



Scaffolding Instruction to Improve Achievement through the Gradual Release Model

Effective literacy instruction supports students as they move from novice to expert readers and writers. All too often teachers introduce students to a skill or material, explain the steps, and then expect the students to complete the assignment independently. Cognitive learning research tells us that another model of instruction, *The Gradual Release Model of Instruction*, developed by Pearson and Gallagher (1983), is far more effective for building student understanding. In this model, instruction moves along a continuum from teacher activity and focus to learner activity and focus.

This continuum can be seen as four stages: teacher directed (modeling), shared practice (teacher and students), guided practice (student practice with support), and independent practice. **The greatest student learning occurs in the second and third stages of the model.**

Teacher Directed (Modeling) - The teacher:

- The teacher explicitly describes and explains a skill, activity, assignment...
- The teacher models the use of a skill/strategy through thinking aloud.
- The teacher reviews the explanation.
- The teacher checks for understanding.
- **The teacher makes the invisible act of learning visible for students.**

Shared Practice - The teacher leads, the students participate:

- The teacher leads the activity/assignment asking students to participate.
- The students participate by following along with the teacher, practicing and/or applying the skill/strategy previously modeled.
- The teacher asks leading questions to encourage students to think about the process, a concept, or an outcome.
- The students develop understandings as they answer the teacher's questions.
- The teacher reviews the activity with the students and checks for understanding.

Guided Practice - The students act (sometimes in pairs or groups), the teacher guides:

- The students (often in cooperative groups) work through the activity/assignment.
- The teacher monitors and coaches students through the process.
- The teacher provides students with specific feedback about their work.
- The teacher continues to ask leading questions to encourage students to find next steps or to think more deeply about processes and concepts.
- The teacher debriefs the activity with the students and checks for understanding.

Independent Practice - The student independently applies the skill/strategy

- The students complete the assignment independently.
- The teacher monitors for understanding and returns to earlier stages if necessary.
- The student applies skill to new assignments / contexts.
- The student monitors and evaluates his/her own understanding and self corrects.
- The student reflects about, analyzes, and evaluates their mastery of the skill/concept.
- The students are able to apply the skill / concept to the "real world".