able to communicate and bring them in so they don't feel like an outsider, it would be a good thing."

Overall, the benefits of ASL should be enough to have some sort of representation in schools, and, as student interest is certainly apparent (given many students would jump at the chance to learn it in place of Spanish or French), it should be at least offered to those students. If this is not to be, there are many affordable programs in the Des Moines area that offer ASL courses, and there is currently an ASL club at the high school open to all students interested in learning the language. But, if offering ASL as a class is taken into consideration, the time to offer it is now, when students' young minds are still developing and still apt to learning other languages. "The sooner that you start with foreign language, the better off you are and the more interest there is going to be learning in that language and continuing to grow in those areas," Noe said.