

Subject: We must have a signing principal with Deaf Education training for our Deaf School in Hawaii

Aloha.

It's for the sake of our Deaf Hawaii kids. They must need a good role model. I rather have a Deaf or signing principal than the non-signing principal using an interpreter at Deaf School.

Since 1956, I went to HSDB (formerly Diamond Head School for the Deaf and the Blind) until I graduated in 1968. I grew up with oral education at school until 1963. I was struggling hard with speech training, but still keeping me in the dark age.

My education was not that great, due to too much focus on speech. What's worse, I was forced to speak many words I even didn't know the meanings of the words.

Thanks to a hearing & signing guy named Mr. Dunning, and he then introduced American Sign Language (ASL) to HSDB in 1963. My eyes opened big, and I had only 5 years of sign language training until I then entered Gallaudet (Deaf college) in Washington DC.

Bless Mr. Dunning for changing our life!

Now we have Dr. Angel Ramos, a Deaf & signing principal for over 3 years. We the Deaf community are so disappointed with the CAS-DOE for just pulling out and transferring him to a hearing school.

Please send Dr. Ramos back for our Deaf Hawaii kids' sake!

And I want to thank my hearing family for using sign language "under the table" at home and helping me do schoolwork, too.

Unfortunately, many of my school friends could not go to college, and today they still have problems reading and writing. But they can use sign language for social communication, thanks to Mr. Dunning again.

Granddaughter Aria is almost 3 years old, and she's Deaf. She can count to 40 by rote in ASL. She can sign over 500 signs in ASL. She even can finger-spell over 50 words with prompting. She could finger-sell my name Kathy. Her Deaf mother really works hard with Aria like a good teacher. Wow!

So I support that Bilingual and Bicultural Education approach (Bi-Bi) is a very important tool for Deaf Kids, using both ASL and English. So they'll get the best education that way. It's a MUST.

Please think of our Deaf Hawaii kids' unique needs first. Thank you for listening.

~ Kathy Thomas, Kaneohe
1968 "HSDB" graduate
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