



# Scaffolding Instruction to Elevate Rigor

Earners implement scaffolding strategies to support more rigorous learning for all students.

## Key Method

The earner demonstrates the use of scaffolds to provide students with access to rigorous content and incorporates varying levels of support to engage all students in learning.

## Method Components

### The Connection Between Scaffolding and Rigor

Just as scaffolds for commercial use help builders access hard-to-reach places, scaffolds in education help students gain access to rigorous content that otherwise might be inaccessible to them. Since the definition of scaffolding differs from one educational expert to another, for the purpose of this micro-credential, scaffolding is defined as *providing any temporary tool, strategy, or assistance to support the student in moving closer to mastery of the standard or reaching a learning or behavior goal.*

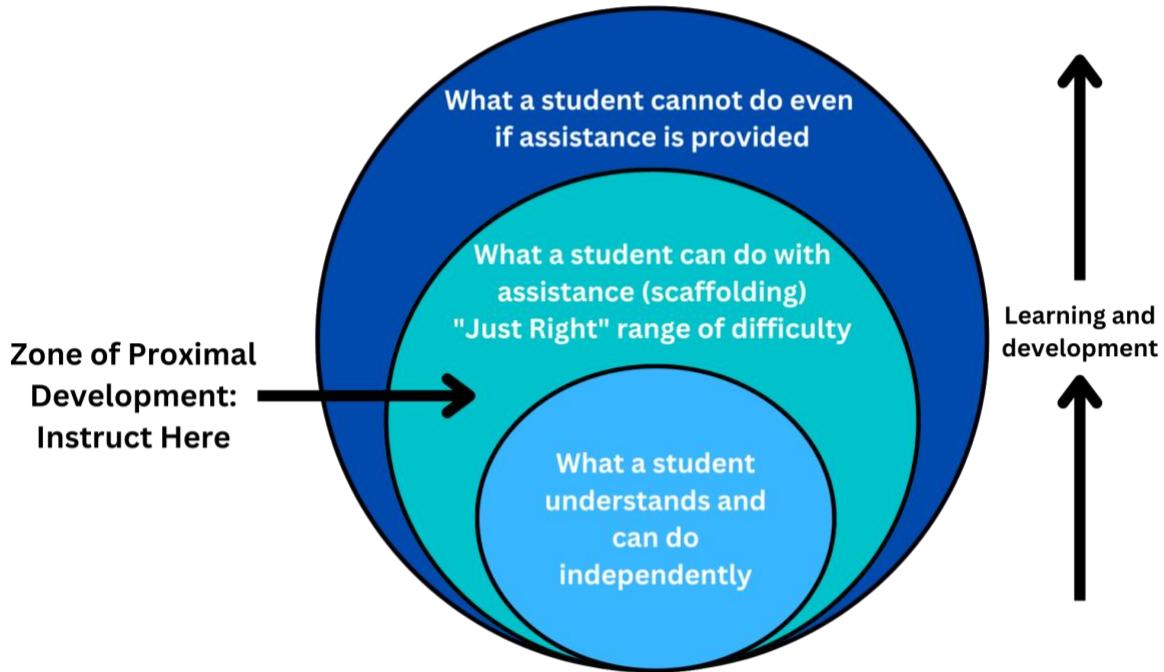
If educators are to move students toward mastery of a standard, they must first determine the starting point. Determining when to provide scaffolded supports and what types of scaffolded supports to provide requires educators to have accurate knowledge of the following:

- what students can understand and do independently
- what students can do with assistance
- what students are unable to do even if assistance is provided

The area between what the student can do independently and what the student cannot do is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The most effective use of scaffolding occurs within the ZPD when students receive scaffolded supports that provide a “just-right” range of difficulty.

