

AIAN Teacher Webinar Series: March 2014

Vanessa Maanao-French: Okay, big group. I'm excited. So, we'll go ahead and get started. So, as you know, we are the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, and this is essentially everything we do in a nutshell. This is the Framework for Effective Practice, and all the work we do, all the training we do, the resources we create are around supporting teachers to be effective in the classroom. And, as you know, we have the foundation around engaging interactions and environments that's really key to what happens on a daily basis in the classroom.

The two pillars are the research-based curricula and the teaching practices you use; ongoing assessment on the right. And then the roof of the house is how do we individualize for children to be sure that they're getting the most out of every day, whether they have special needs and need extra support, or if they're really excelling and need extra resource and incentive and engagement to keep those minds growing.

Today, of course, we're going to focus on the foundation, because as you know, scaffolding fits into instructional interactions. But we can't really do that without the first two blocks. So, it's important that we consider all three of those domains in the foundation. Today, let's chat more about scaffolding. So, what we'd like to do today is to provide you a definition. What is scaffolding? I'm sure many of you know, but, we'll just kind of dig deeper into that definition.

We'll give some examples and some strategies of how teachers can scaffold children's learning, and we'll do that by me chatting a little bit, but more importantly by you seeing some video and being able to see it in action. We'll connect scaffolding into the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. It's always important to see the connection of what we do in the classroom and how it impacts children.

And then, finally, we'll provide some suggestions on how teachers can continue to improve their ability to scaffold beyond this webinar. So, what is scaffolding? Scaffolding is essentially help. And you help children -- when they build on a skill that they already have, you're scaffolding their learning by making it stronger, right? You're giving them just enough support to get to that next rung of proficiency. So, you let the children do as much as they can and then give them a little bit more, and soon they'll be doing it completely on their own. This is a great little visual, right? You've got to add one scaffold to the next to the next to get to the top.

So, what does scaffolding actually look like? So, when you see teachers -- and, teachers, you probably do this every day -- when you provide hints to children when they're struggling to understand a concept, okay? When you offer them a range of answers to choose from, right? "Does the letter Y look like this, this, or this," right? Kind of narrow their choices but also offer a range of choices to help them find the answer themselves, which is key. And you encourage children to use additional resources to find the answers.

And we'll see videos that will demonstrate this, throughout the session today. And what it does not look like is just giving children the right answer, which is quick and which is easy to do, but that's not scaffolding.

So, a quick example of that would be when a child is getting ready to go outside--and we had this actually in our last webinar-- a child is getting ready to go outside and putting on coats and the teacher's there to help zip up the coat, and the child looks at the teacher and says, "Why are we putting on our coats? It's sunny outside," right? And the quick answer is, "Because it's cold." But what else could the teacher do to scaffold the child's understanding of temperature versus seeing the sun in the sky? It's kind of a wild example.

We'll see better examples in the video today, I promise. So, what I'd love to have us do in our first opportunity to chat together is how would you describe scaffolding to a parent? Say, it's parent orientation or a parent meeting. How would you describe that to them? I was really pleased with all of the responses that have come in, and keep them coming!

Please don't let me talking stop you, because it's so nice to see -- be able to see and read your thinking and your reflections. But the theme that I'm seeing come out is allowing the children to do more and the teacher doing less, which is amazing. And it really stems from knowing the child, the individual child, because you have to know them to know where to put the brakes on, right? Where to tap the brakes and go, "Okay, you can do it up to this point, and if I do just a little bit more, right, a little bit more, you're going to get that next step." And there was one in here that I loved, too -- I mean, there's so many. But this is such a simple one, and this came up a couple of times, which is when the children ask for help, respond by asking a question. I'm just like "Yes!"

You know, asking the children to identify what that next step might be, or how they think they might solve that problem on their own; what are their ideas? That gets at so many different things, but what it says to me is you are knowing that it's beyond just being able to physically do a skill, it's about engaging children to realize that they can figure it out, too. Because we can do for children all day, and that would be exhausting, but when they do for themselves, that's when they become independent learners and really more confident learners. And so, I'm excited that you guys are able to have this already as ways that you would explain it to a parent, which is so important. I mean, think about that home-school connection. What can parents be doing at home to encourage this?

And a really simple example that I think of, almost immediately, is how do we teach children to tie their shoes? And so, it'd be fun to ask a parent, right? "How did you learn to tie your shoes?" And have them kind of go back through that process. Or, if they have older children, "How did you teach your first child to tie their shoes?" Right, do as -- it had to be a series of steps, right? Versus just putting one lace over the other, you know how it goes.

