

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Serena Preston

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Alternatives in Education* Oral History project

Interview # EA-A-L-2018-060

Serena Preston, the Superintendent of the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key, Alternatives in Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Wednesday, Aug 8, 2018    Location: School for the Visually Impaired,  
Jacksonville, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio/Digital video: Digital Audio

Interviewer: John Perkins, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 1:31 / 1.52 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 9, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield,  
Illinois.

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# Abstract

## Serena Preston, Alternatives in Education, EA-A-L-2018-060

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Serena Preston is the Superintendent of the School for the Visually Impaired, located in Jacksonville, Illinois. The school is governed and funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services; Department of Rehabilitation Services. Ms. Preston was born in Independence, Missouri in July 1966. Her father, Charles Hampton, was an auto body repairman/painter and her mother Myrna was a homemaker. She attended elementary and secondary school in Independence. She graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled in MacMurray College, Jacksonville, Illinois. She graduated in 1988 with a degree in Special Education, specializing in learning disabilities/social emotional disabilities. She continued her education and received a Masters' degree in special education: visually handicapped and is completing a Doctorate in educational organization and leadership.

Serena married her husband Tim in 1985 and they have two children. She taught at Waverly Elementary from 1988 to 1997 and took a position at the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired in 1997, where she continues to work. She has been a high school math teacher, behavior specialist, principal and superintendent.

Ms. Preston's describes the special population being served at the School for the Visually Impaired, and how this school addresses each student's individual needs. There is a large range of visual handicapping conditions, coupled with other special needs requiring specific services to maximize learning for each and all students. Serena describes the physical facilities at Jacksonville and the ways these facilities were adapted to serve their special populations. The school was founded in 1849 and is located on eighteen acres, with facilities to accommodate residential as well as students in grades K-12+, transported to the school from surrounding communities. Day students make up 10-15% of the total population. Ms. Preston discusses curriculum, core academics, daily schedules, life skills learned in nine specific areas, and student movement throughout the campus. She discusses how students participate in sports, intra and extra-curricular activities, field trips, clubs and advisory committees. She also describes the school's protocols and policies regarding teacher requirements, certification and professional development.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** School for the Visually Impaired; teaching visually impaired students; Jacksonville, Illinois; parental involvement for impaired students; staff development for schools with special needs children; technology for visually impaired students; educational assessments for visually impaired students; Illinois Department of Human Services

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