Because educators work with learners of diverse abilities and backgrounds, identifying the right amount of scaffolding is critical in helping students be successful on grade-level tasks or meet the rigorous standards of advanced academics. Barbara Blackburn, the author of 18 books on rigor, explains that “rigor is creating an environment where each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each

student demonstrates learning at high levels." Scaffolded supports help reduce the cognitive load rigorous material places on students' working memory so they can focus their efforts on learning and demonstrating new skills and content at high levels.



## Characteristics and Types of Scaffolding

To provide the appropriate scaffolds, educators need to be both intentional in planning for scaffolded supports and flexible to provide on-the-spot scaffolded supports during the delivery of a lesson or guided practice. Based on a synthesis of literature (Van de Pol, et al.), all types of scaffolding share three key characteristics:

- contingency—the support is responsive and adaptive to students' ability levels
- fading—the support is gradually lessened or removed over time
- transfer of responsibility—the student assumes ownership of the new learning

In some instances, the educator can provide scaffolded support through direct interaction with students or by having the student interact with a more knowledgeable peer. By carefully planning instruction, educators may anticipate places in the lesson where students might have misconceptions or learning gaps and provide additional materials to serve as scaffolded supports. In other instances, educators break large tasks into smaller steps for students to follow or create checkpoints to guide students toward completion of larger projects. In one final type of scaffolding, the educator uses a familiar text or one readily accessible to students to introduce a new skill. After students gain proficiency in the skill, the educator then asks students to apply the skill to more complex texts.

**Table 1:** The table contains examples of scaffolding strategies. More information about each teacher-student scaffolding strategy is provided in the Resource section of this micro-credential.

Teacher-Student/Student-Student Scaffolds	Material Scaffolds
Gradual Release Model (I do, we do, you do)	Rubrics
Questioning techniques	Graphic organizers
Prompting, cues, gestures	Laminated templates or formula sheets
Modeling Metacognition (Think Alouds)	Sentence starters/Frame statements
Think, Pair, Share	Word lists/definitions/formulas
Jig Saw	Anchor charts/Cue Cards
Reciprocal teaching	Sample problems or exemplars
Hanger Diagram	Chunking the text/task into smaller increments

## Supporting Rationale and Research

Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2010). Identifying instructional moves during guided learning. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(2), 84–95. <https://doi.org/10.1598/rt.64.2.1>

Mariage, T., Winn, J., & Dabo, A. (2018). Provide scaffolded supports. In J. McLeskey, L. Maheady, B. Billingsley, M. T. Brownell, & T. J. Lewis (Eds.), *High leverage practices for inclusive classrooms* (pp. 197–214). Routledge.

Martin, N. D., Tissenbaum, C. D., Gnesdilow, D., & Puntambekar, S. (2019). Fading distributed scaffolds: The importance of complementarity between teacher and material scaffolds. *Instructional Science*, 47(1), 69–98. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-018-9474-0>

Oktaviani, K.N., & Retnowati, E. (2018). Faded-examples for learning contextual mathematics problem solving. *Journal of physics: conference series*, 1097 012114. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1742-6596/1097/1/012114/pdf>

van de Pol, J., Mercer, N., & Volman, M. (2019). Scaffolding student understanding in small-group work: Students' uptake of teacher support in subsequent small-group interaction. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 28(2), 206–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2018.1522258>

van de Pol, J., Volman, M. & Beishuizen, J.(2010). Scaffolding in teacher–student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 22, 271–296.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-010-9127-6>

Zucker, T. A., Cabell, S. Q., Oh, Y., & Wang, X. (2020). Asking questions is just the first step: Using upward and downward scaffolds. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(3), 275–283.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1943>

## Resources

**HLP 15: Provide Scaffolded Supports.** This [video](#) highlights key elements of high-leverage practice (HLP) 15 and provides tips for educators who are supporting the implementation of this HLP. <https://highleveragepractices.org/hlp-15-use-scaffolded-supports>

**6 Scaffolding Strategies to Use with Your Students.** This article from *Edutopia* offers teachers [6 Scaffolding Strategies to Use with Students](#) by Rebecca Alber. Updated January 24, 2014.