But concrete examples like that really bring it home, especially if they can make it personal. I remember my parents teaching me to tie my shoes, and I remember very distinctly teaching my baby sister how to tie her shoes. But thank you all for your responses. This is wonderful. This just says that the rest of this webinar is going to be way fun. Okay, let's keep going.

So, let's connect scaffolding, as we promised to do, to the Early Childhood Development and Early Learning Framework. And it's really everywhere. I don't think that there is a single slice of this pie, or the wheel, depending on how you view this, that doesn't have scaffolding as a part of it to make it successful. So, whether it's fine motor skills or learning language or understanding math concepts, scaffolding has to be in place to move children not only in skill level, but in knowledge and understanding. So, I'm sure that's pretty obvious, but, you know, it's always good to state it.

So, let's get into that first big way that teachers can scaffold, which is providing hints. And that's when you assist children when they have difficulty understanding, answering, or completing a task. Just give them those itty-bitty little hints along the way. And we're going to watch a video that demonstrates this. And after the video, we're going to ask you for your thoughts about what you saw in the video related to scaffolding and offering hints. So let's watch that video.

[Video begins]

Teacher: What state do we live in?

Children: Washington.

Teacher: Washington state. And when we live in Washington, there is an ocean by us. Does anybody remember it? Starts with a P. Puh...

[Children murmuring]

Teacher: Puh-sss...?

Children: Pacific.

Teacher: Pacific. You guys will get it. Pacific Ocean. It's the -- it's a huge bunch of water right here.

Child 1: 2012.

Child 2: 2012.

Teacher: 2012. But when 2012 is over, what comes next? Look, 2012 on here. Two thousand... two thousand what? Look, 11, 12...?

Child 3: 13.

Teacher: 13. So, after 2012 is 2013.

[Video ends]

Vanessa: You're right. You know, he really did use props, he used just giving them the beginning sounds of words as clues to get the answers themselves, right? And he just kind of led them to the answer without just saying the answer right away. And what sometimes teachers worry about is that it'll take too long to have the kids tell them the answer, or if they don't know the answer, they'll offer assistance too quickly and too much assistance, right? And so -- I also liked somebody mentioned, oh, the feedback loop, right? Getting kids to kind of go back and forth with him, that's great, great, great, great.

And I do want to mention, because I've met this teacher before, and something important to also note is that this is a classroom of only 3-year-olds. And so, if this teacher is able to elicit that kind of learning and response from children, with 3-year-olds, just imagine the possibility, as children become more and more familiar and more confident in their abilities as they grow older and become 4s and be almost 5s going to kindergarten. But he's certainly setting a really nice foundation for their learning and their ability to participate. So, great, thank you so much. I love seeing all these things come in. So, we just did that one.

So, here is the next way that teachers can provide support and scaffolding: Offering a range of answers. So, we're going to actually watch another video, and we'll do the same thing. Tell me what you see, okay?

[Video begins]

Teacher: See? That matches. Look, there's one large one and one small one. There's two.

Boy: Yeah, where's the other one? This one?

Teacher: What's the other one called? Another small, medium, or large...?

Boy: This...

Teacher: What size is that one? There's small, medium, large.

Boy: Yeah. Small, medium, and large.

Teacher: What about his collar? Where do you think this collar is? Hmm. Maybe it's a small, the collar?

Boy: Yeah, it's small, like this one.

Teacher: What do you think this one is? These pieces left.

Boy: Beak.

Teacher: Oh, yeah, there's his beak. Some of his wings?

Boy: No, they don't have wings. There it is.

Teacher: You did it. Awesome. Okay. You did a really good job. You did it by yourself, too. Want to go find another one?

Teacher: What do you think a bear looks like when they hibernate? Do you think they hibernate by standing up, or do you think they lay down?

Children: Lay down!

Teacher: Do you think they curl up in a ball or stretch out long?

Children: Stretch out long.

Teacher: Show me what you would look like if you were hibernating.

[Video ends]

Vanessa: What did you hear in the ways the teachers interacted with the children that offered a range of answers? Did you see or hear it? If so, yeah, let us know yes or no. And then if you said yes, what did you see or hear? Thanks. Well, thank you, you all, for your responding again.

I know it was hard for the first one, so I think that's part of the "not sure" for some of you out there. So, you can actually get this video, and I'll talk about that in a little bit later, if you'd like to show it with your staff. The first teacher was giving the child options of small, medium, and big to help the child decide where to put that puzzle piece next. And throughout the video, towards the end especially, you see the little kid go, "Oh, it's small like this one, so it must fit here." So, that was kind of what she was doing. They're hard to see and hard to hear. I apologize for that. But -- oh, good, some people saw that. Great, yay!

