



**Winner of Young Indonesian Writers Award 2009
(Junior High School Category)**

Sri Andiani



My name is Sri Andiani, and I was born in Surabaya on 30 August, 1995. My parents are Sri Gutomo and Sinta Nursimah, and they are both entrepreneurs. I am the eldest of three siblings with two brothers, Sri Arda Andiarto (8) and Sri Arbi Ardiawan (7).

As I have said in my essay, *The Struggle to Enter School*, I have a hearing and speech impairment, and have been using a hearing aid in the form of cochlear implant since I was 3 years old.

I attended the Sekolah Alam Insan Mulia Elementary School in Surabaya on Jl. Medokan Semampir Indah, Surabaya.

During these years, I have won many school competition. For example, I won first place writing competition with a biography of the prophet Muhammad SAW, second place in drawing competition with a drawing of Ibu Kartini's face, and third place in a competition on Islamic calligraphy.

In addition, I was appointed to give a speech and read a poem on the inauguration of the Jala Puspa Children Observation Park, which was attended by then President Megawati Sukarnoputri in 2004. I designed the cover of the book of Aurica Foundation in 2006. I also received the Alexander Graham Bell scholarship when I was in fourth grade in 2004. I am now in third grade of Alam Insan Mulia Surabaya Junior High school. In 2007 I took part in the Biology Olympics for East Java.



My story reflects the difficulties in participating in the development to help the country progress through education. Children with hearing and speech impairments who have learned to speak and hear through hearing aids and through training always have a problem finding schools that would accept them. Public schools normally refuse them, fearing they cannot integrate with other children who have no special needs. But these kids cannot go to a School for Special Needs Children because they are not suitable for it. They are already able to speak and hear - what is the use of going to a school that uses visual communication and sign language? Their ability to hear and speak will decline because the school environment requires them to use sign language instead of verbal language. Inclusive schools are a good idea, but they do not have adequate supports and facilities.

If these kids are facilitated and given the same chance with children who have no special needs, they can accomplish the same as their fellow students and can face the competitive world. In my opinion, people often see just one side of an issue. As a result, the “normal” kids have the wrong understanding and perception about people with special needs. This is because they are separated in education. When they grow up and become leaders, they are not equipped with accurate picture about their “friends” with special needs, who are also able to accomplish as well as them.

Children with special needs must be facilitated and given opportunities to achieve because they are actually capable of. Isn't the responsibility to carry on the torch of the nation lies in the hands of all children, whether or not they have special needs? With my writing I hope that children with or without special needs are given the chance and facility for education so they can work towards developing and building the nation.