Strategies for Paraprofessionals Supporting Instruction of Students with Disabilities – Part 2

Paraprofessional Session #4

PUBLIC CONSULTING GROUP

ALABAMA Achieves
ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Providing Appropriate Levels of Prompting
3. Providing Effective Feedback
4. Wrap up and Next Steps

Session Objectives

1. Consider levels of prompting to determine how to provide appropriate levels of support while still encouraging independence.

2. Identify key elements of providing effective feedback to students.

Engagement Tools

Engagement Guide

Chat

Poll

Note: While this content reflects general best practices, paraprofessionals should always operate under the direction of their supervising teacher(s).

Providing Appropriate Levels of Prompting

Encourage Independence and Interdependence

"Continually ask yourself what the next step is that will enable a student to become more independent and less dependent on adult support."

Example: If a student seems to rely on you to stay on task, ask the teacher if the student can instead be paired with a peer for occasional check-ins to maintain on-task behavior.

Causton, J., & MacLeod, K. (2021). *The Paraprofessional's Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

What to Do Before Providing a Prompt

- Give the student time. Sometimes students are processing and not "stuck".

- Set up materials in a way that students won't need prompting (e.g., color coding, numbering, a list).

- Work with the classroom teacher to set up peer supports for all students (e.g., "Check with your elbow partner to make sure you're on the right page.").

Silent Supports

- Highlight the directions
- Create a checklist
- Provide a model or example
- Enlist a peer
- "Ask 3 Before Me"
- Use visual timers or other visual supports
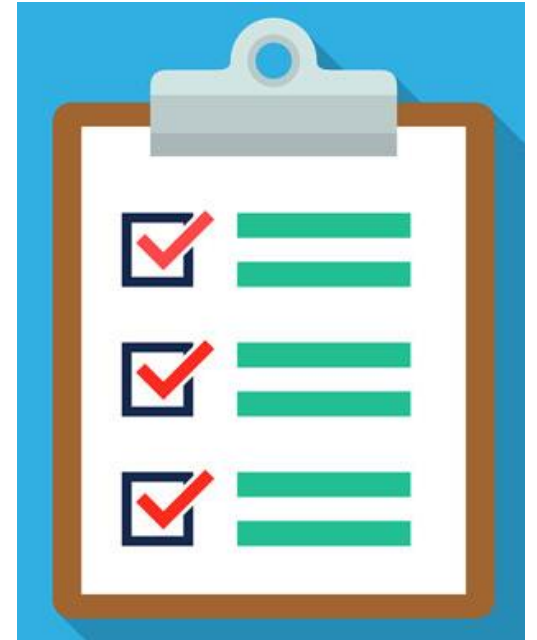
Myth	Fact
Visual supports are only for a few students.	Visual supports promote independence for *all* students.
Visual supports must have pictures.	Visual supports can use images, photographs, icons, core vocabulary words, actual objects, etc.
Students become dependent upon visual supports.	Students can gradually move toward less intrusive methods of support (e.g., checklist, digital reminders).
Once a student knows their schedule or understands the task, they don't need visual supports anymore.	Visual supports provide helpful reminders for *all* students, especially when something new is being introduced.

