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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Los Encinos School to Launch American Sign Language (ASL) Curriculum for K-6 Students**

[Encino, CA, May 31, 2024] Los Encinos School is thrilled to announce the launch of an innovative American Sign Language (ASL) curriculum, making it one of the first K-6 schools in the region without a Deaf student population to integrate ASL education into its academic program. This groundbreaking initiative reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment and equipping our students with essential communication skills.

“We are incredibly excited to introduce ASL to our students,” said Ilene Reinfeld, Head of Los Encinos School. “An ASL program has been our goal for many years. I am grateful for a seed gift from a new donor who shares our vision and will be working with us to procure the funding needed to sustain the program now and in the future.”

Los Encinos School will partner with The ASL Shop to immerse staff and students in the rich language and culture of the Deaf community. The multifaceted approach encompasses staff training, student classes, tutoring, cultural experiences, and flexible learning options to accommodate the diverse needs of the school community. Led by Stephanie Zornoza, a distinguished educator and advocate in the Deaf community, the program is uniquely positioned to offer authentic and impactful learning experiences. Ms. Zornoza said, “The strategic approach ensures that we lay a solid foundation for ASL education, poised to expand and deepen over time.”

According to the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, “ASL is not representative of English nor is it some sort of imitation of spoken English that we use on a day-to-day basis. For many, it will come as a great surprise that ASL has more similarities to spoken Japanese and Navajo than to English.”

Through this initiative, we aim to transform the landscape of language education at Los Encinos School, opening doors to new ways of connecting and understanding. We believe that by embracing ASL, the school can offer its students and staff an invaluable tool for personal and communal growth.

### **About Los Encinos School:**

Los Encinos School (LES) is a small, independent, elementary school in Encino, CA, that provides a comprehensive educational program within a nurturing environment; our impact extends not only to the child, but also to the family. Kindergarten through sixth-grade LES students are encouraged to develop confidence, independence, and joy in learning. We recognize and honor individuality and believe that personal success motivates children toward realizing their fullest potential. The LES faculty prepares students to become global thinkers and citizens, with a strong academic foundation and a passionate curiosity for learning. Teachers design and facilitate a broad range of experiences that engage students as critical thinkers and problem-solvers.

Our school-wide integrated curriculum is rich in the humanities and stresses project-based, experiential learning, with a focus on collaboration and belonging. Building character and mutual respect are emphasized daily in our classrooms and in our service learning program. A Los Encinos School graduate welcomes the challenges of navigating in an increasingly complex world and seeks to find his or her place in our community and beyond.

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