



# Mainstream News

Information about hearing loss for students, families and educators

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PEDIATRICS

## Planting the Seeds for Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy development is a process, one that requires purposeful support and facilitation throughout a child's school years in order for independence to take root. It is much more difficult to expect our students to advocate confidently for themselves when they are in high school—and beyond—if we haven't provided opportunities for them to gain awareness and practice all along. Clarke mainstream teacher of the deaf Christine Derosier shows us how the seeds for self-advocacy can be planted in the youngest of students.



Christine heads Young Voices, a collaborative program between Clarke and the Worcester School District for children who are deaf and hard of hearing at Woodland Academy in Worcester, Massachusetts. Now in its third year, Young Voices has found a wonderful home in this neighborhood school. Christine is maximizing the benefits of mainstreaming and reverse mainstreaming for her students, who currently range between three years of age and first grade. She is able to work with her students one-to-one and in small groups, as well as invite typically hearing peers to join them for activities. As her students progress, they spend part of the time in mainstream classrooms, with and without in-class support.

Those who transition fully into mainstream classrooms continue to receive teacher of the deaf and speech services.

Recently, Christine described some of her favorite activities that promote self-advocacy. While she has the advantage of being part of the school community on a daily basis, there is much that can be adapted to any mainstream setting.

### Who Am I?

Even with her three-year-olds, Christine is laying a strong foundation. Helping the students learn about their hearing loss, their assistive technology and how to explain it to others begins at the start of each school year. She helps all of her students create PowerPoint presentations, which they share with each other and then with their typically hearing peers.

The process of designing these presentations allows the students to practice the basic language associated with their equipment and why they need it. Her three-year-olds dictate what they would like her to type into the PowerPoint template she created, and then they help her look for pictures online to go with their words. This allows them to personalize their presentations while still having the structure of the template to help them talk about themselves. The three-year-olds' presentations include a simple introduction, a few things they like and the listening devices they use. As her students progress, they continue to dictate their ideas, but are able to help her type in their names and more words, choose more details regarding the layout and design, and share more about their likes and interests. Presentations include things like:

"My name is. ....

I am 5 years old.

I like to play with my brother.

I like race cars.

I like to ride bikes.

I like cake.

I like spaghetti and meatballs.

I need cochlear implants to help me listen.

I wear an FM."

*"You were a problem solver!" exclaimed Christine. "You said, 'Can you say it again?' and 'I need it louder!'"*

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Spanish Newsletter Articles
- Self-Advocacy Milestones: Advice from a College Student
- Dear Wil
- Sound Advice
- Upcoming Events

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Published by



**Clarke Mainstream Services**

# Spanish newsletter articles now available!



Thanks to our friends at the Spanish charity “CLAVE, Caring for Hearing Impairment” (www.oiresclave.org) in Madrid, Spain, we are pleased to offer Spanish translations of select articles from our *Mainstream News* archives. Each month we will add to our list of available articles.

To access Spanish articles (and their English counterparts) please visit:

[www.clarkeschools.org/msnewstranslations](http://www.clarkeschools.org/msnewstranslations)

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sharing their presentations with each other helps them see that while they all have hearing loss in common, they may use different technology to help them hear. They can compare devices, earmold colors and more. About a month into the school year, her students, who are also part of mainstream classrooms, share their presentations with their typically hearing peers. The presentations elicit questions that encourage the students to explain more about their hearing technology (e.g. “When do you take them off?”). The majority of comments and questions from these young audiences, however, are expressions of excitement about similar interests: “What do you play with your brother?” “I’m five, too!” “My bike is blue! What color is yours?” “I like race cars, too!” This is often the most heartwarming part, said Christine, because the students connect with their peers and are seen as “just another kid in the classroom.” The technology piece is cool to them, but even cooler are the things they have in common!

While Christine’s oldest students are in first grade, the idea of creating a PowerPoint presentation can be applied to students of any age and in any mainstream situation. Students can use presentations to introduce themselves to a new group of peers, help train a new set of teachers or highlight their strengths and challenges at an IEP meeting. The presentations can be as simple or as detailed as appropriate for the purpose and ability of each student. Once a student creates a presentation, it can be updated easily each year.



