**Establish the Independence Goals in the Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

**Step 1** Educator provides explicit instruction

- Lessons are brief and targeted, supporting the student’s learning profile. May include incorporating environmental prompts into the demonstration. Actions are adult driven - student is the observer. Student practice with prompts should immediately follow demonstration. Carefully monitor the progress of the student to ensure the pace is appropriate.

**Step 2** Educators prompt, question, facilitate, support and guide instruction to meet expectation and to address student needs

- Plan should be to prompt - reinforce - fade. Educator gives instruction then follows predetermined prompting plan. Prompts may be immediate following the instruction or a delay before the prompt is provided. Provide immediate reinforcement if the student engages in the desired skill. Reinforcement provides the motivation for the student to learn and to begin to perform the skill independently. Collect and review data on the acquisition of the new skill to ensure the prompt is working and to determine when to begin the process of fading. Ensure generalization by teaching the skill across different places, people, and materials. As the student becomes successful in performing the skill, it is essential that the educator begin to fade the prompt. If success is not evident, review data and revise your plan.

**Step 3** Gradual release of responsibility to student. Students may practice and apply their learning while interacting with their peers

- Gradual release of responsibility to student begins through prompt fading and increasing expectations that earn reinforcement. Prompts can be placed along three dimensions: intensity, gradually reduce the amount of help being provided; time, gradually and longer intervals of time between the instruction and the prompt; spatial distance, gradually increase the distance between the student and the educator. Monitor reinforcement and adjust as appropriate, based on student response and preference. Continue to plan for generalization by practicing and fading prompts across people, places, and materials as required. Continue to collect data on skill acquisition.

**Step 4** Students consolidate information and solidify their understanding by applying what they have learned in a new situation

- Continue to collect data on skill acquisition based on success criteria over an appropriate timeline. Develop a monitoring plan including transition considerations. These may include, but are not limited to: gradual increase in the degree of independence demonstrated during each session, time as an indicator of student readiness to move to more independent behavior, and the rate of skill acquisition.

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**Hierarchy of Prompts for TEACHING SKILLS**

- **Full Physical Prompts:**
  - Hand over hand assistance
  - Partial hand over hand assistance
  - Usually used to initiate the task

- **Partial Physical Prompts:**
  - Gentle physical guidance to support the student to initiate the task
  - Converse verbal cues to help the student respond correctly

- **Minimal Physical Prompts:**
  - Shaping the student through demonstration, what the expectation is
  - The student begins the task when prompted with an object

- **Direct Verbal Prompts:**
  - The student begins the task when prompted with an object
  - Visual representation of the task is provided to the student (e.g., photos, picture communication symbols)

- **Model Prompt:**
  - When the educator tells a group or uses a form associated with the task to initiate the task

- **Object Prompts:**
  - The student will begin the task when an adult prompts or uses gestures

- **Visual Prompts:**
  - The prompt occurs normally in the environment

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**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Administrator**
- Provide opportunities for capacity building among staff to facilitate pathways to student independence
- Facilitates scheduling that will support student movement towards independence
- Collaborate with the IEP development team
- Monitor the implementation of the IEP

**Classroom Teacher/Educator/Early Childhood Educator (ECT)**
- Collaborate in the development of the independence goals as part of the IEP
- Program for and provide direct instruction in learning skills and work habits including independence skills
- Plan intentional opportunities for the student to develop independence
- Classroom teacher evaluates and reports on student progress towards independence goals

**Educational Assistant (EA)**
- Be familiar with student profile and goals as outlined on the IEP
- On an ongoing basis, identify for teaching staff, possible opportunities for the student to move toward increased independence
- Systematically implement strategies using the hierarchy and fading of prompts, to increase student independence
- Assist in the collection of data, for and under the direction of, teaching staff

**Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)**
- Participate in developing independence goals as part of the IEP
- Ensure pertinent staff understand the independence goals identified in the IEP
- Be a resource to staff in understanding the hierarchy and fading of prompts
- Develop transition plans that incorporate independence goals
- Instruct and/or co-instruct students in developing independence skills
- Support the development of data tracking tools to assess student responses to prompts and assist in the analysis of data
- SERT collaborates with classroom teacher in the evaluation of student progress towards independence goals

**Prompts**
- Share information and collaborate on setting and supporting IEP goals related to independence
- Support goals for independence identified in the IEP
- Participate in transition planning specifically in relation to goals of independence

**Student**
- Participate in IEP meetings to set goals and identify possible strategies, to the extent possible
- Participate in transition planning specifically in relation to goals of independence

**Other Professionals**
- Share information and collaborate on setting and supporting IEP goals related to independence
- May provide resources/consultation
- Clarification of community supports to the family
**Fostering Student Independence**

*An Educator’s Guide*

This guide has been developed by the Barrie Region Boards to assist educators and families as they support the pathway to student independence.

The gradual release of responsibility model provides educators with the instructional framework to move from educator supports to student independence.

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**Writing Team**


**Creating Pathway to Success**


**Effective Educational Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders**


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**Launch of the Gradual Release of Responsibility**

By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve the quality of their lives.” - Ontario Ministry of Education

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**Glossary**

**Gradual Release of Responsibility**

Students are given multiple opportunities through each phase to practice and become confident when applying skills or strategies to a new task. Building a culture of independence takes time, but each step paves the way for students to speak up on their own behalf and to take charge of their own learning and life.

**Prompting**

To prompt is an instructional technique used to help students make correct responses until they learn to respond to the instruction independently.

**Fading**

To fade prompts means the educator is gradually reducing the strength of the prompt and building towards student independence.

**Generalization**

The process of taking a skill learned under one condition and the student demonstrating this skill under other conditions. Conditions may include different settings, people, materials, instructions or actions.

**Task Analysis**

Task analysis involves breaking a complex skill into smaller, teachable units, the product of which is a series of sequentially ordered steps or tasks.

**Reinforcement**

The presentation or removal of something immediately following a response/skill which increases the likelihood that the skill/response will occur again.

**Reinforcers**

Something (i.e., stimulus) presented or removed that increases the likelihood that the skill will occur again.

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**A Model for Success for All Students**

This model accommodates a wide variety of developmental levels and is designed to increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social and career development of all students.

Students are given multiple opportunities through each phase to practice and become confident when applying skills or strategies to a new task.

Building a culture of independence takes time, but each step paves the way for students to advocate on their own behalf and to take charge of their own learning and life.