

## 4 Back-to-School Tips for Teachers of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students



Back to school means dealing with 'summer slide'. Many students start the academic year with lower achievement levels than where they were at the end of the school year. On average, typical hearing students' achievement scores drop by one month of school-year learning<sup>1</sup>. This is especially true for math, but also for reading, especially for students with any disadvantages.

Due to hearing loss, our students are exposed to less incidental language learning and are even more prone for summer slide deficits than their hearing peers.

Read more for how to identify the summer slide effect, and the best ways to jump in and get learning going to close this and other existing learning gaps.

### Tip 1: Look at end-of-year performance as your starting point

Especially for students who are continuing on your caseload, you should be able to look back to the performance monitoring results you did at the end of the year. During the first week or so you see your students check these progress benchmarks for slippage. Any performance that is still where it was at the end of the school year is a win! Look at the present levels of performance from the last IEP and gauge how much improvement has been made from when they were written. IEP goals, present levels of performance, and the most recent progress monitoring information are powerful tools in determining the best places to start with your students.



### Tip 2: If he learned it once, it should come easier the second time

Starting the year with quick successes makes you and the student feel good. Areas of deficit you identify due to summer slump should be targeted for review and relearn. You need the solid foundation of last year to build upon this year. 'Getting up to speed' is common the first month or so of the school year and even more important when students have communication access issues and pre-existing academic performance gaps.



### Tip 3: Strengthen coping skills, set expectations for student responsibilities

New classes mean being with students who may have never had a peer who is hard of hearing or deaf. It also means learning from teachers who may have limited experience or knowledge about the accommodations and strategies that best support learning for each individual student with hearing loss. As you start your sessions with your students, emphasize that they DO have some coping skills; they DO know how to advocate for themselves in classroom situations and when interacting with peers. Do some situation role playing. Go over the [Before LIFE-R](#) questions. Discuss the situations and advocacy strategies from the [What's the Problem Game](#). Use the [Accessibility Considerations Worksheet](#) with your student to discuss communication in each school situation – what works, accommodations needed, and what he or she is responsible for requesting/doing. New classes = a new start. Help make it a strong one!



#### Tip 4: Check attitudes about HAT – hearing assistance technology

Too often students have gotten out of the habit of wearing their personal amplification during all waking hours over summer break. This can reinforce the false belief that they really don't need to use their personal devices. This desire to be 'normal' is powerful! Also, when students move from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school, many see it as an opportunity for a fresh start with new peers who don't already know them as 'the kid who wears those hearing things'. Too often they begin to resist wearing personal devices or refuse to wear their FM/DM

devices in the classroom. Discussion centered around questions from [Living in the World with Hearing Loss: What Other People May Think can](#) help to reset the false belief. Their ability to hear without devices hasn't magically changed. Their performance in communication situations won't be any better when they cannot hear as well as possible. Tweens/teens can take the [Secondary School Survey](#) and learn that their attitudes aren't very different from other kids who use hearing devices. If you are a [Teacher Tools Takeout Subscriber](#), pick a couple of Kool Kidz Vidz to show to your student and discuss similarities/differences between them and the students in the videos. Best yet, if possible, get students with similar technology together in a Zoom call to go over care and operation of HAT and ways to handle teacher issues and student reactions. The MOST POWERFUL support for continued hearing device use comes from facilitated discussion with peers who also have hearing devices.



#### The most important day of a person's education is the first day of school, not Graduation Day. *Harry Wong*

The DHH professional is often the only adult a student comes into contact with that they feel truly understands what it's like to be a kid at school who uses hearing devices or sign language. Knowing that you 'have their back', that they can ask you anything, that you give non-judgmental support, is what helps to make our students look forward to seeing their DHH professional. Better yet, they see you as being in the magic position of being able to see other students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Knowing that others share the same challenge can provide hope and strength and role models for surviving these challenges. Academic performance is important. Addressing IEP goals is necessary. Advocating with a student's educators is routine. Providing emotional and inspirational support, along with keys to surviving and thriving in school - precious!

**"This is a new year. A new beginning. And things will change." – Taylor Swift**



1. [Summer learning loss: What is it, and what can we do about it? \(brookings.edu\)](#)