UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA | SCHOOL of EDUCATION and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
CASTL

# Empowering Learning Through Scaffolding

## INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, "Empowering Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Through Scaffolding," from The National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

## Goals

♦ Discuss how scaffolding allows infants and toddlers to solve problems or carry out tasks beyond their current abilities.

♦ Reflect on your beliefs and effective strategies to better understand each child's preferences, culture, and abilities to support their problem-solving skills through learning.

♦ Develop a plan to support infants' and toddlers' problem-solving skills through scaffolding.

## Activity

♦ Read the article.

♦ Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to support infants' and toddlers' problem-solving skills through scaffolding.

♦ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support problem-solving with tasks.

**Reaffirming the large research base on scaffolding highlights how observing and reflecting helps teachers to better understand each infant's preferences, culture, and what support they may need to move forward.**

**Jung & Recchia**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

♦ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

♦ Scaffolding allows children to solve problems or carry out tasks beyond their current abilities. The article also states that scaffolding is a bridge teachers create to connect existing knowledge to new knowledge and understanding and as a result, is collaborative in nature.
   o Based on the several considerations required for scaffolding, which ones can you apply to your practice?
      ▪ Some include understanding the children's overall development, children's approach to learning and matching strategies to each child's current interests, knowledge, and skills.
   o How can you shape your role to facilitate the children's abilities to learn more than what they may have learned on their own?

♦ Infants can be viewed as innately motivated and competent. Careful and intentional observing enabled the teachers in the article to sensitively individualize their scaffolding to meet each infant's needs. A few suggestions were mentioned to support problem-solving for infants and toddlers. Consider the children in your care and your beliefs about how they learn through play.
   o How would your beliefs influence the way you set the stage for infants' and toddlers' abilities to learn through play?
   o Would this affect the way children in your care problem-solve during play?
   o How can you support their learning through scaffolding as you join them in play?

♦ Develop a plan to enhance children's problem-solving through playful interactions and scaffolding.
   o Create a learning environment that builds on children's interests and abilities.
   o Which strategies would you implement in your practice to support children's problem-solving? Examples in the article included modeling for children, following the child's lead, offering and accepting choices, etc.
   o Make observations to ensure your plan is tailored to each child's individual needs and strengths.
   o As you implement your plan, monitor children's progress and adjust your supports as needed.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Learn more about supporting infants' and toddler's problem-solving skills:

- **Source:** Scholastic
- **Article:** How Your Child Learns to Problem-Solve
- **Link:** https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/creativity-and-critical-thinking/learning-skills-for-kids/how-your-child-learns-to-problem-solve.html
- **Description:** Children have unique ways of thinking. Creative and critical thinking helps them figure out solutions to all kinds of problems.

- **Source:** Illinois Early Learning Project
- **Article:** Approaches to Learning: Problem-Solving
- **Link:** https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/problem/
- **Description:** Children learn to problem-solve through nurturing relationships, active exploration, and social interactions. This article offers indicators and strategies for these interactions.

- **Source:** Zero to Three
- **Article:** Supporting Thinking Skills from 0-12 Months
- **Link:** https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/supporting-thinking-skills-from-0-12-months/
- **Description:** Infants begin to make sense of the world through interactions and experiences with loved and trusted adults. This article explores various ways to support infants' thinking skills from 0-12 months.