

Teaching Strategies

Teachable Moments and Scaffolding

When children are experimenting, being creative and taking risks, adults will often find they are presented with opportunities to support the development of the child's thinking and problem-solving skills if they support the child, rather than instructing them how to complete the task.

Teachable moments cannot be planned for, they are moments where the adult can spontaneously support a child:

- If they ask for help with their task,
- if it has become apparent that they are stuck and need help to move forward, or,
- if they may hurt themselves or others.

These are moments when the teacher can step in to support the child to make decisions about what they may need to do differently to complete the task.

The questions and discussions during these teachable moments can link a child's existing knowledge to new and emerging knowledge, skills and understanding. This is known as scaffolding and occurs in what Lev Vygotsky (1978), a pioneering psychologist, referred to as the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). The ZPD is the difference between what a child can do by themselves, and what they can learn with the support from an adult or someone with more experience than them.

Scaffolding is guidance and support provided to children when they are doing or learning something that is age-appropriate or slightly above their ability. As children develop their skill and learning, the support provided will need to be reduced until the child is able to do the skill or task by themselves.

Strategies

There are a variety of ways to support children's learning and development and it is useful to use a combination of these strategies:

Suggestions:

Offer hints or possible ideas that may help a child to achieve the task that they are struggling with.

Questions:

There are two types of questions you can ask:

questions that encourage children to come up with the answer on their own.

questions that have a clear answer or that are accompanied by a multiple choice of answers to help the child formulate and answer. This type of questioning can take place when a child struggles to come up with an answer on their own.

Discussions:

Instead of discussing the task through questions and answers, encourage the child to ask you questions too.

Demonstrating:

Make your own version of the structure/object to allow the child to view how you would do it.

Praise and encouragement:

Offer encouragement to keep them motivated. Also ask them to think about how they are doing, allowing them to identify their own achievements.

Help and Support:

If none of the above works, help the child with part of the task and then encourage them to continue by themselves.

Scaffolding through a Teachable moment

Building and Construction

Place a selection of equipment and recycled objects in the outdoor area that allows children to build their own structures.

Encourage the children to use natural material (rocks, wood, etc.), alongside the materials provided.

Allow them to complete as much as they can without your assistance; do be on hand to guide when it appears it has become too challenging or if you feel that there is a risk of harm.

Use the list of scaffolding concepts above to support the children.

Teach them to be safe by asking questions about the safety of the structure they are about to climb or the object they have built.