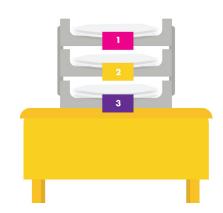# INDEPENDENT WORK SYSTEMS
Guide

Why Use Independent Work Systems?

Independent Work Systems (IWS) provide students with the visual and environmental supports they need to complete work independently.

How Can IWS Help My Students?

IWS provide students with important information like:

1. What work do I need to do?
2. How much work and in what order?
3. How do I know when I'm finished?
4. What do I do next?

Find all Independent Work System templates and visual supports in the Routine Essentials area of the Media Center.

Getting Started

1. **Identify the student's level**
   - Print out the RE Tip Sheet for that level.
2. **Set up the system**
   - Find a designated area to set up the system.
   - Use the guidelines and visuals provided in the tip sheet and set up the system.
3. **Create/gather the work materials**
   - Use the lessons provided in Themes First! for content ideas.
   - Choose activities and lessons the student has previously mastered.
4. **Teach the student to use the system**
   - Find visual supports and other resources in the Independent Work section of Routine Essentials.

Keeping It Going

5. **Rotate activities**
   - Switch out activities frequently so that students remain motivated to complete independent work tasks and get plenty of opportunities to generalize a variety of skills.
6. **Pick activities the student likes**
   - Provide students with a wide range of tasks, including tasks they enjoy. Strategically place high interest tasks after or between low interest tasks. This encourages students to persist with activities that they may not enjoy as much as others.
7. **Move from Level 1 to Level 2 to Level 3**
   - Increase the complexity of the work system after students become competent at the current level.

Tips For Teaching Independent Work Systems

- Set up the system for success:
  a. Provide only the materials needed (just the work to be done in that specific sitting)
  b. Eliminate distractions (clear the space of extra baskets or activities that might confuse the student)
- Use activities at the student's learning level (see RE IW Systems at Levels 1, 2, and 3)
  a. Teach the student to use the system—not the skill
  b. Only provide work that the student has previously mastered
- Initially use prompts to teach the student how to use the system
  a. Prompt from behind, refer student to visual cues, and fade prompts out quickly: the goal is for the student to become independent
- Provide reinforcement for working independently:
  a. Preferred activity, token board, checklist of work completed to take home, etc.
- Use the Independent Work routine for the STAR Program to identify challenging steps and collect data for instructional decision-making