M3-S6: Scaffolded Supports: Progress for All Students

CLH	Hi Gina, and hello listeners. Welcome! This is Session 6 in Module 3 of your TALE Academy learning experience, Scaffolded Supports: Progress for All Students. Before you get started, 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, referred to as HLPs, in special education. Scaffolded supports is one of 22 HLPs.
GK	Hi Christina! Let's get started with the story of Enid Hernandez, who learned to ride a bike at the age of 60. And I like how we're making that sound old. I'm almost 60, and there's lots of things I can't do.
CLH	Perhaps if you had the right scaffolding?
GK	Correct. So Enid had tried to learn to ride a bike multiple times in the past 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 falling. Once they're 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.
CLH	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." After decades of trying to learn to ride a bike, what made this experience different for Enid? The answer is: scaffolded supports…but not the traditional scaffold of a parent holding onto the seat and running behind the child until they can let go.
GK	Nope, the scaffolds that eventually worked for her 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, such as balance, propulsion, etc., and she decided when 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.
CLH	I see how you just slipped in zone of proximal development. We should go back and review that one.The zone of proximal development – or 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. To help students with and without disabilities progress through the ZPD, teachers can provide temporary forms of support, or scaffolds.
GK	So if you do a quick Google search of "scaffolding and education" you get 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.
CLH	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."
GK	They are so right on. What's a good learning scaffold, anyway? Some of the 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. 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 to progress toward shared learning goals. And it begins in the instructional planning process.
CLH	For scaffolding to be a high-leverage practice for students with disabilities, the scaffolds have to do a bunch of things. We can't just throw a graphic organizer in the mix. Effective scaffolding is a way of being. It has to:

	● 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.
GK	So now you've got me wondering: what's the difference between scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications?
CLH	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, or IEP, and is provided to enable students with disabilities "...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.
GK	So scaffolding is a teacher move that is not mandated in the IEP, but comes out of a support mindset. You know, we talk about backward design a lot in this academy as an instructional planning strategy that helps teachers design flexible and adaptable instructional plans from the get-go. In backward design, teachers start by setting learning goals, or identifying desired results, then they establish appropriate assessments, or 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. After you draft your instructional plan, ask yourself questions to identify what barriers may be hidden in your learning activity.
CLH	First, what are the prerequisites for learning? ● What background knowledge do my students need in order 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?
GK	Second, 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, checks for understanding, and graphic organizers are just a few of the main scaffolds teachers can integrate when planning for instruction.
CLH	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, such as 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?
GK	Sadly 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: The teacher explains what they will model and why. The teacher models by showing students how to perform a skill while describing and explaining the purpose of each step. The teacher asks students to describe what they saw and/or heard. The teacher invites one or more students to model. The teacher again asks students to describe what they saw and/or heard. All students practice. 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 or digitized, we can supercharge the scaffold in the following ways: ● Chunks - The video can be divided into several chunks, aligned with the steps previously shared. ● 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
CLH	The gradual release of responsibility framework provides a structure for implementing scaffolds. Gradual release 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. Gradual release 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 you put that together with digital tools and resources, the gradual release framework can be incredibly flexible.
GK	Yes, that is a good mash-up. Here is another way to think about implementing scaffolds. 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, such as visual, auditory, and 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 through passive learning. A more active approach is for the teacher to develop the graphic organizer "live" with student input, which is 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. Creating graphic organizers can now be a form of interactive learning and scaffolding.
CLH	Yes to that. Finally, we can integrate scaffolding with differentiated instruction. This is when 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. 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.
GK	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, such as Google Translate, allow multilingual learners to engage with vocabulary in more than one language, both for understanding/comprehension as well as for expression/composition
CLH	Alright, 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! The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone–students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities–all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added another tool to your toolbox when you use scaffolded supports to help all students progress. Thanks for listening. Bye!
GK	Bye!

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