

Week 3 Reading Assignment

Steps for Scaffolding Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Experiences



Culture plays an important role in children's development. How are you incorporating each child's culture as you scaffold and plan for their learning?

Through interactions teachers learn more about each child's individual identity and interests to plan more intentionally for their learning.

Steps for Scaffolding Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Experiences

(Adapted from *Lesson Plans for a Strong Start: The First 30 Days for Toddlers*, C.M. Snyder, 2016, p. 305; and *Key Developmental Indicator (KDI) Scaffolding Cards*, A. S. Epstein, S. Gainsley, and B. Marshall, 2013).

Adult scaffolding of children's learning is an essential component of early education because young children develop along a continuum; even children of the same chronological age vary in their development and ability levels. For this reason, as adults interact with children, it is important to organize their behaviors into **early**, **middle**, and **later** developmental levels with careful attention to what children observe, do, and say. Consideration of what children *can do* helps teachers make intentional decisions about their interactions with each child.

Scaffolding involves on-the-spot, intentional adult-child interactions to support and extend children's learning. It is broken down into three steps:



This teacher provides musical instruments as a group time experience for her young infants.

Steps for Scaffolding Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Experiences (continued)

Step 1: Consider children's developmental levels.

Anticipate how individual children at each developmental level (earlier, middle, and later) will respond to the activity and how they might use the provided materials. Understanding children's ability at each level will provide valuable insights for determining support and extension strategies.

Step 2: Provide support at children's current level of development.

Once you have an understanding of what children might do and say during the activity, you can plan how you will support their current levels of development.

Strategies to provide support:

- Watch what individual children do and imitate their actions.
- Comment on children's actions.
- Respond to children's verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Try out children's suggestions.
- Acknowledge children's interactions.

Repetition of existing skills is a necessary part of child development to secure brain connections and mastery of those skills. Likewise, acknowledging children's current ability strengthens your authentic relationship with them and boosts their self-confidence.

Steps for Scaffolding Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Experiences (continued)

Step 3: Offer gentle extensions.

Throughout your supportive interactions, you will find natural opportunities to provide children with gentle extensions, that is, subtle ways to broaden their engagement and further developmental growth.

Strategies to extend learning:

- Offer additional materials.
- Pose simple questions.
- Suggest new ideas for children to try.
- Ask children for additional ideas.
- Refer children to one another.

When offering a gentle extension, it is important to observe children's responses. They may show interest in the opportunity or continue with their own idea. Accept their engagement with or dismissal of your suggestion. This will help you determine whether to return to step 2 or to continue with step 3.

By following these scaffolding steps, you can engage with children through meaningful, responsive interactions while encouraging their growth and development.