

THE ROAD TO A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR!

I don't know about you, but I love back to school season. It's such an exciting time as your child starts a new school year, has new experiences, and makes new friends. For families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, there can be some extra steps beyond buying school supplies and packing that cute little backpack. Let's talk about how you can set your child up for success as they head back to school.

Hi, I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway with Hearing First. We're here to help and support families just like yours who have a child with hearing loss. We want to empower you as your child learns to listen, talk, read, and thrive, just like kids with typical hearing.

This video is for parents with a school aged child, meaning kindergarten or older. If you're preparing for the transition into daycare or preschool, there's a different video for you. Check the description below for those links.

Now, sometimes back to school preparation for kids with hearing loss starts before the school year even ends. Why? Often IEP or 504 meetings happen in the spring or summer, but there are some things you can do to get your child ready for the start of the school year before they actually head back. In this video, I'll share some tips so you and your child feel confident and comfortable for the first day of school. And if you have some of your own back to school tips, leave a comment below to help other parents.

One of the easiest things to do in the weeks leading up to the first day of school is to talk about their new classroom and teacher. Talk about what's different about this grade than the last one. What new experiences might they have? If your child's teacher shared their schedule, you can walk through it together. Identify where in the day your child might need to pay more attention to their listening environments.

For example, talk about who is responsible for the remote microphone during the transition to gym or music class or library time. Another suggestion for parents is to reach out to the teacher and see if you and your child can visit the week or two before school's back in session. This lets your child see their classroom and meet their teacher.

Take pictures of the classroom while you're there and the different spaces, maybe the cubbies or the lockers, and then you can keep talking about the classroom after you get home. Making the unfamiliar more familiar will help your child feel comfortable walking into their first day. Well, if it's been a long and fun summer, your child might be out of their school rhythm and routine.

Set expectations with your child about their responsibility with their hearing devices. This will look different depending on their age, but you should expect them to take on more and more responsibility each year.

Back to school is a great time to raise that bar and help your child develop their advocacy skills and independence. What does that look like? Well, you could say and have the discussion, "Now that you're a third grader, this means it's your job to check your batteries every morning and make sure your ears are ready to go for the day."

Of course, as a parent, you're still going to be making sure their hearing devices are charged and ready, but it's a good idea to start having your child think about that every day so that it becomes second nature to them.

Also, I recommend you talk with your child about how they can handle different situations and practice together at home. Remind them that it's their job to let their teacher know if they need something repeated or if there's a problem with their hearing devices. Talk about what happens when the classroom gets noisy. How do they talk with their friends when the cafeteria gets loud? And what will they do if the teacher is wearing a remote microphone, but it is not working?

Having your child think about these listing situations and how they could handle them can help them feel confident about what to do if and when that challenge does arise. Consider how your child will share with the class about their hearing loss and devices.

For a younger child like a kindergartner or first grader, you could talk to the teacher about coming in and helping your child share with the class. Older kids can give a presentation by themselves. This is another great way to practice their self-advocacy skill. We have a great helpful worksheet called All About Me that's great just for this. You and your child can use it for back to school to share more information about themselves, including their hearing loss. Download it for free using the link below. Hearing First wishes you and your child a super successful and wonderful school year, and we hope this video gives you some confidence in how you can support your child.

Wherever you are on this journey, and however you may be feeling, you are not alone. Hearing First is here to help you every step of the way. Connect with other families for advice and support in the Facebook group for families of children with hearing loss and subscribe to the YouTube channel for the latest videos. Be sure and visit hearingfirst.org to find more resources and information.