*“We can teach our kids how to advocate, but if the other kids don’t know how to respond appropriately, it’s not going to work.”*

## Let’s Do Lunch!

When Christine’s first group of preschoolers transitioned to kindergarten, this also meant a transition from her quiet classroom at lunchtime to the cafeteria with about one hundred other children. “Lunch is a time children should be socializing,” said Christine. But, in the noisy, fast-paced cafeteria they saw clear signs of frustration. Behavior issues surfaced before and during the lunch period, red flags that changes needed to be made.

Christine talked with her principal about starting a lunch bunch in her classroom. The idea was to get her students with hearing loss out of the cafeteria without isolating them from their typically hearing peers. By offering a facilitated group that included her students and a few different peers each day, she could keep her students connected with their mainstream classmates and help all of them work on social pragmatics. Her principal embraced the idea.

“She values what we are doing,” said Christine, crediting support from administration as playing a major role in their success. “She understands that it gives the students access and reduces anxiety, and it gives all of the children opportunities for extra time to work on social skills.”

They started by choosing typically hearing peers who would be good language models, and then began rotating through the students’ mainstream class so every child could participate.

“Kids don’t feel singled out,” said Christine. “It’s a privilege to come.”

This was obvious on a recent visit to observe her first-grade lunch bunch in action. With her class list in hand, we entered the cafeteria to pick up her two students with hearing loss and the two classmates who would be joining them (the group is kept to four students each day). Several students with eager faces approached Christine as we wound our way between tables. “Ms. Christine, is it my turn today?” they asked, one after another. A turn to go to lunch bunch is like winning the lottery! As the group settled in around the table back in Christine’s classroom, one of the typically hearing students said spontaneously, “Ms. Christine, you know why I like going here? In here it’s really quiet, over there is too loud.”

To encourage back and forth communication, lunch bunch conversation is structured around a question of the day. For her youngest students, Christine might post a question where students choose from a closed set of responses. From there they can compare how many answers the same, how many are different and talk about their choices. Or, she might pull a question from a specially decorated box of teacher-prepared questions. By first grade, her goal is that her students will begin to formulate their own questions. She encourages students to think of questions that will help them learn about each other. For example, a student might begin with a statement about him or herself (e.g. “I have a bike”) and, with prompting and teacher modeling, work on turning the statement into questions to ask a peer (“*Do you have a bike?*” “*What color is your bike?*”).

Christine writes the question of the day on a piece of paper so students can refer to it as needed. Then, students take turns asking each other the question and listening and responding to each other’s answers. Christine also records each student’s answer, and before lunch is over they have an opportunity to illustrate their responses. These “question of the day” papers are saved in a binder, which the students love to look through during the year.

Lunch bunch is approached with an eye on practicing self-advocacy with all of the children, not just her students with hearing loss. “We can teach our kids how to advocate, but if the other kids don’t know how to respond appropriately, it’s not going to work. Each day we are teaching our kids how to advocate for themselves, but we are also teaching their mainstream peers how to help them—how to respond, what to say, how to ask for clarification, how to help without speaking for them, how to tell when they have not understood and need something to be repeated. I think it is so important that their peers know how to respond appropriately so our kids are not going past their frustration level when they are trying so hard to be understood.”

This careful facilitation—guiding children toward effective strategies without solving problems for them—is part of what makes this lunch bunch so valuable. For her students with hearing loss, regular comprehension checks help reveal when a student has missed all or part of a response. For example, during the session observed, the question of the day was “How do you share with a friend?” One of the students with hearing loss posed the question to a mainstream peer, who responded, “When my cousin comes to my house I share my Wii with him.” Checking the understanding of her student with hearing loss, Christine asked, “What did you hear \_\_\_ say?” This uncovered that the student had not heard his peer clearly. “I don’t know, please say again,” he said. After another attempt, he said more specifically, “Please do louder, I can’t hear you.”

“You were a problem solver!” exclaimed Christine to her student with

hearing loss, commending him and highlighting the repair strategies he used. “You said, ‘Can you say it again?’ and then ‘I need it louder!’”

