

Fading Support on Purpose

Practical strategies for paraprofessionals

This handout shares how to intentionally fade adult support so students can build independence without being left to struggle. You'll learn when to step back, what to put in place instead, and how to work with teachers to create supports that feel natural, respectful, and effective throughout the day.

STRATEGIES FOR FADING SUPPORT

1. DECIDE WHEN TO STEP BACK

Identify 1–2 specific activities (centers, transitions, lunch, independent work) where you will intentionally provide less intrusive support. Start small by fading one support at a time, rather than pulling everything at once.

Example: Stand a few steps away instead of right next to the student during independent work.

2. USE SUPPORTS THAT DON'T LOOK LIKE "ADULT HELP"

Set up visuals, schedules, timers, or routines so the student doesn't need to rely on verbal prompts. Arrange the environment so materials are easy to find and use independently.

Example: A visual checklist replaces repeated reminders.

3. COORDINATE WITH THE OTHERS

Identify a specific time to check in with the other team members (e.g., before school, prep time, or a quick email). Here are a few things to discuss:

- Simple material changes (fewer problems, larger print, adapted tools)
- Peer support options (partner work, table groups) - The goal is to make the classroom work without constant adult support.

4. OFFER CHOICES IN HOW SUPPORT IS USED

Give the student options instead of deciding for them.

Examples:

- “Do you want a visual reminder or a verbal cue?”
- “Do you want help now, or try it first on your own?”
 - Respect the student’s choice—even if it means stepping back.

5. TEACH THE STUDENT HOW TO SPEAK UP FOR THEMSELVES

Model and practice **simple self-advocacy phrases**, such as:

- “I need help.”
- “I want to try by myself.”
- “Can you show me again?”

Encourage the self-advocacy and step in **after** the student has had a chance to ask or signal.

FADING SUPPORT CHECKLIST

- I chose specific activities where I can step back
- I replaced adult prompts with visuals or routines
- I coordinated with the teacher on materials or peer supports
- I offered the student choices in how support is provided
- I created opportunities for the student to self-advocate

**Reminder: Fading support means adding independence—
not removing help**

For detailed instructions and examples, check out the show notes from The Inclusion Podcast

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