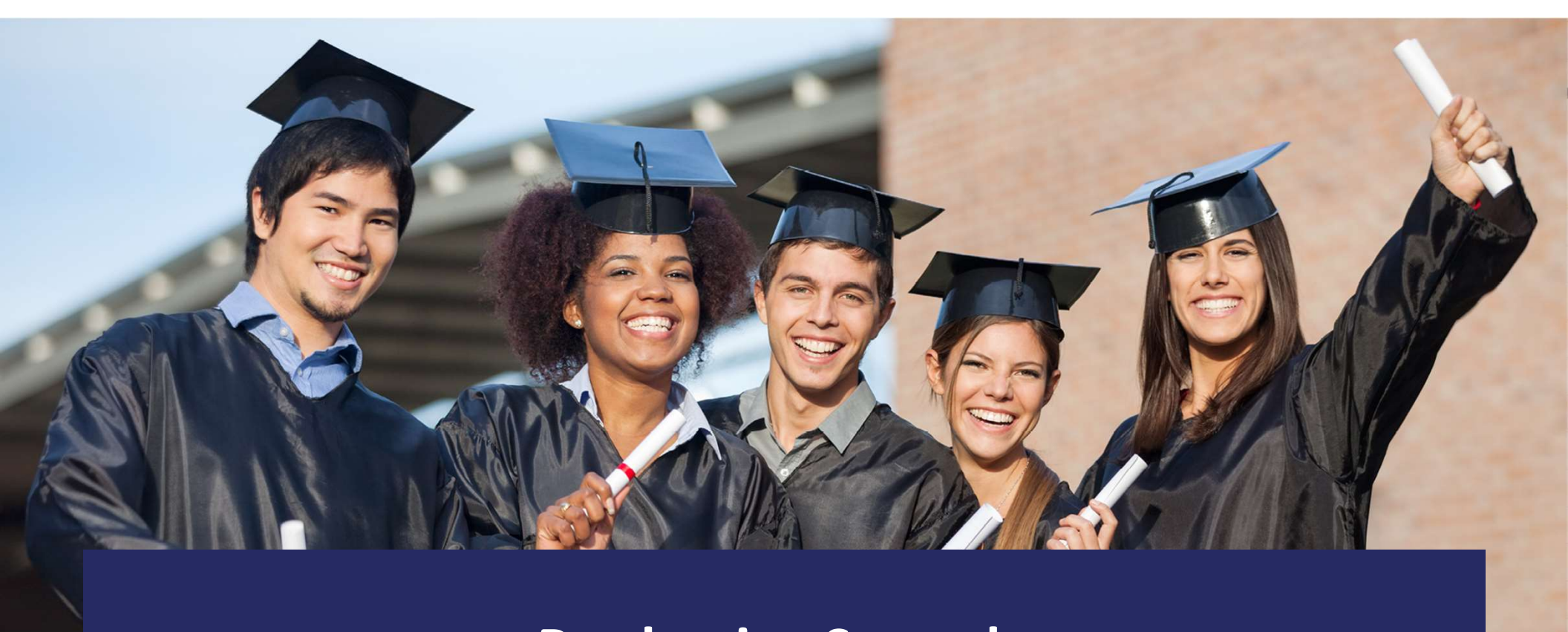




Productive Struggle

Florida Organization for Instructional Leaders

May 2026



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org

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Icon Guide

Icon on the Slide	Meaning on the Slide
	Denotes opportunity for writing in Participant Guide
	Denotes opportunity for discussion
	Denotes opportunity for engaged activity
	Denotes opportunity for the use of technology to enhance learning



Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Examine how productive struggle and intentional planning for tasks aligned to the B.E.S.T. Mathematics Standards and Mathematical Thinking and Reasoning Standards (MTRs) support deeper learning and long-term retention.
- Consider leadership actions that foster classrooms where students are engaged in cognitively demanding, meaningful learning.

Agenda

- Math Task Opener
- Evidence-Based Instructional Practices
- Productive vs. Unproductive Struggle
- Addressing Struggle Without Rescuing
- Leadership Application





Framing Our Focus

- Evidence-based instructional practices explain why productive struggle strengthens understanding.
- Florida's Mathematical Thinking and Reasoning Standards (MTRs) define what students must do/experience.
- Leadership and teacher actions determine whether struggle becomes productive or struggle is removed.





Math Task Opener



Math Task MA.6.NSO.1.1

- Part A: Arrange the cards on the open number line.