Conversely, Christine is able to help the typically hearing children work through communication breakdowns, too. A student might say, “I don’t think \_\_\_\_\_ heard me.” Instead of intervening, Christine encourages the student by asking, “How do you know that? What could you do?” and brainstorms possible strategies with the student, such as saying the student’s name, tapping the student on the shoulder and so on.

An underpinning of Christine’s facilitation is that she is teaching all of the students how to be active listeners. This is important because they can fall into the habit of asking for repetition all of the time. “Do you really need it again, or were you not listening?” is a distinction they need to learn. For the students with typical hearing, it also means helping them recognize that they need to have the attention of their peers with hearing loss first before asking them a question. Do they have eye contact? Are their bodies turned toward one another? Practice with these communication skills during lunch bunch can then be carried over into their mainstream classroom.

Like Christine’s kindergarteners experienced for the first time, the cafeteria can be a particularly challenging environment for many of our students with hearing loss. Lunch bunch is a great alternative, fostering conditions that promote rather than hinder social communication. It also provides a welcome change of pace for the typically hearing children who participate. While Christine is available daily to run lunch groups within her classroom, she recognizes that common roadblocks in other mainstream situations can be securing a quiet location and identifying appropriate staff who can be freed for a lunch period on a regular or rotating basis. Garnering support from administrators is an essential first step, she stressed. With an understanding of the specific access issues for the student with hearing loss—and the advantages for all participants—a commitment from administration often makes it much easier to implement a plan.

With IEP season upon us, school teams are reflecting on student progress and setting new goals—many of which connect to a long-term vision of our students as effective self-advocates. A peek into the Young Voices program shows us how we can begin to cultivate these skills in even our youngest students. Our students will have the best chance of growing into confident self-advocates when practice is woven into what we do on a daily basis and tended to each and every year.



**Sample slides from a first grader's presentation.**



# Self-Advocacy Milestones: Advice from a College Student

As we consider ways to practice self-advocacy with our youngest students with hearing loss, there is much that can be learned from those who are further along in their journey. They can help us see how the skills we work on day to day, and build on from one year to the next, really do make a difference in a student's readiness for the transition out of high school. Ian Faulkner, a freshman at Westfield State University, is in the midst of experiencing this shift in independence—and the responsibility that comes with it. In describing situations where he has had to advocate for himself this year, Ian reflects on past experiences that prepared him for doing so with confidence.



*Ian's trip to Nicaragua provided him with an opportunity to take what he has learned about himself and his hearing loss and pay it forward.*

## Practice with a Purpose

In his last few years of high school, Ian's special education teacher—who had previously taken the lead in training his teachers—turned the tables on him. “He said ‘I'm done, you have to talk to your teachers for yourself,’” Ian explained. “I learned from this, and sometimes I learned the most from failing. I learned that being front and center was the worst seat for me. I learned I should be on the far side of the first or second row to be able to see most of the students to read lips. I learned to get to class early to get the best seat.”

The practice Ian got running his meetings in high school prepared him for explaining his access needs to his disabilities advisor in college. He has learned that advocating on your own includes planning ahead, asking a lot of questions, explaining what your needs are and being persistent. “I have to make sure I point out every single thing,” he said, adding that it is now up to him, not his parents, to make requests for services each semester.

Currently, Ian uses an FM system and notetakers in the class-

room. The FM system his college provides is a different model than the one he used in high school. His advice to other students is to “ask to see what the FM looks like ahead of time. Tell your audiologist what you will be using. Will this system work with your hearing aids [or cochlear implant]?” For Ian, it turned out that his college's FM uses a neck loop (instead of receivers that attach directly to his hearing aids). He had to schedule an appointment with his audiologist to have the t-coil on his hearing aids activated, which delayed use of the FM for the first few weeks of classes.

Requesting the FM is the first step, advocating for its use in class is also necessary. “I have to tell my professors I'm deaf and how to use it,” Ian said. For the most part, his professors “have all been really cool about using the FM,” he said, but he encourages adults to help students prepare for those moments when someone could be less than open to it. Students need to practice what to say if a teacher says, “I prefer not to use it. Couldn't you just get preferential seating?”

“I know how to reason,” said Ian. “I've learned it's just me now, nobody's got my back.”

