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# MY TRANSITION FROM AN ORAL SCHOOL TO A MAINSTREAMED SCHOOL

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I went to school at Desert Voices from 6 months old to 4 years old. After that I then mainstreamed into Pre-K. This transition meant me going from a school where hearing loss was the norm and “normal hearing” was not, to a school where it was the exact opposite. I was the only child with a hearing loss and who wore a Cochlear Implant at a school grades Pre-K through 12th grade. This meant changing my perspective and approach regarding my deafness; this meant me learning how to better engage and deal with the comments, stares, and assumptions made by my hearing peers towards those with hearing loss.

From kindergarten to third grade, I would get up in front of my class at the beginning of the school year and I would present to them about my hearing loss. This entailed me explaining what my Cochlear Implant and FM system was, why I needed them, how my peers could effectively communicate with me, as well as a time for questions. Prior to presenting to my class, my parents and I would make my presentations slides, review what I was going to talk about, and practice question responses.

Walking into class, I would have my slides made, fun interactive materials for my classmates, as well as my personal preparation for any random questions! I always found that having this one time at the beginning of the year for all my peers to ask questions was very beneficial, for everyone. It gave a chance for questions to be asked in a more controlled, safe, and supportive environment. And the questions asked by one student, were often questions many others were thinking too. By addressing and answering the questions in front of the whole class, it allowed for fewer questions overtime. I didn't have nearly as many repetitive questions a dozen times in the same day! Doing these presentations in general, I found that it gave me the confidence I needed and gave my classmates the knowledge, and even curiosity that led them to want to learn more in a way that allowed them to help me. When questions would arise that I didn't know how to answer then, my parents could chime in thus allowing me to learn from them on how to deal with the questions in the future. By doing these presentations in an environment that involved my parents, and teachers, I was able to build my confidence in addressing my deafness because I had the heavy support to help me when needed. By introducing hearing loss to a class, the child is learning how to confront their hearing loss in the bigger world, while their peers are learning how to interact with differences around them. But for the child; the presenter, this type of confrontation is very beneficial down the road.

