

A Coach's Guide to Scaffolding Success

Did you know scaffolds provide temporary assistance to students so they can successfully complete tasks they cannot yet do independently? Scaffolding is segmenting learning into steps and providing a tool, or structure, with each step. Coaching educators through the process of scaffolding lessons or learning activities improves the likelihood of each student reaching the goal.

Providing scaffolded support is a high-leverage practice ([HLP: 15](#)) for teaching students with disabilities. It's also quite effective for English learners, and all students in your classroom can benefit from the use of scaffolds. As teachers set and achieve high expectations with learners, it is important to consider the necessary steps or scaffolds some learners may need to reach the target or goal. Don't forget your teachers may need some scaffolding to reach their instructional leader's high expectations, too.

Here are five keys to unlocking scaffolding success you can share with teachers.

Key 1: Scaffolds can be pre-planned or provided "on the spot," and it's good to have a few of each in your toolbox.

- Pre-Planned Example: Provide a printed graphic organizer to increase understanding and use of content area vocabulary
- On the Spot Example: Use a sticky note to develop a mini checklist as a visual reminder for steps in an art projects

Key 2: Choose visual, verbal, and/or written supports that help the student reach the goal or complete the learning activity.

- Calibrate scaffolds based on the student's level of performance. For example, if the student can complete step 1 of a 2-step activity at a high rate of success, but cannot complete step 2, your scaffold should focus on step 2.
- Consider scaffolding through:
 - Dialogue: modeling, hints, questions, informative feedback, talk moves, etc.
 - Materials: cue cards, anchor charts, checklists, models of completed tasks, etc.
 - Technology: guided notes in an electronic format, assistive technology, digital checklists, hyperdocs, etc.

Key 3: Success with scaffolding requires flexible use.

- Students may need different scaffolds based on their challenges. It's smart to consider using the student's strengths when developing a scaffold.
- Customize scaffolds to match the learning task for optimum success.

Key 4: Take the time to evaluate the effectiveness of the scaffolds you use.

- Ask the student:
 - "How did the scaffold help you complete the task or reach the goal?"
 - "What do you think about using the scaffold again?"
 - "Do you need something different? If so, can you describe that scaffold for me?"
- Ask yourself:
 - "How did the student respond to the scaffold?"
 - "Has the scaffold helped the learner complete the task or reach the goal?"
 - "How could the scaffold be modified for increased effectiveness?"

Key 5: Gradually remove scaffolds when they are no longer needed.

- Scaffolds can be used to build independence with learning tasks.
- A high rate of success should be achieved before removing the scaffold. (A high rate of success is commonly 80%, but this can also be determined by the student's educational team, using your professional expertise, or collaboratively with the learner.)