



Much like the all school play, when Nicholas was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the all school activity was to present an American tribute through the alphabet. Each letter stood for an important figure in American history, or an important event or location across our country. To emphasize the connection of the letter to the person, place, or event – each child was given a line or two to deliver at a microphone when the proper time came. Nicholas was selected for “L” and Abraham Lincoln.

We were given the script and asked to work with our child to rehearse the line. No one was able to take their papers on the stage during the activity. They had to memorize it and recall it when it was time. Nicholas has always had a marvelous memory. We always joked that to learn to spell, all we needed to do was Nicholas a dictionary and he would memorize each word. Generally, once he saw something, he knew it. Learning in a transition manner, was a different story, which was difficult. But looking at a few lines of text and repeating it. He had no problem with that element.

For this particular presentation, all the kids had to wear a T-shirt made just for the show. The teachers required that this be tucked into the jeans they wanted them to wear. This was our challenge. Nicholas never wore his shirts tucked in. He thought they were uncomfortable and if Mr. Sensory didn't like it, he didn't do it. In fact, on some of his clothing we had to cut out the tags on the inside because they bother his neck. The thought of tucking in the shirt, keeping it there was a new challenge. He was also going to be on stage, and Mr. Rocker generally didn't hold still. This is not just a Nicholas challenge; most 2nd grades have a difficult time holding still for an extended period of time.

We dropped Nicholas off at his classroom; shirt tucked in and hoped it would stay that way. My wife was smart, she grabbed a pair of relatively tight jeans so that once tucked in a relatively comfortable from the car ride, the shirt wouldn't move when we left the car and thus perhaps we wouldn't challenge the shirt-tucking rule. We went off to the auditorium.

As with prior public appearances, we scouted out exit strategies, child transfer options and hoped for the best. When Nicholas' class appeared, he had his shirt tucked in and they proceed up on stage. This was his first time on stage. He was placed at the end of the stage (another smart move on the teachers part, she knew that he shouldn't be in the middle between a lot of kids, that just wouldn't work so she placed him on the end with an exit to behind stage if necessary). In addition, the teacher supplied him and another child with a folding chair to use in the instance that they needed to sit or withdraw temporarily.

As the show started, Nicholas participated. He put on goofy sunglasses, and other costume items/ props. He waited his turn. Knowing that he was the “L” was anxiety since we knew it would be awhile for his performance, but on the other hand, this time through he sat down when he needed to and stood when he could. He was learning to self-regulate. This was critical for



self-development. This was not luck, Katie and therapists had been working for years on coping mechanisms that we tried to reinforce at home as best we could.

As the “L” letter approached we got excited. Then it was his turn. We walked calmly up to the microphone and said his lines flawlessly! He turned and went back to his spot. Then the play progressed. We were very proud. Katie and I got a little tear in our eyes. Nicholas can do anything; sometimes I think we’re more anxious about events than he is.

That night Nicholas taught us that he doesn’t get nervous with public speaking, when it’s a topic that has been rehearsed and he knows his material. I think all the “shows” with his sister over the years has combated any nervousness.