1-2 Minutes:
Individual Think Time

(Be ready to justify
placement)



Math Task MA.6.NSO.1.1

- Part B: Discuss your rationale for the placement of rational numbers with your group or partner.
- Part C: Compare your work and discuss whether you agree or disagree on rational number placement.

3 minutes:
Turn and Talk



Math Task Debrief

- What strategies emerged before procedures?
- What kept you thinking?
- What teacher move would have stopped your thinking?



Evidence-Based Instructional Practices



Productive Struggle Through Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

- Draw attention to meaning.
- Prompt connections to prior knowledge.
- Prompt for effortful thinking.
- Use examples and non-examples.

3 minutes:

- Read/mark text
- Turn and talk



Productive vs. Unproductive Struggle



Behaviors Associated with Productive and Unproductive Struggle

- Create a group chart with prompts from the table:
 - Explain or justify each using student actions, teacher moves or leadership expectations.

One productive behavior that is most important to protect.

One unproductive behavior that often shows up with good intentions.

One productive behavior that you can support (as a leader) a small tweak to allow for implementation.

One unproductive behavior that is most often misidentified as productive struggle.

Productive and Unproductive Struggle Gallery Walk



- Place your charts on your table.
- One stay, the rest stray in a clock-wise direction.
 - The group member staying will briefly explain their charts and the visiting group will discuss noticings and wonderings.
- Two minutes at each group before rotation.



Productive and Unproductive Struggle Debrief

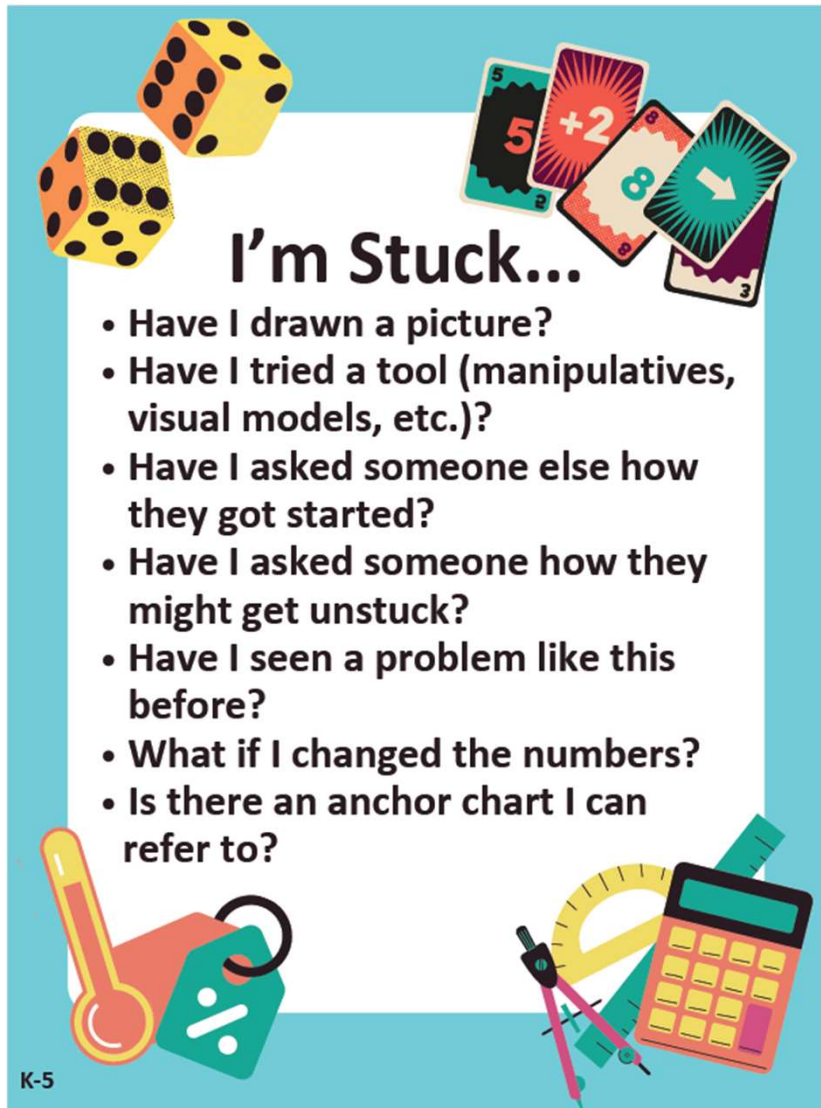
- What stood out to you?
- What are some actions that turn struggle from productive to unproductive?



