Inclusive Education

Conversation Guide for the video: Scaffolding for Student Success

Instructional scaffolding provides students with the “just right” supports they need to participate in learning, complete a challenging task, or learn a new concept.

Key understandings

- Good teaching recognizes that the construction of learning moves from what is already known or can be done to the new.
- Teachers start with knowing students' strengths and needs, and then provide “scaffolding” for individuals and groups of students to support the construction of new learning.
- Common scaffolds for learning include building and activating background knowledge, modelling, guided practice, prompts, strategy instruction, graphic organizers and use of technology such as text-to-speech.
- Effective scaffolding provides tailored assistance adjusted on an as-needed basis, controls for frustration, builds learner confidence and uses descriptive feedback so students can understand what they are doing right and how they can do better.
- Scaffolding builds independence by gradually shifting the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student. As students’ abilities improve, scaffolds can be reduced or removed.
- For students with learning difficulties, the intensity of scaffolding may change but the support may need to be ongoing so students can actively participate in learning and move forward.
- To maximize student success, the use of any scaffold, including technology, must be combined with effective instruction.

Questions for Discussion

- How does this video affirm or challenge what you know about supporting every student?
- In your experience, what are some examples of scaffolded supports that have benefitted individual and small groups of students?
Taking the Pulse at the School and Authority Level

- What is the current capacity to support this change in teaching practice?
- How are current information sources (research, evidence and lessons learned) informing professional growth activities in regards to scaffolding?


More Information

- Alberta Education’s Inclusive Education Library provides ideas on scaffolding as well as other instructional supports.
- The Alberta Assessment Consortium offers scaffolding tools, templates and samples that teachers can adapt for their own use.
- Scaffolding—Dr. Olenka Bilash is a professor of Secondary Education in the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education. Her website provides information for teachers on instructional scaffolding.

Using Flexible Technology to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners—This article from WestEd, a non-profit research, development and service agency based in San Francisco, addresses the use of technology as a flexible scaffold for student learning.

Alberta Examples

The following Alberta school authorities are among those who have developed staff resources on scaffolding for student success:

- Chinook’s Edge School Division - A Student Program Planning & Conversation Sheet connects students’ strengths and areas of need to successful learning through scaffolding actions and supports.
- Prairie Land Regional Division - The school authority’s focus on 21st Century learning skills offers information on scaffolding techniques that teachers might use in a successful learning environment.
- Rocky View Schools Division - The school authority’s focus on inquiry and project-based learning includes scaffolding as a stage in instructional design to ensure the learning is accessible for all students.

“Fair isn’t everybody getting the same thing… Fair is everybody getting what they need to be successful.”


“Scaffolding provides students with the “just right” supports they need to participate in learning, complete a challenging task or learn a new concept.”

Scaffolding for Student Success, Alberta Education

Learn more about inclusive education: https://education.alberta.ca/inclusive-education

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