



The Importance of Just-Right

We all remember the popular childhood story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. It's a bit of an odd story where Goldilocks seemed to have complete disregard for many things, including others' property, as the persistent child explored the Bears' house in search of everything just-right.

As special education teachers and leaders, we can remember Goldilocks' mission to find just-right as we work to develop a support system around each of our students. Learning isn't easy, and it shouldn't be, but it shouldn't be too hard either. Ideally, learning environments, assignments, tests, and other activities, as well as the support we provide to make them accessible, should be just-right. This month's newsletter focuses on the importance of creating a just-right level of support for our learners with special needs.

A Balance of Support Leads to Engagement

Ableism: The thought that individuals with disabilities are dependent and require care and support of someone else.

◦ We do more than we should to support the student

Inadequate Support: Our support efforts are too weak or absent and fail to empower the student around their need.

Result: A student who doesn't engage in classes, study for tests, or take responsibility for learning.

Too much

Result: Discipline Problems = Manifestations

Too little

The Dangers of Not Selecting Just-Right Adaptations

Tell me the story...

Three Different Levels of Support...Three Different Results

Billy walks into his 5th-grade math class after being greeted by his teacher, Mr. Ware. Mr. Ware has been teaching for three years, and his students love his enthusiastic, fun-loving approach to learning. Billy agrees that Mr. Ware is pretty cool, but due to his learning disability, he struggles in math, and Mr. Ware provides too little support. Despite his learning disability, Billy enjoys math class and pays close attention during instruction. However, when it's time to complete individual assignments, Billy gets frustrated easily and shuts down. He frequently complains of headaches and asks to go to the nurse, puts his head down, saying he's tired, and he often refuses to attempt assignments without support. Billy becomes disengaged because he knows he can't complete the assignments.



Billy walks into his 5th-grade language arts class where Mrs. Stevens is busily preparing everything she needs for class, including several modified assignments she provides to Billy and other students. Billy is a child with an identified disability, but only in mathematics, so these modified assignments in language arts aren't necessary. Billy doesn't really know the difference, so he never complains or says anything to his parents about it. Besides, it makes language arts easier for him, which means he doesn't need to work hard in class. In fact, he can pretty much sleep through class and still get good grades. Billy becomes disengaged because the modified assignments are too easy, so he doesn't need to pay attention in class to complete them.

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Billy walks into his 5th-grade science class where Mrs. Garcia is chatting with the school's principal. As the bell rings, Mrs. Garcia instructs the class to resume their work on the simple machines lab assignment they started the previous day. Billy quickly gets to work on the assignment with his lab peers. Several of the tasks involve completing math problems related to finding how much a simple machine reduces the amount of effort required to complete a task. During this step, Mrs. Garcia has provided Billy with a written, step-by-step process of how to solve math problems. This adaptation is just-right and encourages Billy's engagement because the assignment is both accessible and appropriately challenging.

What's the context?

Not too much, not too little...just-right

Finding a just-right level of support is key to engaging the child in class, instruction, and assessment in meaningful ways. Providing too much or too little support causes disengagement that looks different depending on the child. Too much support can cause a feeling of dependency on others, which leads them to become unwilling to attempt tasks on their own, feeling like they need the help of someone else to complete the task. Too little support can cause disengagement that results in passive actions, from the child putting their head down or failing to complete an assignment to aggressive actions that endanger the welfare of the child and their peers.



In both cases, too much or too little support leads the child to disengage from class, instruction, and assessment. It's important to remember that support can be provided in various ways, not only through individual accommodations and modifications. As we work to ensure a just-right level of support, we must consider the presence of these other forms as well!

"Student support should be like Goldilocks finding the right bed, not too hard...not too soft...just-right!" - Tim Kretchman

Get to the point...

Just-Right Support Results in Engagement

A just-right level of support is necessary to engage the child in class, instruction, and assessment in meaningful ways. In its absence, the child becomes disengaged. This looks different for every child ranging from passive participation and failure to complete assignments to aggressive behavior.

Be action-driven...

- ✓ Learn more about selecting just-right adaptations, check out our ["Tools for Effective Inclusion"](#) asynchronous course.
- ✓ See [previous newsletters](#) where just-right is a common theme.
- ✓ Dive into [Accomods](#) to consider ways you might support a child around their needs. Don't have an account? Learn more [here](#).

An Action-Driven Best Practice

At Action Driven Education, we guide teachers in selecting just-right adaptations by considering the following:

This...



- the child's strengths
- the specific needs a child demonstrates in a given environment
- the data associated with the need

Click Me!

Learn more about this process in our recent blog article [Selecting Just Right Adaptations](#).

Featured Modification:

[A9- Permit student to rework missed problems/questions for a better grade](#) is a great modification when we discuss just-right because it shows that there are a variety of ways to support a child as they work to demonstrate their learning on tests and quizzes!



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