Scaffolding definition

Scaffolding is partner-assisted and material-assisted learning that fosters critical thinking and helps students to reach beyond what they could do on their own.

Scaffolding language & student output

- first brainstorming as a class, language needed to discuss a topic, and grouping this language as it is captured

Scaffolding language & student output

- having students use newly introduced words and phrases several times in different contexts for different purposes (Why? repetition supports retention)

Scaffolding language & student output

- providing speaking frames such as a debate framework or one for developing a line of reasoning

Scaffolding language & student output

- giving students several seconds of wait time before picking someone to answer a question

Scaffolding language & student output

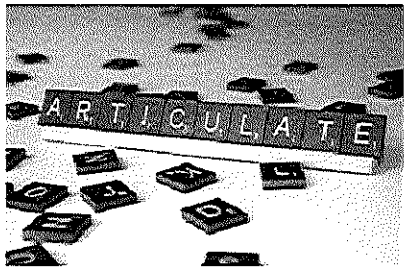
- eliminating hand raising altogether and picking students at random

(Why? If your pick students at random, everyone must pay attention.)

Scaffolding language & student output

- grouping language needed for a discussion by category and providing students with a copy so as to support discussion

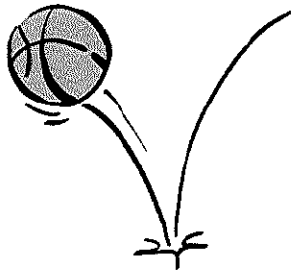
Scaffolding language & student output



Give students the opportunity to articulate their thinking before answering:

- 30 seconds silent thinking before any answers
- brainstorm in pairs first for 2-3 minutes
- write some thoughts down before answering
- discuss with your neighbor first.

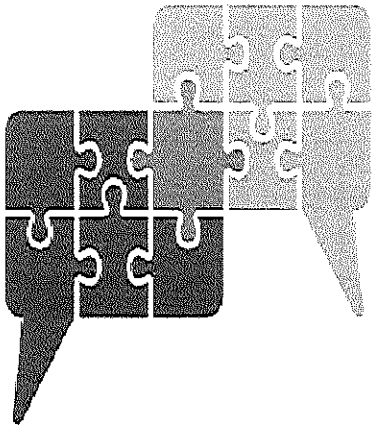
Scaffolding language &student output



Bounce answers around the room to build on understanding and have students develop stronger reasoning out of misconceptions.

"What is the evidence to back up that point?"
"Merixtell, how could you develop Miquel's answer further?
"Nuria, what would be a counter-argument to that claim/using that evidence?"

Scaffolding language & student output



Use an error in logic in a line of reasoning as a discussion point. Use a student's misconception in reasoning to draw out the thinking process.

(Why? - can use it to improve reasoning and creates a climate where students can use mistakes for learning)

Scaffolding language & student output

Ask students why X is an example of Y.

Why is an apple an example of a fruit?
Why is a fox an example of a mammal?

(Why? This avoids factual recall and asks for the underlying reasoning to be made explicit.)

Scaffolding language & student output

When preparing for exams, students generate their own questions and then practice answering them.

(Why? This makes learners think explicitly about the underlying structures of assessment, as well as the material which they are being asked to manipulate.)

Scaffolding language & student output

- giving students the language needed for working in groups

Scaffolding language & student output

- establishing a system of 'learning/talk partners' (new partners each week who spend 30 seconds to 2 minutes discussing an answer to a question before answering before the whole class)

Scaffolding language & student output

- first viewing a video of an excellent student presentation and analysing it jointly to create criteria for presentations before students begin to work on their presentation

Scaffolding language & student output

- providing students in advance with the language (words, phrases) that they need to do a task (e.g. conduct and experiment, ask questions, interview someone, express feelings, write a report)

Scaffolding language & student output

Draw out the background knowledge that students have regarding a topic that you are about to introduce and anchor the new learning to this foundation.

Scaffolds for reading texts

- having students scan a text for unfamiliar words that are explained before reading begins

Scaffolds for reading texts

- first having students pre-use new language in a new text, before reading it

Scaffolds for reading texts

- shortening sentences

Scaffolds for reading texts

- adding in subheadings

Scaffolds for reading texts

- presenting a long and difficult text piece by piece so students are not overwhelmed by its length

Scaffolds for reading texts

- highlighting or underlining key terminology and concepts

Scaffolds for reading texts

- inserting synonyms or definitions in parentheses into the original text

Scaffolds for reading texts

- using graphic organisers (e.g., Venn diagrams, tables & charts)

Scaffolds for writing

- having students summarise paragraphs by writing in subheadings

Scaffolds for writing

- providing key phrases or words to write introductions, bridging paragraphs and conclusions

Scaffolds for writing

- before doing a full assignment practicing achievement of success criteria one at a time such as writing an introductory paragraph that introduces the topic and explains how the text that follows is organised

Scaffolds for writing

- providing exemplars of good and poor writing (e.g. a composition or a lab report) with written explanations of why one piece of work is good and another poor

Scaffolds for writing

- providing in parallel exemplars of good and poor writing with criteria for good writing and asking students to analyse the texts referring back to the criteria