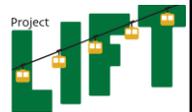


Unpacking Productive Struggle: Supporting Teachers in Conceptualizing Challenge

National Association for Gifted Children
November 19, 2022
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This project is supported under the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program,
PR/Award Number S206A170030, as administered by the OESE, U.S. Department of Education.



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Reflect a moment...

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struggle

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scuffle
brawl grapple fight
exertion writhe
effort wriggle
struggle thrash
strive toil labor
work
wrestle strain battle
tussle

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What Does **Struggle** Look Like?

- Let's brainstorm: What does struggle look like in the classroom? What are some examples of learning situations that cause students to struggle? What are some specific ways that our advanced learners experience struggle?



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Sorting out **Struggle**

- What types or categories of struggle do you see?



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Shifting the Lens

- How might you shift a couple of the examples to be a more *productive* struggle?



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Struggling with Struggle

- What are the challenges of *responding* when students are struggling?



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productive
struggle



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What does *productive struggle* mean?



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Terms for Productive Struggle

- Productive struggle
- Desirable difficulties
- Impasse-driven learning
- Controlled floundering
- Disequilibrium



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Productive Success	Productive Failure
Unproductive Success	Unproductive Failure

Kapur, 2016



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Describing Productive Struggle

“Students expend effort in order to make sense of mathematics, to figure out something that is not immediately apparent” (Hiebert & Grouws, 2007, p. 387)

Productive struggle emerges when a learning task...

- Demands that learners think deeply through challenging problems, concepts, and relationships among ideas
- Reflects value for effort and recognition of the relationship between effort and growth
- Engages learners in monitoring their own response to challenge



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Some Context - Project LIFT (<https://lift.uconn.edu>)

- Javits-funded project focused on general education classrooms at grades 1-3
- Project goals
 - Exploring student behaviors that may be evidence of advanced academic potential
 - Linking instructional practices to the high-potential behaviors students may show
 - Infusing strategies to elicit and support high potential into standards-based instruction for all learners
 - Considering next instructional steps when students demonstrate high-potential behaviors



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Connection to Struggle

- How do we support teachers in engaging all learners in more inquiry-oriented, less teacher-directed activities that may encourage high-potential behaviors to emerge?
- How do we support teachers in responding to the struggles learners encounter in these learning activities?
- How do we help make struggle *productive*?
- How do we help teachers recognize when to help and how much?

“Productive struggle leads to some great thinking and requires perseverance.”



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Professional Learning Activities

- Exploring examples of struggle
- Defining patterns and relationships
- Examining responsive actions
- Recognizing unhelpful types of helping
- Encapsulating productive struggle



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Some Moments Prompting Struggle (Warshauer, 2015)

- Getting started
- Carrying out a process
- Uncertainty in explaining and sense-making
- Expressing misconceptions and errors



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Other Sources of Struggle

- Vocabulary and clarity of instructions
- Interpersonal issues and collaboration
- Fear of taking risks
- *Management* of the learning task



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Supporting Productive Struggle

Supporting productive struggle in the classroom requires attention to...

- Source of the struggle
- Emotional and cognitive elements
- How the struggle is framed
- Supports to promote growth as a result of the experience.
- Potential for experiencing some sense of failure in the process

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Struggle for Teachers, Too

- “Wrapping my head around teaching for the strategy, not the answer”
- Managing “think time” for students
- Assessing when the struggle is productive or unproductive
 - Guiding students in managing their emotional response to struggle
- Deciding how much help to give and at what level
- Providing the opportunity and the context for struggle



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Productive Resolution for Productive Struggle

(Warshauer, 2015; Rodgers, 2017; Jacobs et al. 2014)

- Ask and encourage questions to identify the source of the struggle
 - Use questions that invite thinking and risk-taking
 - Avoid interrupting their strategy
 - Acknowledge without saying “right” or “wrong” as much as possible



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Productive Resolution for Productive Struggle

(Warshauer, 2015; Rodgers, 2017; Jacobs et al. 2014)

- Maintain intended goals and demand of the task
 - Limit “telling” and other moves that take away from their thinking
 - Give time - avoid stepping in too soon or too much and taking the intellectual work away.



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Productive Resolution for Productive Struggle

(Warshauer, 2015; Rodgers, 2017; Jacobs et al. 2014)

- Support student thinking by acknowledging effort
 - Use positive reinforcement and specific praise to acknowledge effort
 - Remind students that struggle is ok
 - Invite students to share ideas even when not fully formed



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Productive Resolution for Productive Struggle

(Warshauer, 2015; Rodgers, 2017; Jacobs et al. 2014)

- Enable students to move forward
 - Encourage identification of the source of the struggle
 - Use questions with care to scaffold
 - Model and encourage stress reduction strategies



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Reflecting on Struggle

- Being open to sharing and the fluidity of what responses could be! Not having concrete categories, etc.
- Sorting the group's larger ideas/thoughts into categories.
- Thinking of how to sort and categorize information.
- Categorizing, but it really improved my understanding
- Some of the activities today required some outside of the box thinking - this is often a struggle for me - especially when working on the spot, without time for introspective thought. But - we did it!



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Thank you!

For more information, email us or visit us at
<https://lift.uconn.edu>