And I think you all picked up on the teachers' kind of emotional piece around it, too, that they were both -- they were positive; they were engaging; they were certainly encouraging the children and giving those options. First in the first video, small, medium, large to help the child complete the puzzle independently was really important. And then for the group reading stories, you guys got those, right? About how do bears hibernate, which is a great, you know, fun conversation to have, right? Standing up, laying down, curled up in a ball, stretched out. I mean, it's definitely a fun conversation. And as an adult in my own mind, I kept envisioning bears in different sleeping positions, so it was fun. Thank you for your participation.

We're going to do another quick intro to the next video, which will be to add additional resources as a scaffolding tool that teachers can use in the classroom. So we'll watch a video about this. The little clip here is kind of cute -- or the conversation about the child wanting to know a little bit more about caterpillars, and the teacher said, "Well, let's go see if we can get some more information." And typically in classrooms, it's easy to go to your bookshelves, right, and find some additional resources. But I've seen teachers use technology for this reason. And if you have computers in your classroom, maybe you all have done this, too, looked it up.

You know, found some pictures of caterpillars turning into butterflies, which is kind the basis of this conversation. Or, if you don't have a computer classroom, you know, printing out some things and bringing it in or bringing in additional resources, which could include the elders in your community, parents as resources, et cetera. But let's go ahead and watch our video of this teacher adding a resource to the classroom.

[Video begins]

Teacher: And they swim up, all the way from California, they swim up.

Boy: No, that's a... that's...

Teacher: All the way to there.

Boy 1: That's a mommy. Can I look at it?

Boy 2: That's a mommy.

Teacher: And I think she has a baby. Hey, let's go -- can I go show you guys where they swim to on our map? Everyone, let's go see our map.

Male teacher: Let's look where the whale, where they caught the whale at, what part of the ocean. Let's look and see.

Female teacher: The Bering Sea. The whale... Look at, the whale. Ali, back up, please. Comes up in the -- in the springtime, it swims all the way up. And this is where I'm from...

[Video ends]

Vanessa: Okay. So, another video. You probably guessed by the map she used, this is a teacher in Alaska. But we would love to have your thoughts about this video in terms of offering a resource. So, the teacher used a map as a resource; so how did the map support children's learning? Keep typing; keep typing. This is great. And, you know sometimes we have those available resources in our classroom and don't always take advantage of them.

And so, I think you all were seeing the reason why the teacher used the map is she's trying to explain migration of whales, and she's just using the air, and she's starting to lose the kids. One of them's like, "That's a mommy whale." And instead of letting it go down the path of talking about mommy whales, she really wanted to be able to offer an additional resource that would help the children really understand what she's trying to relay to them, right? And so using the map to show them how the whale goes along Alaska and goes up north. This video actually goes on for a little bit longer, and she explains, you know, where she's from and how she travels by, you know, snow machine across to get there. It's really a nice video.

But there are also so many other resources you have in your classrooms. We mentioned books, especially, and computers. But let's just -- I'm curious, and if it's okay with you, Susan, something a little bit different and spontaneous, but in that same chat box about mapping the support to children's learning, let's just keep it there. What resources do you as teachers offer to children when they have questions they're kind of struggling with or are interested in? It'd be great to have that here, too. Yeah, as you guys -- keep on typing, but as you guys are writing these things in, like, giving me flashbacks to being in the classroom.

And just the one about props, I remember having -- and maybe you guys use them, too, but that big set of teeth when you have to do some lessons around dental and oral care and having that humungous toothbrush and that big set of chompers and showing kids how to brush their teeth. [Laughs] Oh, Ramona, I really like your comments about relating things to real-life situations.

Okay, so you guys really get this, and you're doing this in your classrooms. Fantastic. I'm hoping this will kind of spur some ideas, which is why I was hoping folks would type in more things about other ways to add resources to the classroom. Because it doesn't always have to be the go-to book, right? But books are great, models and pictures--wonderful. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. You guys get it. All right. Moving on.

So, question. It's kind of a rhetorical question, right? When can I scaffold children's learning? And of course you all know the answer is throughout the day. You're scaffolding constantly. And even when you don't even realize it, you're scaffolding. Or, maybe you do. I'm just thinking, I have a 3-year-old, and she's learning to zip her own coat. And so, I do it -- you know, just get it half, maybe an inch up, and then she takes it the rest of the way. She is working on just trying to get it aligned. You know, zippers are not that easy. I think we take it for granted as adults just how not easy it is, kind of like tying shoes. But when you do it just a little bit, teaching children how to wash their hands, blow their own noses, those things we do in 5 or 10 seconds is really scaffolding children's learning throughout the day.

So, we have a tool you can try, actually. This helps you kind of plan ahead how you would like to scaffold learning. Whether it's hints that you want to give to children, like have some cue cards for yourself, or, if you know that additional resources might be a great thing to think about, this link helps you to do that ahead of time. Some of the best learning that happens in the clips that we show, it's not spontaneous. It may look spontaneous, but it so is not.

