How can scaffolding occur?

_Just as a scaffold supports a worker, the scaffolding process supports children in maximizing developmentally appropriate achievement._

Lev Vygotsky (1930-1978), a social constructivist, coined the phrase “scaffolding” to describe a process by which adults and mentors foster the development of children. Through scaffolding, adults provide an ideal amount of assistance to children to help them achieve mastery of skills. Scaffolding should never be confused with “pushing” children beyond what is developmentally appropriate. Scaffolding recognizes that each child can accomplish tasks at a slightly higher level of mastery with the help of parents and educators, as well as more skilled siblings and peers.

Suggestions to help scaffolding occur in the early childhood classroom

- Prompt and support the extension of a child’s thought with open-ended questions.
- Give children time to think and to process their thoughts so that they don’t feel they have to answer quickly. Time honors process.
- Encourage the child to justify that process by explaining the thought. This helps him organize his thoughts and provide personal clarification.
- Encourage other children to ask questions and extend the thinking.
- Introduce new vocabulary, if appropriate.
- Encourage the use of reference books or experimentation.