

# SCAFFOLDED

# Supports



Progress for  
All Students



**NOTE:** If you have not completed Module 3 - Session 4, we recommend that you do so before engaging in this session. In that session, we explain the origins and value of high-leverage practices (HLPs) in special education. Scaffolded supports is one of 22 HLPs.

## THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY

## TO LEARN TO RIDE A BIKE

*Enid Hernandez learned to ride a bike at the age of 60.*



She had tried to learn multiple times before but without success. As a child, she crashed and ended up in the hospital. More crashes followed as she kept trying to learn throughout the decades. In 2014, she asked someone to teach her, but when she hit rocks and cut open her hand, Enid pronounced “That’s it” and gave up on learning to ride a bike.

But two years later, she heard about [Bike New York](#), a nonprofit organization that offers a nontraditional technique for learning how to ride a bike. They take off the pedals, lower the seat, and the riders first learn what balance feels like and how to coast by pushing off with their feet. When they wobble, their own feet are there to prevent the fall.

Once they are comfortable, they add back the pedals so that the riders can get used to propelling themselves forward, still dropping a foot to the ground as needed. As they gain confidence, they can raise the seat until they are in a comfortable biking position.

*Here’s how Enid described the experience to Bicycling:*

“

Was I nervous — are you kidding me? It was really scary. I was 60, and my greatest fear was breaking a bone. But with the nontraditional technique, you really learn to find your balance. When I took my first pedal strokes I was laughing! It was so much fun, and I felt a sense of freedom.

”

# PROGRESS TOWARDS PROFICIENCY

**After decades of trying to learn to ride a bike, what made this experience different for Enid?**

Answer: scaffolded supports...but not the traditional scaffold of a parent holding onto the seat and running behind the child until they can let go.

*These scaffolds were transparent, flexible, chunked, and within the control of the rider.*

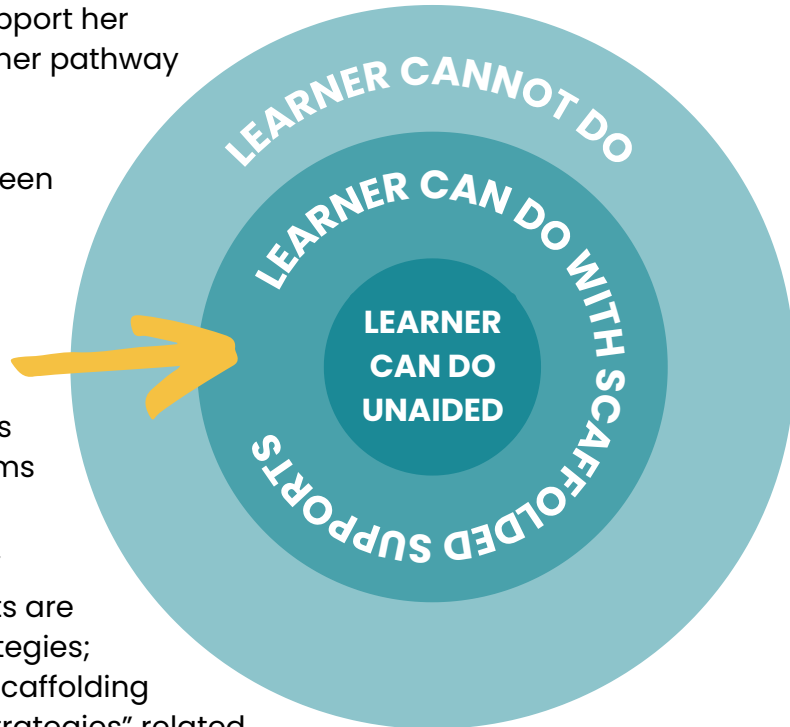
Enid understood how the learning process was going to unfold, was able to focus on specific skills with each step (balance, propulsion, etc.), and she decided when she felt she was ready to remove a scaffold.

What Enid experienced was learning scaffolded to support her progress through zones of proximal development on her pathway to proficiency. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) isn't a new concept. Psychologist Lev Vygotsky introduced the idea in the 1930s as the distance between what a learner is capable of doing on their own and what they can do with support.