**Vygotsky Scaffolding: What It Is and How to Use It.** This blog, [Vygotsky Scaffolding](#), provides the history behind Vygotsky’s scaffolding model and includes tips for using scaffolding in the classroom.

**The Zone of Proximal Development.** This resource elaborates on Vygotsky’s [Zone of Proximal Development](#) and how the Think-Pair-Share strategy can be a scaffolded support for learners, especially English Language Learners

**Teaching Matters: Scaffolding.** This [video](#) by Teaching Matters provides an overview of scaffolding, how to plan scaffolding for lessons, and examples of commonly used scaffolds.

**18 Ways to Scaffold Learning in the Classroom.** This [website](#) provides a list of 18 effective ways to scaffold learning and includes descriptions on teacher-tested ways to support students.

**Scaffolding Children’s Learning.** Pre-K and early elementary teachers can view this [video](#) for helpful scaffolding strategies to use with young learners.

**Just-in-Time Support.** According to this ASCD resource [Just-in-Time Support](#), preparation for scaffolded instruction begins during the lesson planning process so all students can be in the learning game; the article also includes practical ways to scaffold instruction.

**IRIS module.** These resources from the IRIS module: *Providing Instructional Supports: Facilitating Mastery of New Skills* provides explanations and examples of three approaches to scaffolding ([content](#), [task](#), and [materials](#)).

**Scaffolding Literacy Instruction.** In this video, [Scaffolding Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners](#), a 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teacher implements scaffolding strategies to support students as they read complex fiction and nonfiction texts.

## Specific Types of Scaffolding Strategies

[Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework](#),

[Questioning Cues and Prompting](#)

[Learning from Gesture: How our hands change our minds](#)

[Think-alouds \(Classroom Strategies\)](#)

[Think-Pair-Share](#)

[How-To: The Jigsaw Method](#)

[Cooperative Learning: Jigsaw Method \(Video\)](#)

[Using Reciprocal Teaching \(Video\)](#)

[Reciprocal Teaching](#)

[Reciprocal Teaching in High School \(Video\)](#)

[Hanger Diagram for Solving Algebraic Equations](#)

[Attack Strategies for Word Problems](#)

## Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

This micro-credential is divided into three areas: Overview, Work Examples and Artifacts, and Reflection. To earn this micro-credential, you must receive “Passing” on Part 1 and Part 3, and “Demonstrated” on all criteria in Part 2.

### Part One. Overview

In a written response, describe a time when you presented a lesson to students with skills or content that was too easy or too difficult. Your response should include:

- your current educational setting and context for earning this micro-credential
- grade level(s) served and content or specialty area.
- specific behaviors your students demonstrated during different parts of the lesson.
- specific ways you hope this micro-credential will support your professional practice.

***This submission is scored either “passing” or “not passing.”***

***Passing:*** Earner includes a response to each part of the prompt; total response should be a minimum of 200-words and provide adequate detail to help the scorer understand the context for your submission.

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## Part Two. Artifacts and Evidence

### Task 1: Teaching Rigorous Standards

Select a standard you have recently taught or plan to teach. In a written response:

- Identify the curriculum standard and learning objective related to the standard.
- Identify and provide a brief description of the prerequisite skills or knowledge students need to demonstrate the standard.
- Describe the assessment method (e.g., formative assessment, summative assessment, independent practice, student interview, teacher observation) used to determine the students' current level of performance and how the prerequisite skills are embedded in the assessment.

As evidence of this task, you will upload your written response (200-word minimum) and the student work sample(s) you used as an assessment tool or an audio recording if you used oral questioning as an assessment with the student.

### Task 2: Providing Teacher to Student or Student to Student Scaffolds

Select a minimum of **two** scaffolding strategies from **Teacher-Student/Student- Student Scaffolds** from Table 1 in the Method Components to support students as they work toward mastery of the selected standard **from Task 1**. In a written response:

- Describe the selected scaffolding strategies and how they support the learning objective or standard.
- Provide your rationale for selecting these scaffolding strategies as a “just-right” temporary support for the learners.
- Explain how students responded to the scaffolded supports you provided.
- Explain how you plan to gradually fade these strategies as students become independent learners and master the standard.

