Scaffolded

Including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges, and giving feedback, provide the support needed to extend children's existing capabilities. Effective scaffolding by both educators and other children provides active structures to support new learning; it is then progressively withdrawn as learners gain new mastery.

'Scaffolding young learners' is a metaphor drawn from the building industry, where scaffolds are used to support a construction until the structure can support itself. In an educational context, teacher scaffolding is most successful when the emotional climate is warm and responsive. When young learners feel welcome to share their ideas and knowledge, their contributions help to inform teachers' decisions about how best to support their learning.

Classroom scaffolding strategies

- Invite young learners to share their own ideas about a topic or concept for study. Draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to build connections between personal experiences and new learning.

- Prompt young learners to talk about and explain their thinking through open-ended questions, 'Can you tell me why you think that?' 'How did you work that out?' 'What other ways could we try to work it out?'

- Encourage young learners to demonstrate the steps they've taken to solve a problem. In explaining the processes involved they are scaffolding the learning of their peers.

- Model 'thinking aloud' strategies so that young learners understand the thinking processes required to complete a task, create a design, read a new text.

- Provide opportunities for young learners to work in small groups and pairs to share their ideas. Young learners benefit from time to process information and, in the process of talking with others, clarify their understandings and consider alternative perspectives.

- Offer specific feedback that identifies the strategies young learners use successfully to undertake new learning. Feedback identifies and reinforces the skills required for the class.

- Use visual-cueing devices to scaffold learning, for example a graphic organiser can help children to visualise the steps involved in a learning activity.

- Pace the speed and complexity of verbal instructions. If there are new terms, explicitly introduce these and discuss the meanings.

- Reduce the cognitive load in new learning situations by breaking tasks down into a step-by-step approach, 'First we…then, after…at the end you need to…'

- As young learners develop mastery of skills gradually reduce the level of scaffolding until they are working independently.

Creating an emotionally safe classroom learning environment, where risk taking and 'having a go' is accepted everyday practice, reduces young learners' anxieties about performance.

The Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation paper draws on the work of Husbands and Pearce (2012).

To scaffold children's learning, teachers' build on children's existing knowledge and experience using 'a range of techniques including; whole-class and structured group work, guided learning and individual activity; focus on developing higher order thinking and metacognition, and make good use of dialogue and questioning in order to do so.' [1]

Queensland Government