

Signing Course On Horizon For Children With Special Needs

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By MidWeek Staff

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Little Jason Elento watches a 'Signing Time!' DVD at home with his father, Wendell. The communication method is gaining wider local support through the state Legislature and PBS Hawaii. Photo from Linda Elento.



School-sanctioned sign language for very young children is a step closer this spring, thanks to two recent developments.

First, the state Legislature passed a resolution urging the state Department of Education to provide video programs and curriculum "such as Signing Time!" to assist infants, toddlers and young children (hearing or non-hearing), their families and professionals in communication skills. Programs like Signing Time are designed especially for children with Down syndrome and other special needs.

Second, Signing Time will begin airing weekly Saturday programs at 10:30 a.m. June 3 on PBS Hawaii.

Kaneohe mother, Linda Elento, who has led the fight for both the resolution and the local broadcasts, is encouraged by these steps. The public schools, she explained, have been slow to implement

programs to help her son Jason, 4.

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“For my child, who has Down syndrome,” she told *MidWeek* earlier, “he’s had a hard time speaking and being understood. The DOE favors the verbal method, but until he learns to talk, what do you do in the meantime?”

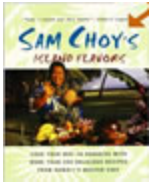
Elento also held a free sign language class last December in Kaneohe for moms and their keiki.

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