

## 19 Ways to Step Back

1. Acknowledge your impulse to make students' days go smoothly. There's a reason you chose the helping profession.
2. Pause before answering or helping.
3. Sit on your hands for a while task while you practice giving verbal instead of touch cues.
4. The handicap associated with vision loss only stems from lack of information. Pat yourself on the back every time you help with seeing but resist helping with thinking.
5. Schedule in advance a brief task or time period when you commit to no intervention; ... no matter what (unless safety is compromised). See what happens. Reintroduce assistance only as needed.
6. Sit further away. If you have been within arm's reach, sit just within earshot. If you have been sitting just within earshot, sit across the room.
7. Take data instead. Keep a tally of the number of times in a lesson students appropriately go to their classroom teachers instead of other adults.
8. Call on students' learning partners or sighted guides.
9. Unless you are the classroom teacher, catch yourself before you correct students' work. Remember, this is about students' skills ... not yours.
10. Teach students to decline assistance: "Thanks, but please let me try it by myself."
11. Phase out cues.
12. Have students discreetly ask their classmates for information (what page they are on, what is the school lunch, who the teacher is talking to, etc.) Coach them to do this on the telephone in the evening as well as during school hours.
13. Remind yourself that you're stepping back so that students can become independent. It's harmful when you cover for them. Don't be responsible for holding them back in this area.
14. Make sure team members (especially the principal) know your reasons for stepping back so it doesn't seem like you are shirking your responsibilities.
15. Clock how long it takes for students to do things independently. The extra time to start zippers, pick up dropped papers, or find page numbers may seem eternal but actually last only a few seconds.
16. Tell other adults in the classroom that you're going to step back and ask them to remind you when you should do this.
17. Let classroom teachers serve as a clearinghouse for all questions or needs. Students ask their classroom teachers. The classroom teachers then decide to (a) respond themselves, (b) delegate other adults or students to help, or (c) ask the students to try to work it out alone.
18. Let your students make mistakes and get into trouble. It's part of the human experience!
19. Post a sign, "Could I be doing less?"

Source: Hudson, L. J., (1997). Classroom collaboration. Watertown, MA: Perkins School for the Blind.