Encouraging independence

Strategies that **make a difference**
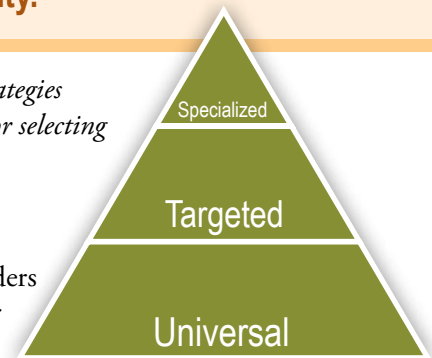
Knowing and being able to use variety of strategies that foster independence allows students to enjoy positive interactions with others and actively participate in their school community.

Choose the statement below that best describes how this student handles strategies that encourage independence. This will help you identify a starting point for selecting strategies (e.g., 1=specialized, 2=targeted, 3=universal).

- ☐ 1. Requires individual, specific supports in order to increase independence related to daily tasks and activities
- ☐ 2. Requires frequent (e.g., more than three times per day) reminders and support to attempt tasks independently, solve problems or come up with a solution
- ☐ 3. May require occasional (e.g., less than twice a day) reminders to attempt tasks independently, solve problems or come up with a solution

(pyramid diagram: Specialized / Targeted / Universal)

Universal Supports benefit all students

- ☐ Help students develop an understanding of what independent behaviour is through class discussion, storybooks, examples from literature and **role-play**.
- ☐ Develop **classroom routines** that promote and facilitate independence by providing step-by-step procedures for frequent classroom tasks and learning activities.
- ☐ Teach student specific strategies that support independence, such as:
  - **What to Do When I'm Stuck.**
- ☐ Teach, practise and review these routines and strategies at beginning of school year and at regular intervals throughout the year. Model and practise each strategy. Start with a limited number of steps (e.g., one to three) and gradually add more steps.
- ☐ Post **visual reminders** of both the importance of taking responsibility for your own learning and the importance of working independently.
- ☐ Post **visual reminders** of routines and strategies so students can reference them throughout the day. When appropriate, collaborate with students to develop these visual reminders.
- ☐ Use descriptive feedback to reinforce individual students, groups of students and/or the whole class when they demonstrate independent behaviour in various contexts and situations.

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Targeted Supports benefit students with more specific needs

☐ Pair individual students with positive peers who can serve as role models and provide support. Rotate these peers at regular intervals throughout the school year.

☐ Provide proximity by positioning yourself nearby individual students who may require support and encouragement in following specific routines that require independent behaviour.

☐ Work with individual students to develop low-key **cues and prompts** (e.g., pointing to the chart for classroom routines to remind the students what they are supposed to do next or "thumbs up" to encourage students to continue persevering with a task).

☐ Provide personalized visual checklists for routines and place them on the student's desk where he or she can see and use them independently. Some students may wish to carry the checklists with them. These visuals can also include cues for positive **self-talk**, such as "I can do it" or "Keep trying."

☐ Develop **self-monitoring strategies** students can use to reflect on and keep track of routines and tasks they complete on their own.

☐ Set up a systematic approach to **reinforcement** for students who are working on improving their independent work habits. Reinforcement should encourage moving toward intrinsic motivation (e.g., "How does it feel when you …?").

> Parents know their children well and can offer insights on how to support their social and emotional well-being. There is strength in collaborating on strategies that could be used at home, at school and in the community.

Specialized Supports benefit the small number of students with sensory, physical, cognitive or behavioural needs that require intensive, individualized interventions

☐ In exceptional cases, an individual student may need 1:1 adult support to facilitate participation in classroom routines, learning activities and social interactions with other students. This support should be provided as unobtrusively as possible. In addition, the adult providing this 1:1 should collaborate with the student's learning team to identify and facilitate as many ways as possible to create opportunities, provide strategies, modify activities and adjust and/or fade support so the student can experience some degree of independence throughout the school day.

For more information and strategies, see:

LearnAlberta.ca
(Keyword: Positive Behaviour Support)

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