Benefits of a Student Visual Schedule

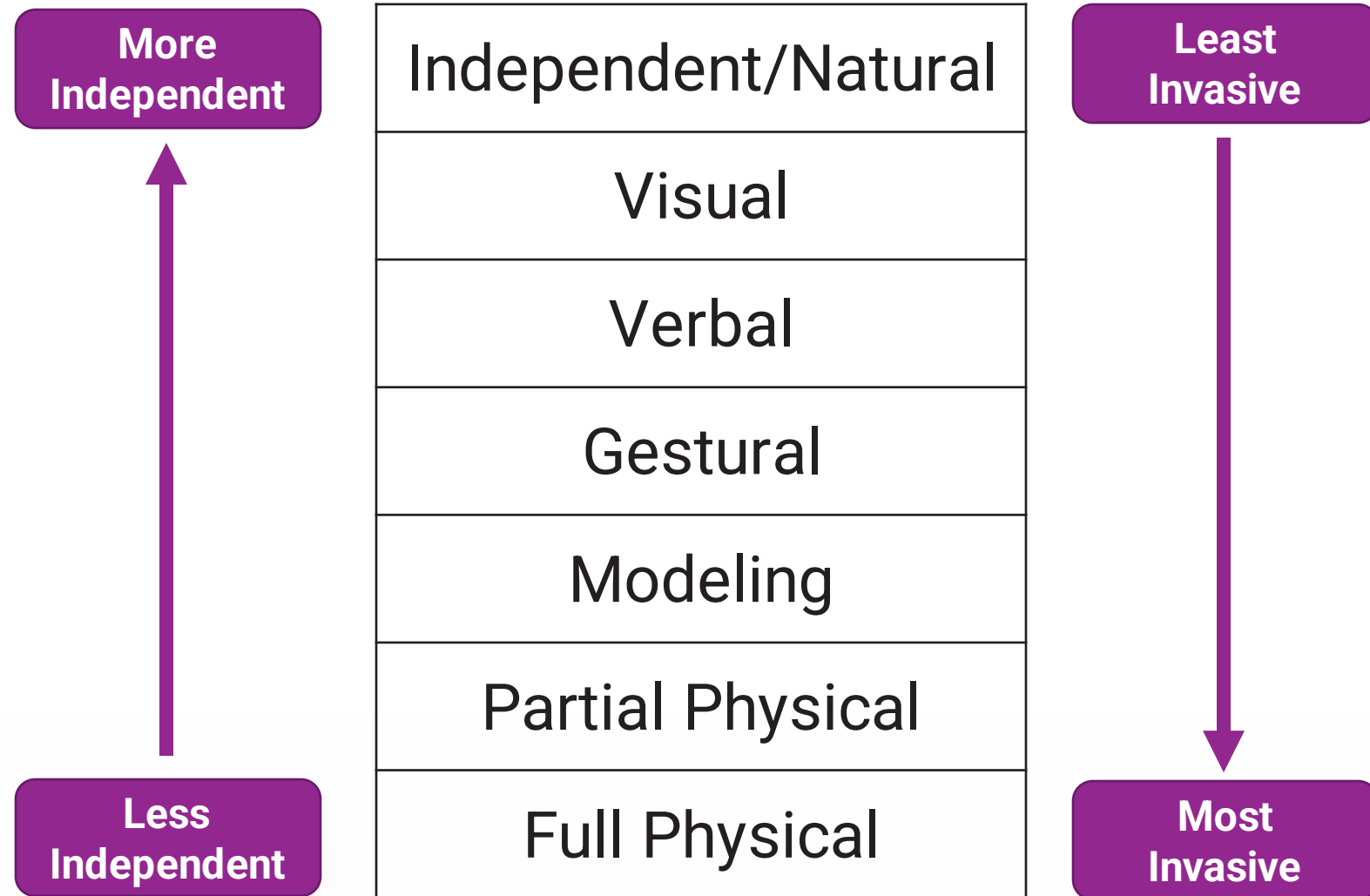Students **know what to expect and what is expected** of them.

Students benefit from **a consistent and predictable** learning environment

Schedules **cultivate more productive students** and therefore greater learning.

Prompting Hierarchy

More Independent	Independent/Natural	Least Invasive
	Visual	
	Verbal	
	Gestural	
	Modeling	
	Partial Physical	
Less Independent	Full Physical	Most Invasive

Independent/Natural	
Visual	
Verbal	
Gestural	
Modeling	
Partial Physical	
Full Physical	

Description
Allowing the environment to provide natural cues to help the student know what to do.

