

Helping Students Develop Independence

Skills in the Adaptive area of functioning are often related to self-care skills such as feeding, dressing, toileting, hygiene, and responsibility.

Self-Care skills in the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Birth – 5 (FELDS) are included in the *Physical Domain – subdomains: (A). Health and Wellness and (B). Self-Help subdomain*



Take Time to Teach

It is important that teachers plan time in daily class schedules to teach Pre-K students tasks related to self-care, hygiene, group participation, and personal responsibility. These skills build the sense of independence and confidence in young students.

Set up your classroom so that you create opportunities for your students to be independent.

- Placing materials and their personal items at their levels.
- Set up your daily routines and tasks with this question in mind – “How can I teach the task in such a way as to allow him to complete this task without my help?”

Be a good role model.

- Model the skills you are teaching. Talk about what you are doing.
- A good way to be a model is to take turns performing steps of a task with a student. The teacher should do a small step in the sequence of the skill and then ask the student to do it.
- Peers can be excellent role models. Point out the peers’ actions and ask peers to show others how to do what they have already learned.

Incorporate self-care skills into the daily routines and schedules of the classroom. The skills become more meaningful to students if they practice them throughout the day as part of the classroom schedule.

- Re-teach routines and tasks on a regular basis.
- Use visuals such as picture icons and photos. Visual strategies can be used to cue a child that it is time for a certain activity and to show a child the steps of a task.



Use clear and easy-to-follow steps with prompts as needed.



- Analyze tasks to break down skills into small sequential steps.
- Incorporate visual supports to reinforce and clarify verbal directions.
- Provide encouragement and reinforcement throughout the steps of tasks
- Provide assistance throughout the steps of the tasks; but provide this assistance in a systematic method that reduces the intensity of the prompts as the child learns each new step of the skill. Refer to the descriptions of prompt hierarchy in the documents Adaptive Skills in the Classroom and Strategies for Toilet Training, as well as a brief description in this document.
- Don’t forget to use **“Wait Time”** to give your students time to process the directions, recall the steps of the task, and allow for difficulties with language and/or motor processing.

References and Resources

Didomenico, Kelli. *How to Encourage Self Help Skills in Children*, The Children's Workshop, Rhode Island College, Feb. 2015

DiProperzio, Linda. *Teaching Your Child Independence*. Meredith Corporation, 2010.

Gillard, Jackie. *Help Yourself, 8 tips for teaching kids to be more independent*, *Today's Parent*, Sept 2016.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities Extended School Year (ESY) Activities *Home Packet*

Resources online:

Teaching your child to become independent with daily routines, The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning Vanderbilt University.

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module3b/handout2.pdf>

Using Visuals, Center for Disabilities and Technology

http://ctdinstitute.org/sites/default/files/file_attachments/TnT-News-VisualSupports-Oct12.pdf

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)
3280 Progress Drive
FAAST Center, Suite 250
Orlando, FL 32826

Tel: 407-823-3058
Fax: 407-823-1360
Email: tats@ucf.edu
Website: <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>

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