Scaffolding facilitates a student’s ability to build on prior knowledge and internalise new information. Scaffolding activities support learners beyond the level of what they can do alone. Teachers help students learn how to link old information or familiar situations with new knowledge. According to Bransford, Brown & Cocking,[[1]](#footnote-1) Scaffolding includes methods, frameworks and organisers that provide a structure for completing a task and activities that:

* motivate or enlist a student’s interest related to the task
* simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for a child
* provide some direction in order to help a student focus on achieving the objective
* clearly indicate differences between the student’s work and the standard or desired solution
* reduce frustration and risk
* model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed.

Scaffolding also includes the interactions between teachers and students that help students understand the requirements and expectations of the task.

**When assessing student achievement, teachers should:**

* write clear and definite instructions about what to do, including steps that students need to follow to complete the task
* clearly state the conditions for completing the task
* describe what is included in a completed student response
* identify any available resources that students can use to complete the task
* include cues and layout that help students understand the task
* include graphic organisers that will help students organise their thinking.

**When setting expected standards descriptors, teachers can:**

* explain exactly what will be assessed in the task — the knowledge and skills expected by the task
* identify for students the characteristics of high-quality responses
* show the characteristics of possible student responses that are not assessed.

**When providing students with samples and indicative responses, teachers can:**

* identify the characteristics of the sample that show the expected standard of the response
* explain the different ways that students can complete the task successfully.

**After students complete an assessment, teachers can:**

* provide written and verbal feedback to students about their work, such as annotations on drafts and one-on-one conferences
* give clear information about the standard of work seen in student responses
* use clear and descriptive language that helps students understand what improvement is required
* make feedback as immediate and useful as possible.

1. Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R.  2000, *How People Learn: Brain, mind, experience & school*,  National Academy Press, Washington, DC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)