



Going Mainstream

Mother: Hunter is in second grade and Riley's in Kindergarten, soon to be third grade and first grade. And I'm their mom.

Teacher 1: *I see, I see...*

Children: *What do you see?*

Teacher 1: *I see children swimming in a pool.*

Mother: The anxiety of a parent that's leaving like the nice safe bubble of the pre-k years had a lot to do with just the unknown and what to expect.

Teacher 1: *I see, I see...*

Children: *What do you see?*

Teacher 1: *I see you doing your favorite hobby or activity during the summer. Show me!*

Mother: Going to preschool the girls were in a nice bubble where their peers, a lot of them had hearing aids or cochlear implants, so that was the normal.

Teacher 1: *If you can hear me, clap three times. Where should your eyes be?*

Riley: *You.*

Teacher 1: *Thank you.*

Mother: From there, we started looking at elementary schools. And we were looking at putting them in a school where there were no other kids with hearing loss and had maybe never seen a child with hearing loss before. And so that whole prospect is just terrifying.

Teacher 2: *Henry!*

Henry: *Three gills and damp skin, all fish need oxygen to breathe.*

Teacher 2: Hunter is the first student that I've worked with that has cochlear implants. It's been quite a learning experience, but with the support of family it's been much, much easier to accommodate than I ever imagined possible.

Hunter, I would love to hear from you.

Hunter: *For most fish being left on land would be a big problem, but it's not a problem for the mudskipper.*

Teacher 2: *Awesome job! That was beautiful. That was excellent, thank you so much.*

Hunter: She speaks louder now that she has me in her class because my ears, they're not regular ears. They're just like cochlear implants. They have FM boots so I can hear out of my FM and, yeah.

Teacher 2: This simply functions as a microphone, and this is the speaker that goes with the microphone. I'll also use her FM that connects directly to her cochlear implants.

Hunter: When I can't hear the teacher I always go and say, "Miss Feeney I can't hear you" or "would you speak louder."

Teacher 2: *Hunter has been such a help this year. I really couldn't have done it without you. Awesome, thank you.*

Hunter: *I don't think you would have these without me.*

Teacher 2: *No, I wouldn't.*

Teacher 3: *All right Riley, here's your word, your word is...*

Riley: *That word.*

Teacher 3: *This one here? "Swim." Alvin, your next word is "hunt."*

We often when there are units coming up like they studied space, and rain forests this year. We work with her to preview some of that vocabulary. So, that way she'll be that much more confident and prepared when she's in the classroom setting.

How did she do? Does this say swim?

Alvin: *Yes!*

Teacher 3: *Alvin, what was your word?*

Alvin: *Hunt.*

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Riley: Kind of like Hunter, but take off the R.

Teacher 3: *You're right. That's like her sister's name, Hunter.*

Teacher 2: *I'm going to send this FM home with you since it's a Wednesday, and you can take it with you to gymnastics.*

Hunter: *OK.*

Teacher 2: *Thank you, can you put it in your backpack for me?*

Hunter: *Yeah.*

Teacher 2: *Thank you.*

Both girls use the FM system, and it's a great direct communication system for them. They are responsible for it. So, they each have it in their own little bag, and they bring it along with them.

Teacher 3: *All right, here we go friends!*

Hunter: *High five!*

Mother: *Did you guys get your yearbooks?*

Hunter: *Yep.*

Riley: *Yes!*

Mother: *Are they in your bags?*

I think that fear of how are other kids going to respond to my child with hearing loss, and looking at their equipment, and having never seen that can be really scary.

Riley: *Oh, Mom, could you sign my yearbook?*

Mother: *Where do you want me to sign? Can I do a little heart?*

So what would I say to a new mom going through the process of finding the right school? I would just ask every question that you have. The good educators want to answer your questions, and they want to do whatever they can to help your child. And, so hopefully

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by asking all those questions you can find that perfect place for your kid.

Mother: Oh my gosh!

Hunter: I know I'm heavy, ouch!

Mother: You are not, you are just perfect how you are.