

January 24, 2024

Dear Jeff and Joel,

Hope you are having a great time in Mumbai.

We want to write this letter to say thank to both of you. At this busy time of the year, we feel very lucky to be able to connect with you via VAEFA's member - CDS and be able to successfully organize the round table discussion in Hanoi. Thank you both for your dedicated time and very useful information that you have shared during the roundtable on January 15.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy head of the Steering Committee for Education for Children with Disabilities and Children in Difficult Circumstances, Ministry of Education and Training, Dr. Ta Ngoc Tri; Director of the National Center for Special Education, Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences - Dr. Nguyen Thi Kim Hoa. Unfortunately, Dr. Le Anh Vinh - the Director of the Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences that day could not attend, but instead, there was the Former Deputy Director of the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences - Associate Professor Dr. Nguyen Duc Minh who is expert in disability education, especially in education for the blind. He has made significant contributions to advance the right to education for students with disability. Currently, Dr. Minh is one of VAEFA's advisors on special education. In addition, there was also the participation of 7 members of the VAEFA network who work on deaf education from all parts of the country and VAEFA coordinating office's team.

Getting to know the context in which your school works in the US through your sharing as well as your personal experiences, some participants have come to understand that not only deaf children but all children with hearing loss need to learn sign language to start their communication as early as possible. The importance is the language foundation for children to develop. The concept of bilingualism is also made very clear and profound so the audiences can understand what bilingualism is. We also covered quite a few topics and aspects while having in-depth discussions on topics such as teachers, curriculum, and standardized sign language... Through the feedback from our guests, we see positive signs and hope that there will be improvements in their work related to deaf people.

We also saw your open and sincere discussions with Vietnamese deaf people, not only in our meeting in the morning of the 15th but also in the evening of the 14th when you met with the Deaf community in Hanoi, with HAD. We know your journey does not stop in Hanoi or Vietnam. In Vietnam, you visited educational institutions for the deaf in all three regions and then your trip continued to other countries in Asia. You both are so inspiring and full of energy! We feel the inspiration and motivation from your energy in many Deaf people including Deaf children in Vietnam. Thank you very much for that.

Although it was a very short time you were here, we hope this will be the beginning of a journey with many good things waiting for us ahead. As shared in the meeting, in 2024 VAEFA plans to hold a conference specializing in education for the deaf. Hopefully, we will be connected with you so that together we can have more opportunities to improve the quality of education for the deaf in Vietnam.

We sincerely thank you for your generosity and enthusiastic support as you helped cover the interpretation costs for a deaf interpreter to translate ASL - Vietnamese Sign Language and provided 2 ASL - English interpreters online. The meeting took place until noon in Vietnam, which means midnight in the US. We also want to send huge thanks to two online interpreters who worked very hard and coordinated well with the live interpretation team in Vietnam. The meeting would not have been successful without such a team of professional and enthusiastic interpreters.

Once again, thank you both sincerely!

We are looking forward to following up on cooperation with you both and the ASD. We are also looking forward to receiving beautiful photos from Joel.

Take care and see you soon!

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