Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Henry S. Redfield, July 23, 1897

799 July 23rd, 1897. Mr. Henry S. Redfield. Esq. My Dear Sir:—

The account of your son's progress in study is most interesting and very gratifying and I thank you for kindly allowing me to know of it. It is becoming more and more the desire of parents to place their deaf children very early under the same educational influences as their hearing children enjoy, and the question of how to do this wisely and with a view to obtaining the best results is one which needs careful consideration. The conditions of transfer from the care and instruction of a teacher, skilled in work with deaf children, to that of one unfamiliar with such teaching, should be as favorable as possible for the child, so that the difficulties which naturally confront him at this time may not seem too great to be easily overcome. If possible to secure continuance of the services of the teacher from whom he goes, for the first six months of his course with hearing children, it would be well to have her follow closely all that is required of the class to which he is admitted and to watch his work, supplementing the class instruction by special teaching at home as she sees the need of it. Possibly a longer time than six months would be necessary for this supervision of the child's work, but that point could be determined by the child's own sense of need. It seems only reasonable to allow the child to know that as he must depend so largely upon his eyes for his instruction he should accept all the help he can get from a special teacher or a class-mate who hears what he sometimes fails to see or to comprehend. This first stage, in experience in a school with hearing children, your son has happily passed and with remarkably good results as shown by his marks. I would, however, suggest that as each year in a school course brings added requirements it may be advisable to ask if the teacher of his class will give him an hour or more, out of school time, to prevent him from becoming distrustful of his ability to keep in rank with the best in his class. This arrangement would, no doubt, meet the approval of the teacher as she

would not only have the pleasure of seeing the advancement of her pupil, but of receiving an addition to her 2 800 salary.

With kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Redfield, I am,

Yours sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell