



# EFFECTIVE SCAFFOLDING

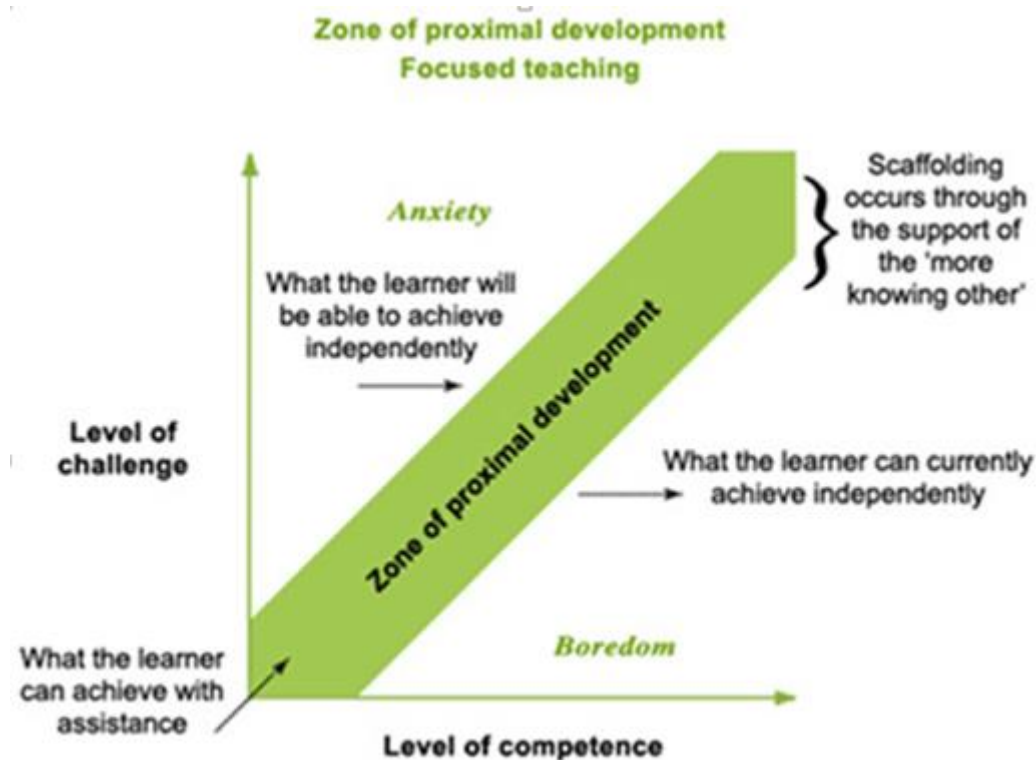
Chaucer School

Instructional scaffolding

noun

a learning process designed to promote a deeper level of learning.

*The zone of proximal development, often abbreviated as ZPD, is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. It is a concept introduced, by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)*



The diagram above illustrates where the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) is. It is in this area that scaffolding should be provided for students to bridge the gap between what they are able to do independently at that point in their own learning journey and the eventual learning goal or outcome.

### What is scaffolding?

Scaffolding refers to a variety of **instructional techniques** used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process.

The term itself offers the relevant descriptive metaphor. The teacher provides successive levels of **temporary support** that help students reach **higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition** that they would not be able to achieve without assistance.

Like physical scaffolding, the supportive strategies are **incrementally removed** when they are no longer needed, and the teacher gradually shifts more responsibility for learning to the student. With an ultimate view to the students becoming unconsciously competent at the skill being taught.



Scaffolding is often used to **bridge learning gaps**—i.e., the difference between what students have learned and what they are expected to know and be able to do at a certain point in their education (age related expectations). For example, if students do not have the skills to analyse a source of evidence in geography or history, the teacher might use scaffolding to incrementally improve their ability to do this.

## GCSE History

Write down three things you can see in the cartoon:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Write down three things you can infer about the cartoon:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What questions would you ask the man in the cartoon? (use your knowledge of the current topic to help you)

**Challenge Task:**  
Explain the meaning of the source, use the source and your knowledge to support your answer.

We also encourage some of the students to label the cartoon using their knowledge and by simply saying what they can see before they attempt the questions to ask section or the Challenge Task.

The 'challenge task' is in reality a 6 mark GCSE exam question but we word it like this so some students are not scared of what is expected from them.

### Causes of World War Two Unit

Providing scaffolding like this is likely to reduce the negative emotions and self-perceptions that students may experience when they get frustrated, intimidated, or discouraged when attempting a difficult task without the assistance, direction, or understanding they need to complete it.

## Scaffolding (teach to the top) vs. Traditional Differentiation

Scaffolding **shares many similarities** with differentiation, which refers to a wide variety of teaching techniques and lesson adaptations used to teach students with diverse learning needs, in the same classroom.

Scaffolding and differentiation techniques are used to achieve similar goals- **moving student learning and understanding from where it is to where it needs to be**. Therefore the two approaches may be blended together in some classrooms to the point of being indistinguishable.

Scaffolding and differentiation are, however, distinct in several ways. When teachers scaffold instruction, they typically **break up a learning experience, concept, or skill into discrete parts**, and then give students the assistance they need to learn each part.- For example, teachers may give students an excerpt of a longer text to read, engage them in a discussion of the excerpt to improve their understanding of its purpose, and teach them the vocabulary they need to comprehend the text before assigning them the full reading.

Alternatively, when teachers differentiate instruction, they might **give some students an entirely different reading** (to better match their reading level and ability), give the entire class the option to choose from among several texts (so each student can pick the one that interests them most), or give the class several options for completing a related assignment (for example, the students might be allowed to write a traditional essay, draw an illustrated essay in comic-style form, create a slideshow “essay” with text and images, or deliver an oral presentation).

### Some examples of how scaffolding might be used.

To achieve the goals of a particular lesson, a teacher may break up the lesson into a series of mini-lessons that progressively move students toward stronger understanding. For example, a challenging algebra problem may be broken up into several parts that are taught successively. Between each mini-lesson, the teacher checks to see if students have understood the concept, gives them time to practice the equations, and explains how the math skills they are learning will help them solve the more challenging problem (questioning students to check for understanding and giving them time to practice are two common scaffolding strategies). In some cases, the term **guided practice** may be used to describe this general technique.

**Students are given an exemplar or model of an assignment they will be asked to complete.** The teacher describes the exemplar assignment’s features and why the specific elements represent high-quality work. The model provides students with a concrete example of the learning goals they are expected to achieve or the product they are expected to produce. Similarly, a teacher may also model a process—for example, a multistep science experiment—so that students can see how it is done before they are asked to do it themselves (teachers may also ask a student to model a process for her classmates).

**Pre-learning or flipped classroom.** Students are given a vocabulary lesson or homework task before they read a difficult text. The teacher reviews the words most likely to give students trouble, using metaphors, analogies, word-image associations, and other strategies to help students understand the meaning of the most difficult words they will encounter in the text. When the students then read the assignment, they will have greater confidence in their reading ability, be more interested in the content, and be more likely to comprehend and remember what they have read.

The teacher clearly describes the purpose of a learning activity, the directions students need to follow, and the learning goals they are expected to achieve. The teacher may give students a handout with **step-by-step instructions they should follow**, or provide the **success criteria** that will be used to evaluate and grade their work. When students know the reason why they are being asked to complete an assignment, and what they will specifically be graded on, they are more likely to understand its importance and be motivated to achieve the learning goals of the assignment. Similarly, if students clearly understand the process they need to

follow, they are less likely to experience frustration or give up because they haven't fully understood what they are expected to do.

The teacher explicitly describes how the new lesson builds on the knowledge and skills students were taught in a previous lesson. By connecting a new lesson to a lesson the students previously completed, the teacher shows students how the concepts and skills they already learned will help them with the new assignment or project (teachers may describe this general strategy as “**building on prior knowledge**” or “connecting to prior knowledge”). Similarly, the teacher may also make explicit connections between the lesson and the personal interests and experiences of the students as a way to increase understanding or engagement in the learning process.