## Zone of Proximal Development

To help students with and without disabilities progress through the ZPD, teachers can provide temporary forms of support, or scaffolds.

A quick Google search of "scaffolding and education" brings up almost 71 million results. At the top of the hits are articles, blogs, and tip sheets that provide lists of strategies; "6 Proven Strategies for Scaffolding in Education," "5 Scaffolding Strategies to Bolster Student Learning," "8 Proactive Strategies" related to scaffolding, and "18 Effective Ways to Scaffold Learning in the Classroom" are just a few of the headlines.



While there is an abundance of advice on scaffolding in education, clarity around what exactly constitutes scaffolding and how it should be implemented is harder to come by. Drs. Cassandra M. Smith and Rachel L. Juergensen described this conundrum in their 2021 article on "Virtual Scaffolded Instruction for Students with Disabilities":

**"The term scaffolding is frequently used and frequently misunderstood. It is one of those words we often hear when talking about instruction but struggle to know exactly what it includes or how to implement it successfully in classroom instruction."**

Some of the phrases and practices that come to mind when teachers talk about scaffolding are modeling, chunking, pacing, checks for understanding, prompts, graphic organizers, fishbowl activities, think-alouds, pre-teaching, interaction, and many more.

# PROGRESS TOWARDS PROFICIENCY

At the end of the day, scaffolding isn't just one thing or even a discrete set of practices. Scaffolding is better viewed as a process that teachers can use to design learning environments that support all students, including students with disabilities (SWD), to progress toward shared learning goals. It begins in the instructional planning process.

*For scaffolding to be a high-leverage practice for students with disabilities, the scaffolds must be used as follows:*

Provide temporary assistance to students so they can successfully complete tasks that they cannot yet do independently and with a high rate of success

Be multi-modal to support visual, verbal, and written learning

Be carefully calibrated to support students' performance and understanding in relation to learning tasks

Used flexibly

Evaluated for their effectiveness

Gradually removed as they are no longer needed

Planned prior to lessons and provided responsively during instruction.

*What's the difference between scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications?*

**Here are the differences, according to the New York State Education Department:**

- A scaffold is a temporary support provided to students to help them achieve a learning goal.
- An accommodation is reflected in an individualized education program (IEP) and is provided to enable SWD "...to be educated alongside students without disabilities to the greatest extent possible in the Least Restrictive Environment. Accommodations may change the instructional delivery, learning environment, and administration of an assessment, but do not change the instructional level, the information taught, or the criteria of mastery."
- A modification (also reflected in an IEP) may alter the curriculum, instructional level, or criteria of mastery to provide access for students who are unable to comprehend all of the content.

# 3 PHASES OF BACKWARD DESIGN

IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS.

DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE.

PLAN LEARNING EXPERIENCES & INSTRUCTION.

(SOURCE: [VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY](#))

## FROM BARRIERS TO SCAFFOLDS

## THROUGH BACKWARD DESIGN

In Module 1, Session 5, we introduced backward design as an instructional planning strategy that helps teachers design flexible and adaptable instructional plans. In backward design, teachers start by setting learning goals (identifying desired results), then they establish appropriate assessments (determine acceptable evidence), and finally design the unit/lesson/activity such that it is aligned with the learning goals.

**This is where scaffolding comes into play.** Teachers can augment the instructional plan by identifying potential barriers to student learning and planning ways to help students overcome those barriers.

*After you draft your instructional plan, ask yourself questions to identify what barriers may be hidden in your learning activity.*

### WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR LEARNING?

- What background knowledge do my students need to engage in and be successful throughout this learning experience?
- What skills do my students need to have in place in order to engage in and be successful throughout this learning experience?
- What vocabulary do my students need to understand in order to engage in and be successful throughout this learning experience?
- What resources do my students need to have in order to engage in and be successful throughout this learning experience?

### WHAT ARE THE PROCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR LEARNING?

- What are the discrete steps of the learning experience?
- What is the correct order of the steps?
- How will students know they have successfully completed a step?
- What do students do when they are not able to complete a step successfully?

Your answers to these questions will help you plan for and embed scaffolds throughout the learning experience. Resource banks, key words, chunks, graphic organizers, and checks for understanding are just a few of the main scaffolds teachers can integrate when planning for instruction.

