HLP 15:
Provide Scaffolded Supports

High-Leverage Practices
for Students with Disabilities

The effective special educator is always thinking about students' long- and short-term goals (HLP 11) and how to design and deliver an individualized program that will help the student succeed. In addition to making adaptations (HLP 13), use of scaffolds to support students with disabilities in completing learning and other tasks successfully is an important HLP for educators to know and use. Scaffolds help students perform tasks they cannot yet perform on their own or with a high rate of success. Scaffolds can be planned ahead of time, or more organically, as student learning challenges arise. Students must be explicitly taught (HLP 16) on how to use various scaffolds and receive feedback on the extent to which they are using it properly (HLP 8/22). As students demonstrate success and greater independence with new skills, scaffolds should be gradually faded over time.

This resource is intended to support school leaders looking to embed the HLPs in professional development, implementation, teacher observation and feedback efforts at their school site.

The major source for content within this resource is the chapter by Troy Mariage, Judith Winn, and Arfang Dabo in *High-Leverage Practices in the Inclusive Classroom*; the book *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education: The Final Report of the HLP Writing Team*, and content on **www.highleveragepractices.org**.

Teachers Who Effectively Provide Scaffolded Supports

- Provide scaffolded supports across a wide range of areas including academics, language, behavior, motivation, attention, social skills, and communication.
- Use dynamic assessment to access students' thinking, language, writing, or performance to determine the type and level of scaffolded supports needed.
- Use knowledge of curriculum standards and benchmarks, the scope and sequence of the curriculum, and prerequisite skills/understandings to structure task difficulty from easier to more difficult for students, focusing on essential knowledge and skills.
- Are attentive to students' motivation and engagement, and to whether students understand and value the purpose of learning a concept or strategy, in order to plan for and adjust supports as needed.
- Provide only the amount of scaffolded support necessary to allow a student or group to perform at a level they could not have performed at independently.
- Gradually release responsibility back to students or fade their support to promote independence with concepts/tasks.
- Intentionally plan for varying supports (e.g., technology, checklists, graphic organizers), but are attune to, and adjust for, students' moment by moment support needs as well.
- When providing scaffolded supports:
  - Work to create a safe environment in which students feel respected and comfortable sharing their thinking;
  - Watch and listen carefully to make sure students understand the goal;
  - Remove a support once it is not needed, and put it back when it is;
  - Practice what they could say to students and remember that prompts may need adjusting in the moment;
  - Are positive, patient, and caring.

Tips for School Leaders to Support Teachers

- Ensure educators are familiar with a range of scaffolds that can be used for various purposes and settings
- Help educators recognize signs within student data that scaffolds are needed, or can be faded
- Provide feedback to educators regarding appropriate selection and teaching of scaffolds to students in various situations

Questions to Prompt Discussion, Self-Reflection, and Observer Feedback

- Why are scaffolds important to consider when planning how to address long- and short-term learning goals?
- What are effective ways to monitor student performance using scaffolds?
- When should a scaffold be faded or removed?

References & Additional Resources

Online Resources

Video: Gradual Release of Responsibility
A ninth-grade English teacher helps students assume more responsibility in writing.

Video: I Do, We Do, You Do
A high school mild/moderate special education teacher demonstrates the gradual release of responsibility model through I Do, We Do, and You Do in creating a portrait. The teacher demonstrates the importance of direct instruction, modeling, and thinking aloud for all students, including sharing what a final product looks like as a reference. The teacher then uses prompting during the We Do and You Do phases, providing more and less support as needed as the students move towards completion of the assignment.

Video: Scaffolds for Critical Thinking
A high school teacher guest teaches in a fourth-grade classroom, providing scaffolded supports for students' understanding of the difference between things and ideas.

High-Leverage Practices: A Professional Development Guide for School Leaders
A downloadable online guide providing school leaders, including administrators, principals, mentors and coaches, with practical tools for engaging staff members in learning about how high-leverage practices can enhance student learning in the school and district.

Journal Articles

Dye, G. A. (2000). Graphic organizers to the rescue!: Helping students link—and remember—information. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 32*(3), 72–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990003200311

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Riccomini, P. J., & Morano, S. (2019). Guided practice for complex, multistep procedures in algebra: Scaffolding through worked solutions. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 51*(6), 445–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059919848737

Riccomini, P. J., Morano, S., & Hughes, C. A. (2017). Big ideas in special education: Specially designed instruction, high-leverage practices, explicit instruction, and intensive instruction. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 50*(1), 20–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917724412

Singleton, S. M., & Filce, H. G. (2015). Graphic organizers for secondary students with learning disabilities. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48*(2), 110–117. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915605799

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