

Scaffolding And The ZPD

Education

The gap between what a learner can do alone and with help, and how to use it.

Wood, Bruner and Ross named six scaffolding functions. Four carry most of the load.

1

Find the edge

Locate what the learner can nearly do. Too far ahead is not the ZPD.

2

Reduce the degrees of freedom

Cut the task down so only the target difficulty remains.

3

Model and think aloud

Show the expert move, including the decisions behind it.

4

Prompt, do not supply

A question that reaches the step beats an answer that skips it.

5

Fade deliberately

Withdraw support on a plan, not when the lesson happens to end.

6

Check unaided

Independent performance is the only evidence the scaffold worked.

Educational reference. Vygotsky wrote about the zone; scaffolding is a later metaphor built on it, and the two are often conflated.