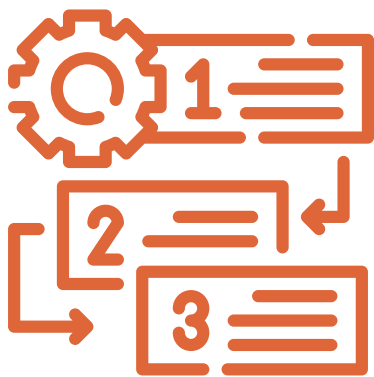
# PORTABLE SCAFFOLDS

When thinking about how to use scaffolds across learning environments, it is helpful to return to a concept we introduced in Module 1: **portable practices**. How can we make scaffolds portable, or useful, as students with disabilities move between learning environments (i.e., from in-person to remote or remote to hybrid)? And, once we accomplish that, how can those portable practices help us rethink scaffolding in general? Can these portable scaffolds become part of our standard practices?

## *From Sequential to Digital*

Many tried-and-true scaffolds eat up class time. For students who don't need those scaffolds, this can be lost learning time. For example, let's look at modeling.

**Modeling traditionally follows a sequence such as this one:**

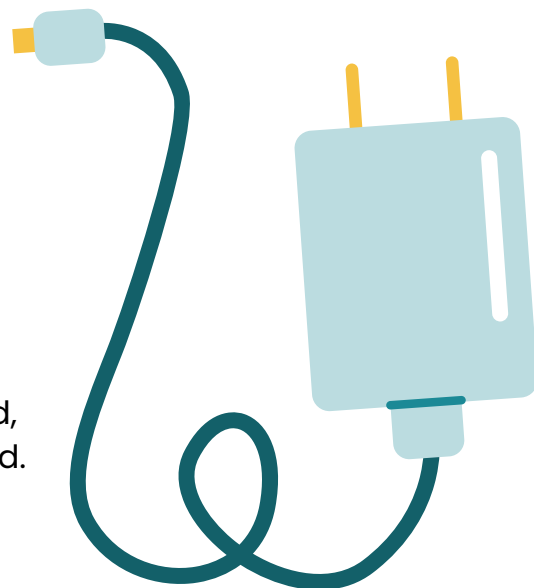


1. The teacher explains what they will model and why.
2. The teacher models by showing students how to perform a skill while describing and explaining the purpose of each step.
3. The teacher asks students to describe what they saw and/or heard.
4. The teacher invites one or more students to model.
5. The teacher again asks students to describe what they saw and/or heard.
6. All students practice.
7. The teacher provides feedback.

The traditional, live modeling process can take anywhere from a few minutes to an entire class session if we have to move through each step in the sequence. And if students miss the modeling session or need it repeated, even more time is lost to the process.

*If, however, the modeling activity is recorded to video (digitized), we can super-charge the scaffold in the following ways:*

