

Hello Room 21! How are all my Dolphins doing? My name is Casey Rohrer and I'm an 11th grader at Mira Costa High School. I have the honor of being Anna's older and wiser brother. Anna and Ms. Cederquist, thank you for having me here today to teach your fellow classmates all about including others, what it is like living with a disability, and how my experience was at Hermosa View being a student with a disability.

I heard this week your school is having a campaign called "Start with Hello." What a great way to start a new school year. To talk about including everyone and making everyone feel welcomed and part of your class and school.

Raise your hand if you are new to Hermosa View this year. Raise your hand if you have ever joined a new team or club. Raise your hand if you have ever felt different than others, your friends, your classmates, or your siblings.

At some point we have all been new to a class or felt different from our friends. That is what is so great about "Start with Hello" week because it is a reminder to be kind and include everyone.

I loved elementary school at Hermosa View but at first I was nervous to go to school because I have a disability called cerebral palsy. It has made me unable to speak. Can you imagine!? I was worried that I would have trouble making friends and being included.

Does anyone know what cerebral palsy is?

Cerebral means your "brain's cerebrum".

Can you all find and touch where your brain is?

Good Job.

The "cerebrum" is the part of the brain that controls your motor movement.

Can you wiggle your arms?

Good your cerebrum is working.

Now wiggle your legs.

Good Job.

Your "cerebrum" is helping you move your legs.

Now freeze, don't move!

"Palsy" describes the paralysis of movement in your body parts. Meaning you can't move.

All of you are able to control your body and its movements. A person, like me, with cerebral palsy is not able to do that. Cerebral palsy is a disorder that affects a person's ability to move their own body, and for some of us, even speak.

When I was a student at Hermosa View my teachers and classmates made me feel included every day by having me talk about my weekend or what I did the night before. My teachers taught my classmates when they asked a question or came to talk to me, to make sure to give me time to type my answer, and let me speak.

My favorite memory from elementary school was when I got my very first Tobii. A day I will never forget. Tobii is this amazing computer device I have that makes me able to speak. It has an eye gaze reader that reads where my eyes are looking at the screen. This means I am able to type out everything I want to say, and speak just by looking at the screen and using my eyes to select letters. I can even surf the web, watch YouTube, Facetime, text, and make phone calls using my Tobii. It is my communication hero.

It is not easy living with a disability. What is hard about living with cerebral palsy? You could spend several days a week at a hospital, instead of with your friends at school. So you may not know your classmates as well as others. Or you may miss assignments and need friends to see that you could use some help. Not fun, right?

Another thing that makes it hard to live with cerebral palsy is that I don't fit on playground equipment. Can you imagine not being able to play outside at recess? Even though I am in a wheelchair, my friends included me during recess by having me join in their activities. In a game called "toss the ball", instead of tossing the ball, they would come set the ball in my lap and then another student would come and take the ball from me. This made me feel awesome and helped me to participate in recess.

Another thing that made it hard having cerebral palsy when I was your age was that I could not sit in a class circle "criss-cross applesauce." It made me feel sad and different. Hey, but the bonus was, sitting in the wheelchair made me the tallest kid in my class until about third grade. Sometimes my teacher would have students sit in chairs next to me so I didn't feel different. Again, feeling included. Also, it was difficult for me to play with friends inside the classroom too when I was your age, I could not sit on the floor to play, someone had to be with me to move the toys and build for me. Thanks to my nice friends in class they helped me.

My experience at Hermosa View was a great one, thanks to the teachers and students here. They "started with hello" and that grew into friendships. The teachers and my classmates did a great job including me in all school activities. Your teacher Ms. Cederquist and my old second grade teacher, Ms. Miller, one year did a Thanksgiving play together, and I played the turkey! It was such a great experience for me and kicked off my passion for acting and theater. Being included was life changing. Feeling included is life changing. Does it feel good to feel alone? No. Does it feel amazing being included? Always.

Thank you for listening. Anna, I am glad I was able to come and hopefully teach you and your classmates a thing or two.

I hope you take this away from today. You always have the choice to be kind and include others or not... Always choose kind. You give kindness, you get kindness.

Starting with hello will not only make someone else feel great, it will make you feel great too.

Before I ask if you have any questions, please remember to be patient while I respond; remember I have to type out my answer with my eyeballs. Thank you very much and do you have any questions?