



I chose California School for the Deaf for my internship because my son is a student here. The school has warmly welcomed me and made me feel comfortable. I wanted to be part of a school that offers full access to language through American Sign Language, and so many of the other schools do not.

I'm hearing but my son Lennon was born deaf. Being a CSD parent, I have been exposed to the Deaf community, Deaf culture, and the Deaf world. I feel at home here! When people tell me how impressed they are that I sign with my son, I respond by saying, "Why not? He's Deaf! I should sign with him." I see so many parents who don't sign with their child, and that child does not have that same access to language. I realize that everyone has a different situation. There are parents who want speech training for their child, but their child is missing so much of the information and their language is delayed. I really feel that I want to work in Deaf Education because I want to support families as the mother of a Deaf child.

### **My experience with my son...**

When Lennon was born, the doctor said, "I'm sorry to inform you but your son is deaf." I was so upset. Lennon was the first Deaf person in our family so I had no prior experience with Deaf people or the Deaf community. The doctor told me, "Don't worry. We can give him cochlear implants. He can be mainstreamed at school. We can fix him." The way that the doctor explained it made me feel like something was wrong with my son. When I asked about how to communicate with my son, the doctor advised me to speak with him just as I would if he were hearing. So that's what I did and Lennon didn't understand a thing I told him. Looking back on my communication with Lennon when he was a baby makes me feel awful that I talked to him instead of signing, but I didn't know any better.

When Lennon was two months old, we moved from Florida to California because of my husband's work. Since I didn't know anyone in the Bay Area, I joined a mommy's group. One of the moms from that group advised me to contact Early Start, which I did. When the Early Start teacher came to my home, they recommended that I use American Sign Language with Lennon, and that was the start of my journey into Deaf Education.

The doctor recommended that Lennon go to Weingarten Children's Center (an oral school) because he was a candidate for cochlear implants, but the Early Start teacher encouraged me to take a tour of California School for the Deaf. I was open-minded and decided to go for the tour. From the minute I arrived on the CSD campus, I felt like I was home. I realized that this was where I wanted my son to go to school.

When Lennon was 1½ years old, we started with the infant class. It was impressive to see Lennon who had been language delayed, pick up ASL so quickly. His language skyrocketed! Once Lennon started communicating through ASL, he did not want to use his cochlear implants. I gave him the choice and he didn't want to use them at all.

Then Covid-19 hit and we went to distance learning mode. It has been a little bit frustrating for me as a mom because I want so much to meet other parents, and become immersed in the Deaf community.

My advice to parents is that everyone has their own journey, but Deaf children need visual language in order to have access regardless of their hearing level. Also, it is important to start learning to sign as early as possible...preferably when your child is first born. If you want advice about Deaf children, ask people from the Deaf Community.

**About my internship...**

My experience with my son inspired me to go back to graduate school and get my master's degree in Deaf Education.

I love my internship at CSD. I am learning more in just a few weeks of practical experience here than I could possibly learn in a college classroom. My mentor, Rita Ribera, is "champ"! She has welcomed me and included me as a part of her team. I appreciate that collaboration. I've been doing all of the things to prepare me for becoming a teacher—lesson plans, teaching class, coming up with creative ideas for children's activities, getting materials together for projects. We are coming up with creative ways to meet our students' needs through Zoom.

My dream job would be to work with Early Start and help support families with new babies.