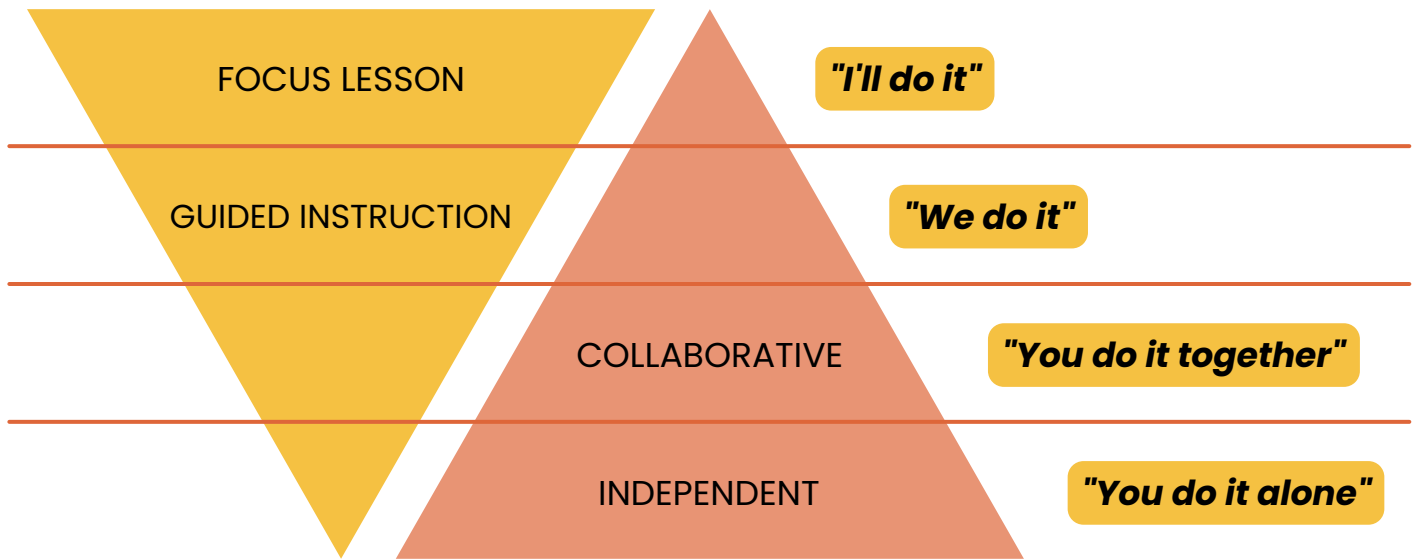
- **Chunks** - The video can be divided into seven chunks, aligned with the steps above.
- **Self-pacing** - Students can progress through the video at a speed that is comfortable for them.
- **Reorganization and Repeating** - Students can skip forward, move backward, and repeat chunks of the video, as needed.
- **Multi-modal** - Students can turn on closed captions to read the teacher's explanations and descriptions



# IMPLEMENTING SCAFFOLDS

The gradual release of responsibility (GRR) framework provides a structure for implementing scaffolds. GRR shifts the cognitive work slowly and intentionally from teacher modeling, to joint responsibility between teachers and students, to independent practice and application by the learner. The GRR framework is sequential but does not have to be linear, meaning that students and teachers can move back and forth between the components as they master skills, strategies, and standards. When coupled with digital tools and resources, the GRR framework can be increasingly flexible and allow for greater student mobility between components.

## Teacher Responsibility



## Student Responsibility

*Adapted from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

## From Passive to Active to Interactive

Graphic organizers are a favorite for many teachers across grade levels and subject areas. A graphic organizer displays the relationships between concepts, terms, and/or ideas through a visual format such as charts or maps. Graphic organizers are great tools to engage students across learning modalities (visual, aural, written), particularly if the teacher verbally presents the organizer to the students.

**The traditional graphic organizer is designed by the teacher and delivered to students (passive learning). A more active approach is for the teacher to develop the graphic organizer "live" with student input (active learning).**

Digital tools, such as mind-mapping apps, open up new learning opportunities by allowing students to collaboratively develop graphic organizers, adapt/annotate organizers to support individualized education, and use assistive technologies such as text-to-voice to interact with the content in ways that address learner variability. Graphic organizers can now be a form of interactive learning and scaffolding.



## From Assigned

When scaffolding is used in conjunction with differentiated instruction, the teacher assigns scaffolds to students based on the teacher's assessment of student need. Personalized instruction goes a step beyond differentiation and allows for student choice. The teacher makes the scaffolds available to all students, and they can choose among them. The next step addresses learner variability by providing scaffolds in formats that students can access in multiple modes.

## To Available

**Take, for example, scaffolds to build vocabulary.** In a traditional format, teachers might assign lists of vocabulary words with definitions based on the teacher's assessment of student proficiency. The teacher may also assign a check for understanding such as a vocabulary quiz to make sure students are proficient in the vocabulary before proceeding with a learning activity.

## To Accessible

**A step beyond** this would be to make digital glossaries available to all students and link from vocabulary words used in context back to their definitions in the glossary. Students can click the link if they want or need a refresh on the word. New technologies such as digital translation tools (e.g., Google Translate) allow multi-lingual learners to engage with vocabulary in more than one language both for understanding/comprehension as well as expression/composition.

# Now it's your turn!

After you explore the concept of scaffolding more via the choice board, you will have time to practice scaffolding techniques that work across in-person, remote, or hybrid classrooms.

And remember our inspiration - 60-year-old Enid...there's more than one way to ride a bike!



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# About Us

## **The TALE Academy**

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

## **The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project**

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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