

April 2, 2011

Alexander Graham Bell Association
School-Age Financial Aid Committee

This past year Bret attended Summit Classical Christian School (Summit) for first grade. There were nine students in his grade, and they learned everything from spelling and grammar, to geography and animals in science. Bret is a very smart young man and remains at the top of his class in almost all subjects, except hand-writing. He has shown improvement lately in producing neater work when motivated to do so, but he definitely has room for more improvement. He appears to have inherited his father's delayed small motor skills.



In October, one of his former therapists from Listen & Talk (his early intervention and preschool in Seattle whose mission it is to “teach children with hearing loss to communicate and learn through spoken language”) did a consultation with Bret’s current school. She observed Bret for most of a day, and then we all gathered for a conference time. She also did a presentation to his first grade class about what it means to have a hearing loss. His therapist was able to coach his teachers about how best to help Bret, and what things to look for. At Bret’s recent parent/teacher conference, his teacher commented about some observations she had made concerning Bret and what he does when he’s not hearing a speaker. It was neat to see how eager she is to help him, and that she could pick up on those little indicators.

Bret is an exceptional math student – he taught himself the multiplication tables last year in kindergarten. In August he was tested by the school, and they allowed him to advance to second grade math (our school is ahead a year in its math curriculum, so he’s actually in a third grade curriculum). In his latest report card, the second grade math teacher wrote, “Bret continues to excel in math. Not only does he know his facts, work hard, and maintain a cheerful attitude . . .” Bret’s only difficulty in math is that he works the problems so quickly in his head, he hates to actually have to write down the problem and show his work. After having missed some points on recent tests for not having shown his work (although he did get the right answer the correct way), he was convinced to show his work. He brought his grade back up to an A for the recent quarter.

His other strong subject is reading. For the past two quarters he received a “++” for reading (when “+” is the top grade for first grade). His teacher stated in his last report card, “Bret continues to do absolutely amazing when it comes to his reading fluency. He read 134 words in one minute this quarter. This is well over the standard for a first grader, even at the end of the year. We are so proud of Bret and his reading abilities.” Bret is currently reading “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” by C.S. Lewis. I told him he had to finish this book before he could move on to the Harry Potter series of books by J.K. Rowling. Because he was taught phonograms these past two school years, he is able to sound out almost any word. When he reads with me at home, I am so impressed with the difficulty of words that he fluently reads. His spelling is also one of his strengths, as he rarely misses a word on their daily tests.



Bret’s favorite subject, however, is P.E. The classes all do P.E. once a week on their own, but on Fridays two dads volunteer and teach P.E. to all the first through third graders. As a larger group they are able to play different team games. Bret’s favorites are soccer and kick ball.

Bret’s teacher, Mrs. Miller, has also recognized the fact that children of this age are able to memorize information with ease. She created songs for each continent (with more than one country on it) listing all the countries. The children had to learn the names of each country and where they were. When it came to Africa, I was learning names of countries I had never heard of. Bret still sings these songs (to the great annoyance of his sisters), and can show you where each country is located. For science, Mrs. Miller also created a song “that never ends” about how to order living things (kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and species). The children sang it one day while I was helping in the class room, and I truly thought it would never end, but was amazed at all the information in the song that they had tucked away in their memories. In his latest report card, Mrs. Miller stated, “Bret really has strong memorization skills, and does very well with memorizing new information. He also is very good at retrieving information that we have learned in the past.”

Two of the highlights of the year were the two field trips the class took. The first was to the Seattle Children’s Theater to see “Lyle, the Crocodile.” Recently Bret’s class visited the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. Earlier in the year the children had done presentations on a mammal of their choice from the zoo. Bret chose the tiger, and I was very impressed with his speaking skills in front of his classmates and a few moms. So, Bret was very excited to get to see the tiger at the zoo, and all the other animals too (I think the penguins were some of his favorite).



As the mother of a deaf child, the comment on his report card that most encourages me was, “I have really seen Bret blossom this quarter when it comes to his social skills with his peers. He seems to be much more aggressive (in a good way) when it comes to socializing with the other students. He seems to be much more comfortable in large groups.” Knowing the difficulty that he and his older sister (who is scheduled to receive her first cochlear implant this summer after wearing hearing aids for years) have in large group or classroom settings, this is the teacher comment that makes me the most proud. He receives no special accommodation at school because of he is deaf, other than his teachers wearing his FM system. He must listen and learn like all the other kids, and he must communicate verbally with his classmates and teachers. When I’ve observed Bret in class, he interacts with others just as all his peers do, and it makes me so happy that his hearing loss has not disabled him. Despite being deaf, he has thrived and blossomed in the classroom and with his friends, and we continue to expect great things from him!

Greg and I would like to extend our heartfelt thankfulness for your helping us financially so that Bret can attend Summit. Looking back to our initial IEP meeting with our school district when Bret was almost three years old, we are continually amazed at the progress Bret has made. He went from being approximately two years behind in his language skills when he turned three, to now fluently reading books I did not read until I was several years older. We know this is due to the hard work of many professionals, continually advancing technology, many of hours of therapy, and teachers who are eager to help their students blossom. Of course, none of this comes without a price tag. That’s where your organization has been instrumental to us – giving us the financial support to make these things possible for our beloved son.

Our sincerest thanks,

Greg and Ann Fullington
Proud parents of Bret Fullington