

JAN 25 2006

S.B. NO. 3226

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that sign language has  
2 long been used as a tool to facilitate communication for  
3 children who are deaf or have a hearing loss. What is less  
4 commonly known is that research has shown that incorporating  
5 sign language into the instruction and training of children with  
6 oral-motor or developmental disabilities, including those with  
7 Down syndrome, autism, or cerebral palsy, can also have  
8 tremendous educational and developmental benefits.

9           According to a 1998 study published by the Colorado Springs  
10 Down Syndrome Association, there are two forms of sign language:  
11 American Sign Language (ASL) and "Signed English." In North  
12 America, people who are deaf or have a hearing loss often  
13 communicate using ASL, which is a visual manual language system  
14 with its own sentence structure and word order. For children  
15 with other disabilities, Signed English is used; words are  
16 signed and spoken at the same time, and in the same order as  
17 spoken English. Coupling sign language with the spoken word



1 increases language comprehension by presenting information  
2 visually as well as auditorily.

3 For example, young children with Down syndrome are usually  
4 excellent communicators. They use facial expressions, gestures,  
5 mime, and vocalizations to express their ideas. Since spoken  
6 language often develops more slowly than receptive language or a  
7 desire to communicate, sign language can be a powerful tool to  
8 build a child's confidence in communicating. By looking like  
9 the object or action they represent, signs help young children  
10 with Down syndrome attach meaning to spoken words when mere  
11 audible sounds seem meaningless. When using sign language,  
12 children become more attentive and responsive to their  
13 environment, which advances language acquisition, and helps  
14 children with disabilities become stronger, more effective  
15 communicators.

16 The purpose of this Act is to broaden the eligibility for  
17 sign language instruction and services to children with  
18 oral-motor or developmental disabilities, including those with  
19 Down syndrome, autism, or cerebral palsy, to require sign  
20 language training for all special education service providers,  
21 and to require the University of Hawaii speech-pathology



1 curriculum to include a course in American Sign Language and  
2 dysphagia, or swallowing disorder, training.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 304, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
4 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
5 and to read as follows:

6 "§304- Speech-language pathology; requirements. Each  
7 student enrolled in the speech-language pathology program at the  
8 University of Hawaii shall be required to take one course in  
9 American Sign Language and in dysphagia, or swallowing disorder,  
10 training."

11 SECTION 3. Section 302a-439, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
12 amended to read as follows:

13 "[~~§~~§302A-439] **Eligibility standards.** (a) The  
14 eligibility of exceptional children for instruction, special  
15 facilities, and special services shall be determined in  
16 accordance with this section and [~~those~~] standards established  
17 by the department.

18 (b) Students with oral-motor or developmental  
19 disabilities, including those with Down syndrome, autism, or  
20 cerebral palsy, shall be eligible for sign language instruction  
21 and services, which may include communication devices such as a  
22 manual communication board, computer, or dedicated electronic



1 device. These teaching methods shall incorporate the latest  
2 available research and technology that resources permit."

3 SECTION 4. Section 304-20.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
4 amended to read as follows:

5 "[~~§~~§304-20.5~~]~~ **Center for teacher education;**

6 **university-school partnerships.** (a) Reforms to the public  
7 school system cannot succeed without concomitant reforms to the  
8 manner in which teachers are educated. The purpose of this  
9 section is to create a link between the public schools and  
10 university teacher education programs to ensure that teacher  
11 education is focused on the needs of the diverse student  
12 populations found within the public school system.

13 (b) There is established a center for teacher education  
14 within the University of Hawaii. The center, in collaboration  
15 with the board of education, shall:

16 (1) Continually review the system of educating teachers  
17 for the purpose of redesigning the teacher education  
18 program of the college of education so that it is  
19 responsive to the needs of the public school system in  
20 Hawaii;



1 (2) Develop innovative strategies to effectuate the  
2 changes in the teacher education program at the school  
3 level; and

4 (3) Where appropriate, establish university-school  
5 partnerships as the mechanisms by which to implement  
6 the innovative strategies developed by the center.


7 (c) The center shall research and implement sign language  
8 or total communication training for all special education  
9 providers, including teachers, education assistants, and skills  
10 trainers working with students with oral-motor or developmental  
11 disabilities, including those with Down syndrome, autism, or  
12 cerebral palsy.

13 The center shall submit prior to the convening of each  
14 regular session of the legislature a report to the board of  
15 regents, the board of education, and the legislature outlining  
16 its progress in redesigning the teacher education program and  
17 the initiation of any university-school partnerships."

18 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed  
19 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

20 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2006.

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INTRODUCED BY: Elizabeth Chum Oakland  
*[Handwritten signatures: J. ...]*  
2006-0963 SB SMA.doc *[Handwritten signatures: ...]*  
 *[Handwritten signature: ...]*

Norman Sakuma



**Report Title:**

Sign Language; Special Education; Schools

**Description:**

Expands sign language instruction to include students with oral-motor or developmental disabilities. Requires sign language training for all special education instructors. Requires UH speech-pathology curriculum to include sign language course and dysphagia training.

