

The WORST Advice I Was Given About Classroom Accommodations as a Parent of Deaf Kids

Alaine: [00:00:00] Welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. I'm your host, Elaine Jacobs. There has been this weird rally cry of people telling parents to make sure their deaf and hard of hearing kids sit in the front row of the classroom to get better language access in their classroom. And while this can be helpful as far as your child's seeing and maybe hearing a little bit better because they're a little bit closer, generally the advice for classroom accommodations stops there for parents.

Alaine: So I'm going to let you in on a little secret that I learned when my kids were in preschool and we were first starting the IEP process and figuring out classroom accommodations for our kids. Here's the secret. Language and hearing access has far more nuances than just sitting in our deaf and hard of hearing kids in the front row of the classroom.

Alaine: So in this podcast today, I'm going to tell you why this is actually [00:01:00] terrible advice to give parents and why this is not counting as a hearing or language accommodation in the classroom. Let's discuss.

Alaine: Hey, welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. Are you tired of spending your precious time after the kids go to bed googling and scrolling Instagram for answers like, how do I learn sign language? Do you feel overwhelmed by all of the decisions that you have to constantly make for your child? Hey, I'm Elaine. I'm a mom of three littles, two of whom are deaf.

Alaine: I remember what it felt like to learn that my child was deaf for the first time. It felt like the rug got torn out from under my feet, and I was falling without a net in sight. How did I get through those crazy early years of learning new ways of life without completely going insane? By creating solid foundations for my child of communication strategies, academic skills, and [00:02:00] routines at home.

Alaine: And I can't wait to share it all with you. Together, we're going to build a strong foundation that will support your child and help them thrive. So put down that to do list, close out that ASL app for now, and let's get started.

Alaine: Did you know that I have a free community of parents just like you? Busy parents who want to parent their child with more confidence while still getting all of the things done in the house each day. In our community, we share strategies to help our kids learn language faster, a no sweat approach to the IEP, and we lean on each other for support and encouragement in this up and down journey of hearing loss with your kids.

Alaine: If you haven't found your community yet, then welcome home. Come join us at facebook. com slash group slash raising deaf kids.

Alaine: So I have two kids who are deaf, they both have cochlear implants and [00:03:00] I remember going through the classroom accommodation process and just the whole thing about trying to figure out what in the heck like accommodations my kids could be having when they started preschool. So I knew that when my kids started preschool, I wanted them to go to preschool because I wanted them to get more social interaction.

Alaine: I wanted them to be around. More typically hearing kids with typically developing speech, especially my first child who does use spoken speech. So and I think that really did as a side note help him develop a lot of speech and language, you know, at an earlier age. And we want that socialization especially once again for my older child who didn't have older siblings, you know to socialize.

Alaine: With him at the time, like, you know, my other kids have had so I knew that when we were starting school, like I had an intuitive thought as a parent and as a former teacher [00:04:00] myself, I used to be a classroom teacher. It was in a high school, but still, like, I understand the classroom a little bit and I knew that something.

Alaine: Like, needed to happen to make sure that my kid was, like, hearing in the classroom, but back then I. I wasn't sure like what to ask for. And honestly, all of my mentors were not helpful because they kept insisting, like it's your decision, your decision, but like, I didn't know what decision to make because I was new to this and I, am not deaf or hard of hearing myself.

Alaine: I have no hearing loss and neither does my husband and neither does literally anyone else in my family. And so I literally, you know, when the teachers are asking like, what should I do? I did not know as a parent and none of my mentors would ever tell us because there's this weird thing also in the professionals that, They're pushing [00:05:00] so hard that everything is a parent's decision, which it is.

Alaine: And that is true, but that they won't offer any advice at all, which kills me. Which is why I have this podcast to tell you guys the truth, right? As parents and to give you the information that I wish I had. And the one thing I remember everyone telling me, including professionals, which is like weird because they're in.

