

## What does “Parent Driven” mean?

Two years ago I attended my son's first high school Open House. In the commons area of the school there were teachers who represented the different departments with teaching materials on the tables next to where they stood. As I walked up to the World Language table I saw three giant books; German, French and Spanish. My heart sank. Knowing that my son would need ASL to complete his two year World Language requirement in order to graduate, I asked the teacher standing there, "How do you get ASL on this table?" After I explained what American Sign Language was to this teacher, he gruffly replied "It's about Resources", and explained the school district had a class like that in another high school across town.

For the last two years I have written letters to everyone in our school district, spoken to PTA moms, attended meetings where my husband, son and I requested this each and every time. And even during a chance meeting outside a local grocery store, where I was introduced by my daughter to our new superintendent, I may even have said something like, "Nice to meet you I've heard so much about you and I really like how you are making changes in our school district, and by the way my son will need to take American Sign Language at his neighborhood school in order to meet his graduation requirements. Breath." For which he replied with a very blank look on his face "Nice to meet you too."

Surprisingly, two weeks ago my son came home from his school announcing he was able to register for ASL as a World Language class for the 2012/13 school year. When I asked his teachers if this was true, they said yes and were nervous about finding a teacher. I assured them I was a "send" button away from spreading the news out to our state and what did I have to do next. They sent me the wording and out it went.

Still dazed from this actually happening, my husband and I looked at one another one day trying to figure out who made this all possible, "I wonder if it was that one guy who came to our last IEP meeting?" my husband said. "I wonder if you getting mad at the school counselor had something to do with it?" I answered back. Then we got it, it was us as parents who made this happen. It was us who educated our son on the importance of why to advocate for what he wanted, and it was us who persisted on behalf of our son.

This is "parent driven", an allegiance to families whose children have unique and individual needs. It's not about resources, or any other barrier, it's about doing what's right for our children. And it's Hands & Voices that gives this ability to parents and their children.