Addressing Struggle Without Rescuing



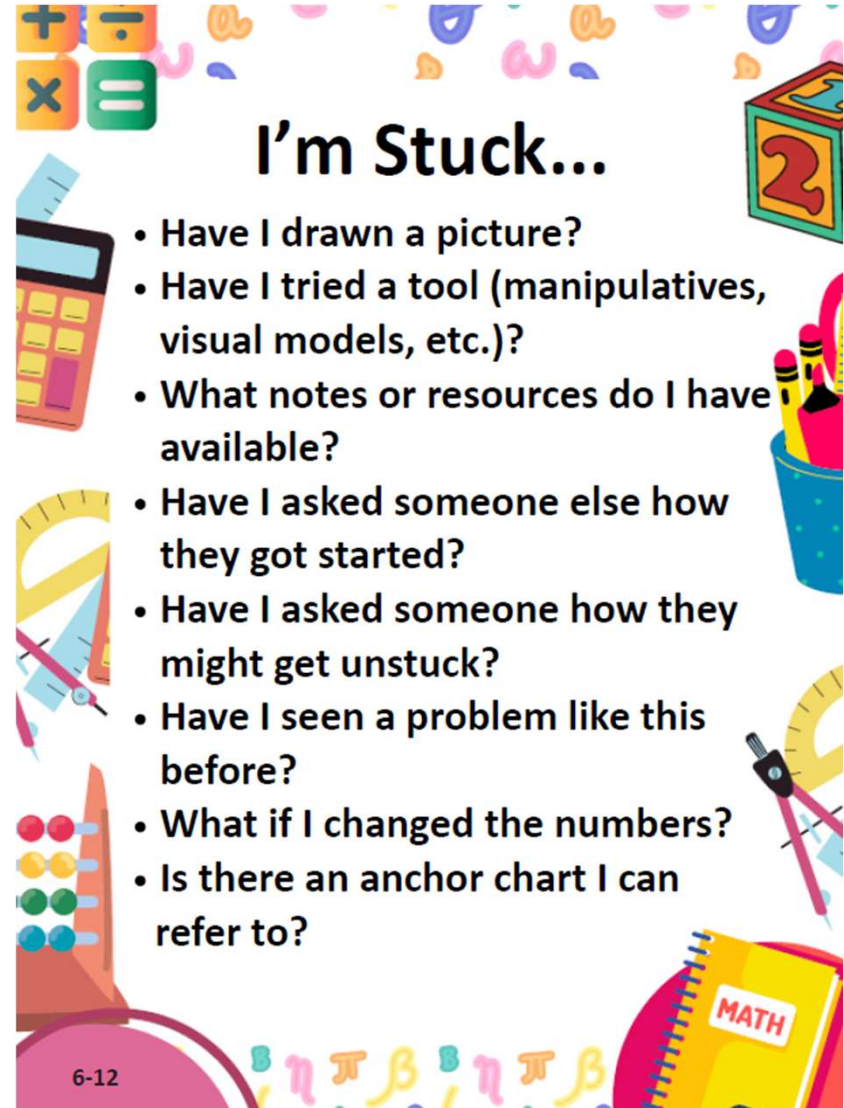
Productive Struggle Anchor Charts



I'm Stuck...

- Have I drawn a picture?
- Have I tried a tool (manipulatives, visual models, etc.)?
- Have I asked someone else how they got started?
- Have I asked someone how they might get unstuck?
- Have I seen a problem like this before?
- What if I changed the numbers?
- Is there an anchor chart I can refer to?

K-5



I'm Stuck...

- Have I drawn a picture?
- Have I tried a tool (manipulatives, visual models, etc.)?
- What notes or resources do I have available?
- Have I asked someone else how they got started?
- Have I asked someone how they might get unstuck?
- Have I seen a problem like this before?
- What if I changed the numbers?
- Is there an anchor chart I can refer to?

6-12



Productive Struggle Anchor Charts

- What thinking do these prompts require students to do?
- Which MTRs are supported here?
- What do these anchor charts not do?



Leadership Application



Leadership Application

- Review the documents listed:
 - Productive Struggle Walkthrough Form (pg. 8-9)
 - Productive Struggle Reflection Inventory (pg. 10-11)
 - Modification Strategies to Provoke Productive Struggle (pg. 12-13)
- Turn and Talk:
 - How can these be used in your schools and districts to promote productive struggle?
 - Where do leaders unintentionally rescue?
 - What is one actionable step, as a leader, you can take to promote productive struggle in your classrooms?



How Can We Support You?

Questions? Contact Us!

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We Want Your Feedback!

- Access the B.E.S.T. Mathematics Coaches professional learning feedback survey using the QR code below.



<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/zpiEUrMLTF>



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