

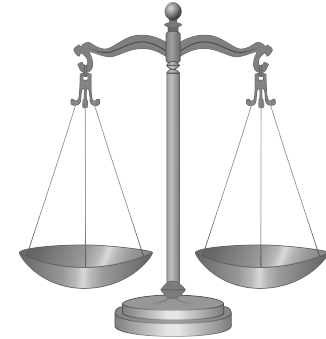
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FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

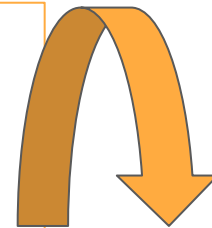
Paraprofessionals: Finding the Balance to Effectively Support Students

THE COMMON DILEMMA

Paraprofessionals often grapple with how much support to provide to their students. How much assistance is too much or not enough? On one end of the continuum we may think that students need to be more independent and do things on their own. On the other end of the continuum we might feel the need to complete tasks for students, so they can keep up with what the class is doing. Perhaps there is a middle ground -or balance- in the way we support students, while of course considering each student's individual needs.



What can YOU do or say?
Check out the following hypothetical scenarios.



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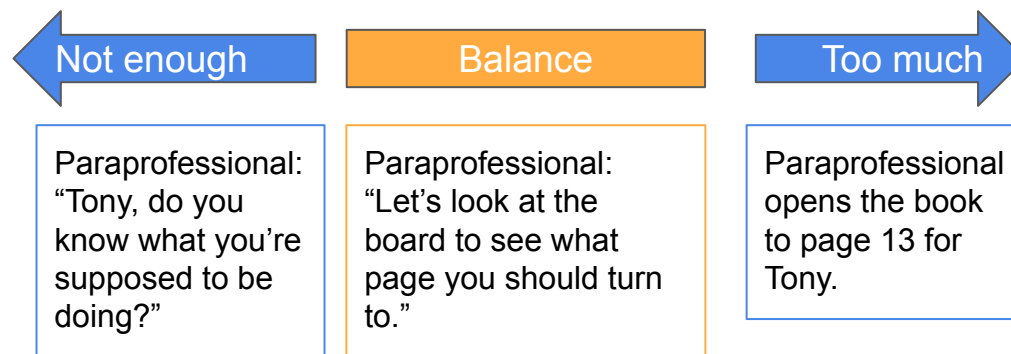
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Scenario #1

Meet Tony

- Class is starting
- The teacher is giving verbal instructions. *"Take out your book and turn to page 13."* This is also written on the board.
- Tony looks around at the other students, takes out his book, but does not open to page 13. He just sits there.



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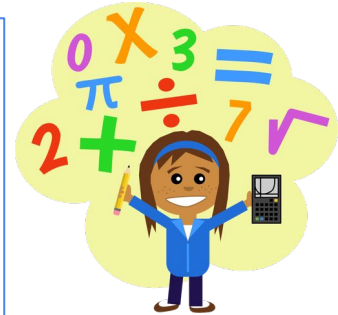
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Scenario #2

Meet Sofia

- The teacher models two math word problems.
- The students have a copy of the problems in front of them and complete the problems along with the teacher.
- The students are given a new worksheet with similar problems.
- Sofia puts away the sheet with the models.
- She then says raises her hand. The paraprofessional approaches and Sofia says that she doesn't know how to do the problems on the worksheet.



Not enough

Paraprofessional: "Sofia, you just do the same steps that the teacher showed you a few minutes ago. Just try."

Balance

Paraprofessional: *"These problems are just like the ones the teacher did. Take out that sheet."* (Mrs Smith waits while Sofia takes out the reference sheet). "You can follow the same steps to do these new problems. Let's see, what is the 1st step?" –continue to ask guiding questions, rather than finding the steps/answer for her.

Too much

Paraprofessional: *"These problems are just like the ones the teacher did."* Paraprofessional retrieves the reference sheet from Sofia's backpack and does step one of the first problem on Sofia's worksheet.

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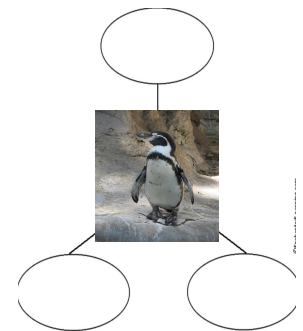
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Scenario #3

Meet Zachary

- Students are given a graphic organizer to brainstorm three things they know about penguins.
- They are reminded to look at the book (words and pictures) they read yesterday to help fill out the organizer.
- Zachary starts to fill out the organizer without looking at the book. He writes “black and white” in one of the organizer bubbles.
- He looks through the book for a few minutes, then just sits there not completing the organizer.
- The teacher asks if he is done and he responds, “yes”.



Not enough

Paraprofessional tells Zachary to think of one more thing he remembers from about penguins.

Balance

Paraprofessional labels each “bubble” -appearance, habitat, food. She then cues Zachary to look in the book for something about penguins’ habitat/where they live, etc. The paraprofessional may direct him to a certain page.

Too much

Paraprofessional gives Zachary a completed graphic organizer.

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