Ian has discovered that advocating for access includes speaking up for what he needs outside of the classroom, too. Initially, his dorm room was not outfitted with a fire alarm that had a strobe light to alert him. A few weeks into the first semester, a fire drill was held in the middle of the night and Ian did not hear the alarm. His roommate woke him up and he was able to put his hearing aids in and get out of the building, but it was a wake-up call—literally and figuratively—that he needed to initiate some changes to ensure his safety. He requested that a fire alarm for the deaf, along with a door-knocker alarm, be installed in his room. In addition, he spoke to friends across the hall and asked that in the event of an emergency, they push his door alert button as back-up.

## Meeting Role Models

The confidence with which Ian advocates for himself now wasn't always there. “In middle school, I grew my hair long so I could hide my hearing aids,” he recalled. Around this time, Ian attended Clarke's Summer Adventure camp for the first time, an experience he describes as life-changing.

“Clarke camp helped me completely open up,” he said. “The following summer I was a completely different person.”

The counselors with hearing loss he met at camp had a signifi-

cant impact on him. “They taught me how to stop caring about what other people said. I took on that mentality from them. Camp helped me to be more social. Once you can accept it [hearing loss], it can be more comfortable.”

Ian went on to become a counselor-in-training and then a junior counselor, giving him an opportunity to serve as a role model to the younger campers. It is a program he plans to be involved with for years to come.

“The camp changes everybody,” he said, describing the joy of seeing “new kids come in and make friendships” just like he did.

## Paying it Forward

In January, Ian had the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua with a group of fellow WSU students and professors to complete a service project. As part of “La Esperanza Grenada” (“Hope for Grenada”), they assisted native workers in building a school. A mission like this lends itself to teamwork and bonding on a deeper level than typically happens in the classroom. For Ian, it provided him with an opportunity to take what he has learned about himself and his hearing loss and pay it forward. A professor on the trip shared with him that she had been diagnosed with hearing loss later in life, and just a few months prior to the trip got her first pair of hearing aids. Early on in the trip, Ian opened up to his group about his hearing loss, figuring it would be important for them to know about times he would not be able to wear his hearing aids and how they should get his attention in those situations (such as swimming).

“This professor loved how I could talk and joke about it. I helped her to accept it more and to be more comfortable with telling people about it,” Ian said. “After I told everybody, she told people about her hearing loss for the first time.” This experience enabled her to see that “we could relate to one another, we could both read lips. The more you can joke about it, the easier it can be, the easier it is to relate to other people.”

There is no doubt that Ian will continue to find opportunities to pass on the confidence and self-acceptance that he has worked hard to achieve. He knows it is not easy, and he encourages younger students to keep trying—and their parents and teachers to help them along the way. “There is fear involved in telling someone [about your hearing loss] for the first time. If you get a lot of bad responses, it leads kids to not want to say anything. Help them keep trying—if you get one bad response, keep trying. It’s not the end of the world! Make sure they are advocating for themselves and help them learn how to step back and learn from situations.”

*Wil is a fourth-grade student who has a strong interest in helping others understand and manage hearing loss. In this issue, Wil answers questions from fourth graders Kaedin and Samantha, who submitted these questions together.*

## Dear Wil,

### What hobbies do you have and does your hearing loss interfere?

Well, I like to play a lot of sports and games that require communication.

I sometimes need to make eye contact and say, “What?” During this time I usually need to speak up for myself by asking people what to do.

I also like to play with Legos. You do not need much communication to do this, but if you are building something together, then you would need to plan out things like who builds what, when or where do you start, and how much do you build. Communication is difficult when you have a hearing loss, but you can work it out.

### How long have you had your hearing loss and how did you know you had it?

I have had my hearing loss for as long as I can remember. My parents told me I was diagnosed at birth. I knew I had a hearing loss because everyone else in my family could hear without hearing aids, and I needed the hearing aids to hear better. When I first went to school I had a lot of people saying things like “What are those things on your ears?” Luckily I knew exactly what they were and could answer them.

