



Kids As Self Advocates

## How My School Has Accommodated Me

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By Zach Feist

*Zach Feist, a fourth grader in North Dakota, has a hearing impairment. This does not keep him from being active. He tells us about his accommodations in this helpful one-pager.*

Hi my name is Zachary Allen Feist. I am 10 years old, and live in North Dakota. I am in the 4th grade. I have a lot of good friends here. I like to play football and basketball, and I am in Pee Wee wrestling. I also like to sing and I like to fish. My favorite football team is the Green Bay Packers. My favorite players are Antonio Freeman and Ahman Green. I also like to play with my dogs. My best friend is in the 6th grade, his name is Kyle. I like all sports and also play baseball in the summer.

I am going to tell you a little bit more about me. I have a **hearing impairment**. Almost like being deaf but not quite. I have hearing aides in both ears. I just got new ones that are stronger and computerized. They are really neat. If I am in a loud area, I can control how much I hear. Sometimes, I can hear people tell secrets with my hearing aides.

I get help in school for my hearing impairment. I have an **IEP\***, which is an **Individual Education Plan**. This is from the federal law of IDEA (Individuals with Education Act). My mom helped me with that. **This helps me so I can get a good education like the rest of my class.** I am in the same class with the other kids my age. I have a lot of teachers. I have my regular 4th grade teacher, a teacher for the hearing impaired, a speech teacher, and a reading teacher. My favorite subject is Math. The hardest subject for me is social Studies because we have so much work to do in it.

**I sit in the front of the class**, so I can read the teachers lips as well as hear her talk with my auditory trainer. **An auditory trainer is like hearing aides, except the teacher wears a microphone, and I wear the other piece like the hearing aide.** It cuts down on all the background noises in the classroom, and wherever she goes I can hear it. Which can be kind of funny. **I also have carpet** under some of the desks in the classroom. It is to help cut down on the noise in the room. My hearing impaired teacher helps me to understand if I missed something that the teacher said. She and the speech teacher help me to talk better. Last year, our class did a fair on disabilities. It was a lot of fun and helped the other kids understand about how it is for kids with disabilities to live. My friends help me a lot, when I don't always hear. In Phys. Ed. Class and in music class, I don't wear my auditory trainer. I wear my hearing aides. In Phys. Ed the teacher knows to look at me when he is talking and telling us what we are going to play. In Music, **we are learning sign language** for a song in our next play.

I don't use sign language right now, but know some sign language. Sign language has been fun to learn. It is speaking with your hands. Some of the other kids in Music have to memorize the words but I get the song sheets to follow along with the music. That really helps me. I am with my hearing impaired teacher every day and speech teacher two days a week. I like going to their rooms because we sometimes play games. It is fun.

Sometimes the kids don't think I can do some of the things I can do. Sometimes it hurts my feelings but my friends keep helping me. They help me so others don't make fun of me. Especially Kyle. **I have a fun time in most everything I do.** The kids and I like to share jokes with each

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other.

Pee Wee wrestling will be starting soon. When I wrestle I don't wear my hearing aides. **The coaches have made hand signals for me to understand what moves I should do during the matches.** Usually the referee knows that I can't hear and they tap me to know when to begin and end. Sometimes I feel scared on the mat because I have had to wrestle kids bigger than I am. I have won a lot of medals in wrestling. I have wrestled for the past 5 years. **I really have to do a lot of lip reading.**

I have gone to school since I was three year old. I would like other kids with a disability to know that even though sometimes it is harder than for most kids, there are people and friends to help us along the way. **We need one another.** I hope this will help others. I had a good time writing about my life and disability.

\*For more on IEP's, see [www.fape.org](http://www.fape.org). FAPE is the Family & Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE) project. This is a project, which aims to inform and educate families and advocates about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and promising practices

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