As evidence of this task, upload your written response, a video or audio recording of the teacher-student interaction or student-student interaction that provides scaffolded support, and any additional visual documentation that provides evidence of implementation with students.

### Task 3: Providing Material Scaffolds

Select **three** scaffolding strategies from the **Material Scaffolds** column from Table 1 included in the Method Components. In a written response:

- Describe the selected scaffolding strategies and how they support the learning objective or standard.
- Provide your rationale for selecting these scaffolding strategies as “just-right” temporary support for the learner.
- Explain how students responded to the scaffolded supports you provided.
- Explain how you plan to gradually fade these strategies as students become independent learners and master the standard.

As evidence of this task, upload your written response and a copy of each of the material scaffolding documents used to provide students with temporary support to meet the standard. You will also provide a sample of each document completed by the student or a work sample that demonstrates how students used the material scaffolds to support their progress toward the learning target.

### Artifacts and Evidence Scoring Guide

Tasks	“Not Yet”	“Almost”	“Yes”
Task 1: Teaching Rigorous Standards	The written response does not address all bulleted items in the prompt and/or does not submit the assessment artifacts.	<p>The response identifies the learning standard but <i>only partially</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describes the prerequisite skills to demonstrate the standard.</li> <li>• describes the assessment method to determine students’ performance level.</li> </ul> <p>The earner does not submit an assessment artifact.</p>	<p>The response <i>thoroughly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifies the learning standard.</li> <li>• describes the prerequisite skills for the standard.</li> <li>• describes an assessment method to determine performance level.</li> </ul> <p>The earner submits required student assessment samples or audio recording.</p>

<p><b>Task 2: Providing Teacher-Student Scaffolds</b></p>	<p>The response does not address all bulleted items in the prompt and/or does not submit the required artifacts.</p>	<p>The response <i>only partially</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes the selected strategies from Table 1 Column 1.</li> <li>provides a rationale for selection.</li> <li>explains student response to scaffolds.</li> <li>explains plan for fading as students gain proficiency.</li> </ul> <p>The earner submits only some of the required artifacts.</p>	<p>The written response <i>thoroughly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes 2 selected strategies from Table 1 Column 1.</li> <li>provides rationale for selection.</li> <li>explains student response to scaffolds.</li> <li>explains plan for fading as students gain proficiency.</li> </ul> <p>The earner submits a video or audio recording of scaffolding interactions and other supporting artifacts.</p>
<p><b>Task 3: Providing Material Scaffolds</b></p>	<p>The response does not address all bulleted items in the prompt and/or does not submit the required artifacts.</p>	<p>The response <i>only partially</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes the selected strategies from Table 1 Column 2,</li> <li>provides the rationale for selection,</li> <li>explains student response to scaffolds,</li> <li>explains plan for fading as students gain proficiency.</li> </ul> <p>The earner submits only one material scaffold or no student work samples.</p>	<p>The response <i>thoroughly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes 3 selected strategies from Table 1 Column 2.</li> <li>provides rationale for selection.</li> <li>explains student response to scaffolds.</li> <li>explains plan for fading as students gain proficiency.</li> </ul> <p>The earner submits copies of the material scaffolds and student work samples.</p>

### Part Three: Reflection

In a written response, reflect on your learning from this micro-credential to answer the following questions:

- In what ways did the scaffolds you provided support your students—behaviorally and academically—in meeting the learning objective or standard?
- What are some of the ways you plan to continue the implementation of scaffolded supports in your classroom?

***This submission is scored either “passing” or “not passing.”***



**Passing:** Earner includes a response for each part of the prompt (250-word minimum). Responses should clarify and further explain how earning this micro-credential has impacted your professional practice and student outcomes.