### Do you use a pass-around microphone\* in your classroom?

Yes. I use it when I need to hear a friend or another teacher that doesn’t have the FM on. Sometimes there are two teachers talking, like when we are playing a game of Bingo and the two teachers are telling us the numbers. I like to give the one who is doing most of the speaking the FM transmitter, and if there is another teacher speaking I give them the pass-around microphone. It would be a good idea to use both because then you wouldn’t need to keep taking the FM off, putting it on another person and passing it around. The pass-around microphone is a lot easier to carry back and forth. Sometimes we split into groups, like when we are doing math. When my friends want to tell me an answer or help me with a problem, they speak into the pass-around microphone.

At the beginning of the school year, I tell everyone about the FM before we start going in groups. I show them how to hold it the right way. Then, when a friend comes to work with me they usually grab the microphone. If they forget, I would get it, but after a while they do it automatically.

\*A second, pass-around microphone is an option with some FM systems. Talk with your student’s audiologist about what may be possible for your student.

**Do you or your students have a question for Wil? Send questions to [mainstream@clarkeschools.org](mailto:mainstream@clarkeschools.org)**



# Sound Advice

Information related to the audiological management of students with hearing loss in mainstream settings

## Daily Listening Checks Foster Friendship and Self-Advocacy

For students with hearing loss, daily checks of their sensory devices play an important role in ensuring they hear their best every day. While regular checks of hearing aids and cochlear implants at home are essential, we also need to confirm that a student's personal devices

are working alone and when coupled with the student's FM system at school. When these checks do not happen a problem can go undetected, putting the student at a distinct disadvantage. The student may still be able to hear through a weak or intermittent signal, but will not get optimal benefit from the amplification. The longer this continues, the greater the risk the student will miss important information, which can have both academic and social consequences.

Listening checks are best performed in a quiet location. The hustle and bustle of students getting ready for the day means the classroom isn't always the ideal place for morning checks. Often, routines are established where a student meets with an adult outside of the classroom, such as in the nurse's office or another room that is free from distraction.

For Sebastian, a second-grade student at Hatfield Elementary School, bringing a friend along has helped make his trip to the nurse's office each morning a fun experience. As Sebastian is a new student at the school this year, the activity started out as a way for him to get to know his classmates.

Sebastian's teacher, Laura Hoey, has observed multiple benefits. "Having classmates involved helping with the FM has led to greater understanding and acceptance. It has also helped foster friendships," she said.

Recently, Sebastian and his classmates explained what they do each day and why others should consider this approach.

Each morning, a different classmate accompanies Sebastian for his listening checks. Sometimes the nurse's office is their only destination, other times it's a stop along the way to deliver the lunch count to the cafeteria. Occasionally, the nurse is busy taking care of another student, so Sebastian might have to wait a bit for his turn. "I feel more comfortable waiting for the nurse with a friend," he said.

His friends enjoy the company as much as Sebastian does. It is an opportunity to talk about things they have in common and fosters a sense of community.

"We usually talk about things like video games," said Theo.

"It makes me feel good," shared Jacob.

"I like helping out a friend," added Brodie.

Sebastian explained that the nurse does her part of the check, then he puts on his hearing aids with the FM receivers attached, his classmate says a magic word into the FM and "I have to say what the magic word is." If he can't hear the word, it means they have to investigate the problem, which is usually a simple fix like a battery change.

"I like knowing the secret word," said Jameson. "It's fun, like a walkie-talkie."

This system of doing listening checks has helped to make the FM a regular part of the classroom. In addition to the social benefits, it provides a comfortable setting for Sebastian to answer questions a peer may have about his equipment. By learning more about the process, his classmates have developed a good understanding of how important his hearing aids and FM are for access.

"[I've learned] it's a type of microphone and it helps Sebastian hear better," explained Theo.

"You want to make sure he can hear," added Duncan.

"If Ms. Hoey's speaking and Sebastian can't hear her, it will be hard for him to learn," said Madison.

Sebastian's friend Brodie has noticed that the FM is helpful when they partner up to practice spelling words. "I was doing a buddy spelling test with him and he could hear the words better [with the FM]," he said.

Sebastian agreed, noting that the FM makes it easier when lots of other groups are practicing at the same time.