Example
The bell rings and the class begins putting away their materials. (natural)

Independent/Natural
Visual
Verbal
Gestural
Modeling
Partial Physical
Full Physical

Description
Visual prompts could include objects, pictures, drawings, or symbols that cue a student of what is expected.

Example
Students are asked to line up. One student remains seated. The paraprofessional hands them a picture card showing the student in line. The student gets in line.

Independent/Natural	
Visual	
Verbal	
Gestural	
Modeling	
Partial Physical	
Full Physical	

Description

Indirect – verbal information that prompts the student to think about what is expected without stating it explicitly.

Direct – specific verbal information about the expected student behavior or response.

Examples

*Make an **indirect** verbal statement by asking, "What snack do you want?" If the student does not respond, provide a **direct** verbal prompt by stating, "Say, 'more crackers please.'"*

"Sarah, what should happen next?" (indirect)
"Sarah, stand up now." (direct)

Independent/Natural	
Visual	
Verbal	
Gestural	
Modeling	
Partial Physical	
Full Physical	

Description

Physical movements that communicate or emphasize a cue (e.g., head nod, pointing, thumbs up, etc.).

Example

A student is walking around the classroom. The paraprofessional looks at the student and points to their seat. The student sits.

Paraprofessional points to the schedule written on the board to indicate that it's time to transition.

Independent/Natural
Visual
Verbal
Gestural
Modeling
Partial Physical
Full Physical

Demonstrating the expected student behavior or response without physical touch. Can be partially or fully modeled.

Example

Partial Model*: A student has completed a task and is able to ask for a break but is not asking. The teacher makes the initial [br] sound. The student says, "Break please" and is given a 30-second break.*
Full Model*: A teacher asks a student to open a book and models doing it while making the request.*

Independent/Natural	
Visual	
Verbal	
Gestural	
Modeling	
Partial Physical	
Full Physical	

Description

Physical touch used to indicate or encourage a correct response (e.g., touching a hand, nudging an elbow) without full physical guidance.

Example

A student is asked to point to the green apple. He does not respond. The paraprofessional touches the student's elbow and repeats the directions. The student touches the green apple.

Begin to zip a student's coat, allowing the student to pull the zipper up the rest of the way.

	Description
Independent/Natural	Direct physical assistance for *most* or *all* of the movement required for a task.
Visual	
Verbal	
Gestural	
Modeling	**Example**
Partial Physical	*A student is asked to point to the green apple. He does not respond. The paraprofessional takes his hand and uses it to point to the green apple.*
Full Physical	*Providing hand-over-hand assistance while a student writes their name.*

Provide Effective Feedback

Provide Effective Feedback

1. Be specific.
2. Provide feedback as soon as possible.
3. Present feedback carefully.
4. Involve learners in the process.

Types of Errors

1. **Careless mistake.** Student should have known the answer but perhaps lost focus or worked too quickly.

2. **Misconception.** Student thought they knew the answer but was mistaken in their understanding of the question or concept.

3. **Lack of knowledge.** Student truly did not know the answer.

Be Specific

Help students **recognize their mistakes** and **learn how to correct them** by providing explicit and informative feedback.

Examples	Nonexamples
You remembered to carry the one to the next column!	Great job!
Let's read that sentence again and make sure your answer matches.	Not quite there yet.
I noticed you typed an extra number into your calculator.	Try again.

Provide Feedback as Soon as Possible

- Multiple studies have indicated that feedback is most effective when it is provided immediately.

- The longer students have to wait for feedback, the more likely they are to lose the connection between their efforts and their results. This decreases the efficacy of the feedback and can ultimately impact student outcomes.

Present Feedback Carefully

Feedback loses its benefits if students:

- Feel too strictly monitored.

- Interpret feedback as attempt to control them.

- Feel uncomfortable sense of competition.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Reflect: Session Takeaway

What is your biggest takeaway from today's session? What are you looking forward to implementing?

Thank You, Alabama!