Is This Productive Struggle?

Five things to consider before stepping in



The Learner

Is this student ready for this challenge?

Think about skills, experience, and confidence.



The Challenge

Is it challenging but within reach?

Not too easy. Not so hard that learning stops.



The Response

Is the student still thinking and trying?

Notice persistence, frustration, or shutting down.



The Time

Is there time to figure things out?

Allow time to explore, test, and make changes.



The Purpose

Are they struggling with the right thing?

Keep the learning goal in mind.

What can I do next?

Possible response	What it means
Keep Going	Allow the student time to continue thinking, trying, and making progress.
Add Support	Ask a question, provide a resource, or offer a starting point without taking over.
Remove a Barrier	Teach a missing skill or address a difficulty unrelated to the learning goal.
Adjust the Task	Change the materials, expectations, approach, or time available.
Stop & Rethink	Pause when the activity isn't producing meaningful learning. Revisit the purpose and decide how to proceed.

Choose a response based on what you observe. These aren't steps to follow in order.