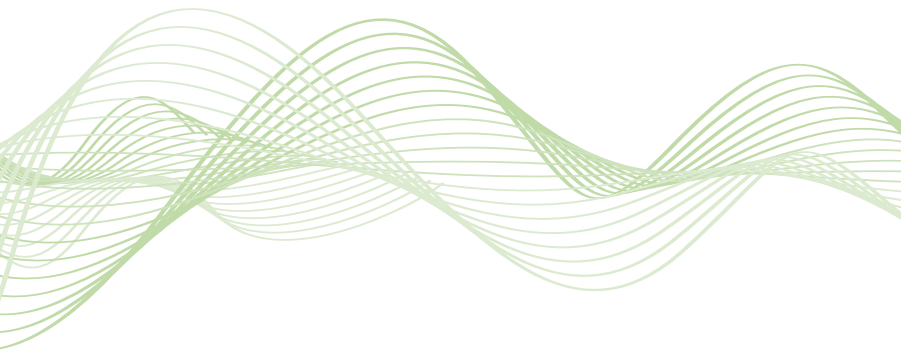
Sebastian and his classmates think that students in other schools



*"I feel more comfortable waiting for the nurse with a friend."*

—Sebastian





should consider doing listening checks just like they do.

“They won’t be lonely going to the nurse’s office,” Sebastian said.

Madison and Rosa suggested that the adults and students who help with listening checks should learn about the FM. They should know “how to hold the FM in the right spot,” said Madison, pointing about six inches below her mouth.

“Keep it at the right distance and don’t touch buttons or play with the FM,” added Rosa.

Listening checks take just a few minutes, but it is worth thinking carefully about how we approach them. Taking care of hearing technology is a responsibility that will follow our students with hearing loss every year, but it doesn’t mean they have to do it alone. Inviting a classmate along helps take the mystery out of the process, fosters friendship and encourages self-advocacy practice. When classmates are included, they begin to share responsibility for the FM system; it becomes a natural and necessary part of the classroom.



*Theo and Sophia demonstrate how they ask Sebastian a question or tell him a “magic word” to confirm he can hear through the FM system. The FM is “a type of microphone and it helps Sebastian hear better,” said Theo.*



**A daily check of your student’s listening devices is a quick and easy process** that

will be tailored to your student’s specific hearing loss and equipment. Choose an adult who will be available each morning and be sure this person receives training from either the student’s audiologist or teacher of the deaf.

If your student wears hearing aids, you will be able to use a stethoscope (as demonstrated here by Clarke audiologist Dr. Joni Skinner) to listen to the hearing aids alone and when coupled with the FM system. This will help you become accustomed to how they should sound and better able to detect changes than can impact how your student hears.

If your student uses cochlear implants, you will not be able to listen to them in the same way because of the internal components to the devices. However, you can still assess your student’s responsiveness to the full range of speech sounds, confirm the functioning of the FM system and perform basic troubleshooting steps as needed.

Whether your student uses hearing aids or cochlear implants, a friend can help confirm that the FM is working by asking your student a question or giving your student a “magic word” of the day, just like our second graders featured here.

**Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech**  
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### Upcoming Events



#### **Summer Adventure July 13-25, 2014**

Children with hearing loss, ages 9-14  
Held at the Williston Northampton School  
in Easthampton, MA

*For more info, contact Martha DeHahn at*  
**413-587-7387** or [mdehahn@clarkeschools.org](mailto:mdehahn@clarkeschools.org)  
[clarkeschools.org/summeradventure](http://clarkeschools.org/summeradventure)

#### **Explore the Outdoors August 3-6, 2014**

Teens with hearing loss entering grades 9-12  
Held in Western Massachusetts

*For more info, contact Kaitlyn Millen at*  
**413-582-1155** or [kmillen@clarkeschools.org](mailto:kmillen@clarkeschools.org)  
[clarkeschools.org/explore](http://clarkeschools.org/explore)

#### *Save the Date!* **October 21-22, 2014**

#### **Clarke Mainstream Services' 35th Annual Conference on Mainstreaming Students with Hearing Loss**

NEW LOCATION: Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA

DIFFERENT DAYS: Tuesday & Wednesday

SAME High QUALITY Workshops!

[clarkeschools.org/services/annual-mainstream-conference](http://clarkeschools.org/services/annual-mainstream-conference)