

Hello, my name is Lorrie Shank. I was born deaf but my parents didn't know until I was 2 years old when they noticed that I was not turning my head to loud noise. My parents have no clue of what are best for me in regarding to education and the doctors told my parents that I need to learn how to speak (by voice) and do not learn American Sign Language (ASL), otherwise I would not be successful in 'hearing' world.

I did not learn ASL until the age of 6 and boy, I was more happier to learn ASL in order to communicate with anyone who knows ASL because I do remember being frustrated in classroom with hearing children as I could not follow when they speak or follow teacher when speaking to students. My parents tried to have me to read books at home but was having hard time to understand what the books are about. I was falling behind in my written English and my reading level was low.

When I learned ASL, I was able to understand what the books are about and at same time, my written English improved. My parents realized that it's really important for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to have access to both languages of English and ASL and wished that I learned ASL at earlier age to keep my reading/written level the same as hearing children. With my access to both languages, I graduated from university and works in government job for over 20 years.

I personally know that if I did not learn ASL, my life will be full of frustrations of trying to communicate with anyone and struggling with trying to learn English.

It's really important for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to have access to English and ASL at very early age and be Kindergarten-ready. They need to have access to develop a language through assessment at birth, when they do then they will have same level of achievement as of hearing children.

Please vote YES to SB 444
Thank you,
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