

REFLECT

How can I make this happen in my classroom?

CONSIDER

Evaluate yourself as you foster independence

Fostering independence in learning is not easy. It requires that teachers teach the skills to students so students can adapt and tailor the strategy to their own learning needs. As always, reflection is needed to ensure that this gradual release is productive for student learning.

Here are some tips from experienced combined grade teachers who have done this effectively.

Do not rush this process. Take your time modelling and practicing with students. By going slowly at the beginning, students will gain increased independence and confidence later during the application stage.

Take baby steps when sharing responsibility with students. After teacher-directed modelling, it is important to choose roles for students that are appropriate, manageable and easy to access. As students slowly begin to master these tasks, increase the length and complexity of the tasks.

All students do not learn at the same pace. Some students quickly grasp a concept or skill while other students might need many opportunities to practice and refine their understanding.

To differentiate instruction, clearly lay out your lesson beforehand and encourage students to share responsibility on a variety of levels based on their learning needs and ability.

Ensure that all students are consistently being challenged and valued for their differences in the classroom.

At the end of each lesson, make brief anecdotal notes about student observations based on whole and small group work.

This informal assessment tool will enable you to easily develop small groups for further guided practice and also allow you to target individual students that are ready to demonstrate and share their understanding of a strategy with the whole group.