So, I think we're going to put the link for this into the chat box, so that if you'd like to, you can just download it directly. But what I will tell you is that it is also available to you on ECLKC, or, for those who live in other parts of the country, I think you call it "e-click." We have it on our website as well. And the nice thing about going to this is--this little website here-- is it'll help you get into the NCQTL website and you can see how many other wonderful things are there.

But download it, check it out, see if it helps you. If you are a lead teacher working and with an assistant teacher or teacher assistant, volunteers in your classroom, maybe there are some nice ways to include them in planning to scaffold within this form that may be really helpful for you. So, that's just, you know, a little goody we'd like to pass along.

So, improving your practice. We talk about this in each session, but, you know, I'm curious always if people are taking some of these on. So, one we offer as an idea is to video record yourself, which is never really fun the first few times. People rarely like to hear themselves, you know, speak in a recording or see themselves on video.

I think I've shared this story before, but these -- our education manager ones in particular are recorded every time and placed onto ECLKC, so if you ever need another dose of Vanessa, you can go online and get more of me. But I was almost horrified to hear my own voice and hear my own laugh. And I sound just like my brother when I laugh. That's the part that's horrific. Anyway, but it's helpful.

And I say that because I learned how to pace how I present the material and to make sure that it's engaging and interactive. So, recording does offer you personal reflective feedback, which is very helpful. You could practice with a peer. This works really well if you've got a teaching partner in the classroom, right? You're able to kind of say, "You go ahead and do it, let's see how it goes," and then offer feedback either during or after class, however it's appropriate. Practice is great. You can watch a "master teacher" in action. Perhaps, there's somebody in your program who is really, really good at it. Watch them and get some ideas from them, right? Maybe, you're the master teacher and you don't even know it, so offer yourself.

So, here, let's go ahead and kind of start summarizing this for you. Again, as teachers, you scaffold children's learning when you give hints, just enough to have them understand or to take on a new skill. You offer a range of answers when children need extra support. And you encourage children to use additional resources to help them understand concepts or ideas.

So, I know we asked this question earlier, but we're going to ask it again because now you've had the benefit of the full session. So, how, again, would you describe scaffolding, this technical term, to a parent or a new teacher or somebody at a party? Thank you. You all keep typing. My Fort Belmont friends, Danisha, keep going. Wonderful answers. I think it will really help parents to think about ways that they can scaffold at home. And feel free to offer, you know, the shoe-tying example as a way to kind of make it feel more real. And I just wanted to really highlight a comment that Dee made about it not being right or wrong, but it's about the process, right? We learn best when we're able to roll up our sleeves and to kind of dig in and think about it, make mistakes. I mean, I don't know about you all, but I definitely learn more deeply and permanently when I make a mistake and figure out how to fix it.

And when you think about children's play, it's a lot about making little mistakes and making little corrections. Block area is such an easy example of that, right? We can tell a child how to build a block structure, but if we are just there to scaffold them and give them hints, they'll figure out you can't put a long heavy block on top of that one little skinny cylinder and have it balance easily. But what could they do, right? Put a series of cylinders underneath that big block, and that would make it work. But they will figure it out. Oh, Danisha, I'm so glad you put that in there. Giving children time, time to think and to answer questions. And that really does speak to how rushed we feel so often in our Head Start classrooms. There is so much to do, and so often it feels like there's so little time to do it in. But if we stop and pause and we offer these hints, resources, range of answers, our children will become more and more independent learners as they gain confidence in being able to learn on their own.

So, I think you guys took everything I was hoping you would out of this webinar session today. If you are working in teams, download that planning form and think about ways you might be able to use it in your room to really deepen this in your classroom.

So, we have another tool for you, of course. And we'll put this link also in chat. And what this does is just give you some quick tips as teachers. I recommend sticking this in your planning binder. It gives examples of how to offer a range of answers, for example, or to provide hints. It could be a tool you take with you to your next home visit if you want to explain a little bit more in detail with some examples for families, right?

I know we have transition visits coming up soon. Give parents ideas to think about for over the summer, for example. Would be great at parent meetings. I don't know if you have any family engagement people out there, though might be some nice ideas here, too, for you.

So, another tool for you. Again, this is part of the full in-service suite package, and you can find it online as well as in that big binder we sent out to you all, and in the AIAN-specific in-service suite DVD. Okay? And if you don't know what those things are and you're an ed manager, let me know. We've got to make sure we get that to you, okay? So, thank you all.

I will stay on general chat for a while longer since we have about 10 more minutes left in our time together, if you have questions. And actually it could be me or Susan answering. So, thank you all.