Alaine: This, but that's when I realized that a lot of professionals, even though they're in this field, like, don't really understand hearing loss completely. The one thing they were always telling me is make sure your kid is like in the front row so that they can hear and I was like, okay, so that was like the basic accommodations that I went off of for years with my kids.

Alaine: Until I started learning more about hearing loss and honestly talking to more like deaf adults and realizing that like sitting my kids in the front row, like really wasn't doing anything. And that was really terrible advice [00:06:00] that people gave me. And there was really no reason for that. They didn't really give.

Alaine: The advice, but I see this going around all the time still, I see this going around. It's like, you know, when parents are asking, even in like parenting Facebook groups of, you know, what accommodations should I be asking for? Should I be looking at, or should I be thinking about everyone? The first thing is like, make sure your kid is in the front row.

Alaine: And that is just not good advice. And then it comes with no other like contacts about like, why, what they should be doing in the front row. Like what side of the front row should they be dead in the middle? Yeah. And it does not take into account the nuances of hearing loss and understanding and communicating with hearing loss.

Alaine: And so that's what I want to talk about today, why this is terrible advice for parents and a little bit about why this is not good advice and why you need to be thinking [00:07:00] more strategically when you're talking about school accommodations for your kids. So one of the things, my first reason why this is terrible advice for parents is that it's really showing a lack of true understanding about what hearing loss actually is you know, so it's just kind of the old way of thinking of if you talk louder, they will understand better.

Alaine: Okay, and my kids, if you talk loud at them, it doesn't mean they're going to understand what you're saying better. Like, that is crazy, but that is really what the general public worked under for years and years and years when they came across people who are deaf or people who are hard of hearing, they

started talking really loudly, and maybe you will understand better, and it doesn't make you understand.

Alaine: In fact, actually talking louder distorts your voice. More so you actually understand less. So that is kind of the framework [00:08:00] that this response to putting, putting deaf and hard of hearing kids in front of the classroom is working off of. If you just make it louder, AKA they're closer to the teacher, then they will hear and understand better.

Alaine: I said, it's not taking into account listening skills, communication skills. And the volume level that is in the rest of the classroom. So, it's missing so many nuances of what hearing loss is and what it means for your kids. Tip number two. It also gives schools the impression that they are providing a viable school accommodation and therefore fulfilling the IEP or the 504.

Alaine: And it is the idea. We make it louder, they can understand better. Now they have access to language in the classroom. And this is not at all what we need to be doing. We need to be talking about actual communication strategies. [00:09:00] Okay. Are you using sign in the classroom? Are you using cued speech in the classroom?

Alaine: Are you using visuals in the classroom to help the kids? Does it help the kids to, Use the mini microphone, which as an aside, we use that for my boys and it helps them a lot. Does your kid like Ripley, sorry, lip read a little bit? And would it be helpful to see the teacher's face? Whereas if that is true, then you have to train the teacher to talk.

Alaine: To the class and not talk to the board. There's more strategies than just put them in the front. And now that they can hear because it's louder and now they have access to the classroom and just because they're in the front of the room. Doesn't mean that the teacher is really talking any louder. So that kind of just debunks that whole strategy, to be honest.

Alaine: And I really like what comes to mind [00:10:00] here was a post that Valley Gideon's posts a lot on her Instagram accounts and on her social media, where it's a quote from her daughter. You know, both her son, her daughter have cochlear implants and her daughter, when she was, you know, a little bit older said that there is a difference between hearing and understanding and that hearing or hearing loss is, has more to do with understanding than actually doing the hearing, right?

Alaine: Meaning it's way more nuance and like, just because something is louder, doesn't mean our kids are understanding it better hearing something. And then understanding it are two different skills. Okay, and so it's, maybe it is louder, maybe they can, quote, hear it, but it doesn't mean they're understanding and processing what is being told to them any better just by being sat in the front of the classroom.

