

Dear Mom and Dad,

This letter is a reflection of my educational experience growing up. Looking back on it, my education was truly a positive experience although it didn't always seem that way to me. You both decided to move in order for me and my siblings to attend one of the best deaf schools in the country. You both raised me in a bilingual environment in which I thrived. As a result of my educational experience, I feel confident in my academic and social skills and that will help carry me through the rest of my life as a deaf woman.

I feel very fortunate to be raised by deaf parents who gave me your time and attention to encourage my language development at a very early age. I have always enjoyed learning language and that was always encouraged. I also feel fortunate that I never felt badly about being unable to speak and hear – which I believe is why I am comfortable with being deaf in a predominantly hearing world. That value was further reinforced at school, so I was able to focus almost entirely on my writing and reading skills rather than worry about speaking. At this progressive school, my ASL skills constantly improved as well. I feel lucky to be bilingual when so many students in America are not.

I believe I got a well rounded education at my school. Truthfully, I do not have much to compare it to, but at Gallaudet where students from all educational backgrounds come together, I performed well academically. A lot of that is because of my background knowledge in various academic disciplines such as history, science, English, and so on.

Finally, I want to discuss my social skills. I really believe that my experiences growing up are on par with hearing students. I experienced all the different aspects of school life such as friendships, enemies, romances, cliques, the list goes on. I also struggled with depression after puberty, and I can compare my experience in high school with memoirs I've read about depression. I can honestly say that being deaf did not set me apart from my peer group, nor did it cause any difficulties for me. I truly believe that gave me an excellent foundation for dealing with things in my adult life. Because of my positive experiences growing up, I never had any problems with hearing people so I view them as equals. That has enabled me to develop healthy and productive relationships in the hearing world. Because of that, I've been able to date hearing men, participate in several political rallies, and work in a hearing environment.

To sum it up, I know that raising a child in the deaf educational system isn't easy even for deaf parents like you. There are a lot of challenges and sometimes the answers aren't always easy. Looking back on everything, I think that I got a good education at my school as well as a solid foundation for life. It wasn't perfect, but a lot of things could have been different, but anyone could say the same about their educational experience. I emerged as a bilingual person who will be a functional member of society. That's really all you can ask for. For that, I thank you.

Love, xxx