Greg Hubert lives in Naperville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago with his wife Shelley and two daughters who are deaf. Nicole uses bilateral cochlear implants and developed her listening and spoken language skills through an auditory-verbal approach. She has been mainstreamed since three months of age in the infant program at Montessori school. She is now in middle school with a Section 504 plan. Josselin didn’t receive any help in the first six years of her life in her native country of Honduras. She cannot benefit from hearing technology. The Hubert family, including Nicole, learned cued speech to help Josselin develop communication and language skills. Josselin is now learning sign language in a junior high program that uses conceptually accurate signed English. Greg is also the oldest son of two parents who are deaf. He can be reached through email at gregoryLhubert@att.net.

Preface

In 2002, with the support of the United States Access Board and the Acoustical Society of America, a classroom acoustics standards document “ANSI/ASA S12.60-2002 Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements, and Guidelines for Schools” (ANSI S12.60-2002) was approved. Yet today, the implementation of standards for classroom listening conditions (acoustics) remains voluntary across most of the U.S.A.

We have a new advocacy opportunity with the change in Federal Government leadership in Washington, D.C. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has also taken a leadership role by making classroom acoustics a national priority of its public policy agenda.

Early ID and Intervention Meets Classroom Noise

My conversations with other parents on the subject of classroom listening conditions often turn to two of my father’s favorite questions. “Why?” and “How come?” My dad was born in the USA in an era long ago when a child who was deaf didn’t usually get help until it was time to start elementary school. He was deprived of access to communication and language until he was five years old, so English language literacy is not one of his strengths.

Today, we are so incredibly blessed by newborn screening, hearing technology, and early intervention services. We recognize the vital importance of bathing our young children in the communication and language that surrounds them. However by the time our child gets to the elementary school classroom, we seem to value only the teacher-to-student communication. As long as our child is using an FM system or sound field system for the teacher’s voice, and our child is getting good grades, everything is great. Right?

Have we forgotten the voices of all the other students in the classroom and our child’s essential connection to his/her classroom peers? Why? How come?

Let me take a step back and ask you about your own listen-