Alaine: And the third reason why this is terrible advice for parents is that it [00:11:00] doesn't take into account all other aspects of the classroom setting. Right, so generally students, especially, you know, if you're talking about younger kids, like in kindergarten, 1st grade, even 2nd grade they're not sitting in their seats all day, or at least they shouldn't be if a school is good, then they allow kids to get up, go to recess, you know, work with partners.

Alaine: Go to like centers and like different parts of the classroom and certainly in preschool kids are not sitting in their seat at all, right? So that's why sitting in front of the classroom like doesn't even work, especially for the younger ages because kids are moving around the classroom. They're not stationary.

Alaine: Things don't stay the same in the classroom all day long. Okay. So what happens when they're in centers? Right. Working centers. What happens if they're working with partners and the volume level is louder. What happens when they're on the playground? How they communicate with their friends and their teacher when they're on the [00:12:00] playground or how they hear their teacher when they're way over on one side of the playground and their teachers on the other side.

Alaine: How do they work in group discussions? Okay. And what do they do during specials time? Right. When your kid is going to art music P. E. What do you do then? Especially PE class, the volume is loud in there. The gym, you know it's echoey. It's hard for a hearing person like me to hear in the gym. What about your child?

Alaine: What happens then? Okay, so that's why this advice is bad because it's also just assuming the kids are sitting in their seat in the classroom all day long, and they're not. So it's not taking into account the strategies of all the other aspects of the classroom setting and the school day that your child is going through.

Alaine: Okay. So if you were a parent who was told that your child just needs to be in the front row of the classroom to get hearing access, then I'm sorry. I'm sorry that someone gave you bad advice that will ultimately affect how your

child is learning. [00:13:00] And there's just so much more strategy involved in education accommodations other than just making sure our kids can quote here.

Alaine: But the good news is that I've been through this process myself with both of my kids multiple times. And I also am a classroom teacher, so I understand from the teacher's side like what's going on in the classroom all day. And I wanted to let you know. That I would love to help you. I would love to help you through coming up with a better strategy than just putting your kid on the front row and hoping for the best.

Alaine: That's not an accommodation for the. That's not a true classroom accommodation and the school should be investigating. Much deeper strategies for communication, hearing, and listening than that. So, I wanted to let you know that I will soon be opening up a new one on one coaching program, and it's called Harmony at Home, and we talk about things that can go over [00:14:00] things together like communication strategies at home, and also communication and learning in the classroom if you are at that point in life with your kids.

Alaine: I would love to work one on one with you. I'll probably take just a few clients in the beginning. So email me at hello at raising deaf kids dot com and tell me that you want to be on the waitlist for this program and I will put you on the waitlist and I will let you know as more information comes up.

Alaine: I'm really excited to be able to get to work with you and help you find those better accommodations in the classroom. They're really going to set your child up for success and aren't just kind of what. Has been told to you time and time again, so I hope this episode today calms your soul a little bit and also helped you realize that there are deeper strategies to helping your child learn.

Alaine: And as parents, I know we want the absolute best for our kids and unfortunately, kids, and especially kids with hearing loss do not come with a handbook. I want you to know that simply by being [00:15:00] here and listening, you are doing a great job as a mom or a parent or a parent because you're learning and trying to find better ways to help the child in your life.

Alaine: I am so proud of your efforts and I'm so glad that you're here and I will see you on Thursday where we are talking all about how to help your typical hearing children understand hearing loss. And I think it's going to be really great. I've got some fun stories from my own home to share with you. All right.

Alaine: I'll see you on Thursday.

Alaine: Hey, I hope this episode today blessed you big time. If so, would you take 30 seconds and leave a quick review for the show on Apple Podcasts? It lights me up to know that this podcast is helping you and leaving a review helps other parents to find this podcast too. If you have a friend who needs to hear this podcast episode today, be a pal and text it or share it with them.

Alaine: Now go check off the rest of your to do list and I'll meet you here every Tuesday and [00:16:00] Thursday for podcast episodes to support your whole family in language learning and parenting your deaf and hard of hearing child with confidence. Adios!