

Scaffolding approaches: online and face-to-face learning



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Abstract

The purpose of this reflection is to analyze the different approaches to scaffolding between the online and face-to-face learning environments. It will examine approaches to scaffolding, skills students will need to master learning objectives; as well as similarities and differences in the learning experience and student engagement in traditional and online learning.

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Success Strategies in Online Learning

In order for students to be successful with online learning, teachers must be knowledgeable on how to scaffold learning opportunities appropriately for students. A basic foundation must be created by scaffolding assignments that allow students experience with navigating the course, online resources, and technology that is now required for the learning experience. Success with these experiences and specific feedback and encouragement from the teacher will build confidence and motivation in the learner.

Online students may need more structure to encourage collaboration with peers. This is a system that provides additional support; as well as the opportunity to interact with others. Teaching students to utilize their peers and online resources to drive their learning experience allows them to take learning into their own hands and engage in the curriculum in a way that interests them. Combining these strategies with breaking up learning into

smaller pieces will allow the students to stay focused and successfully engage in what they are learning.

Many skills and strategies needed for success in a traditional learning environment are also necessary for success in the online setting. Building relationships with students and keeping communication lines open help support a successful learning environment. Skills that are important in both settings include clear expectations for all learning opportunities, strong communication with students about course setup and expectations, and designing curriculum in a way that students are consistently engaging with the curriculum. These strategies encourage students take ownership of their learning and enjoy the learning process ((North Carolina Community College System).

Pre-Requisite Skills Needed for Online Learning

A student hoping to find success in the online learning environment will need to have a certain set of skills to help them maneuver the needs of virtual learning. Regardless of the environment, all students will need a common list of skills to be a successful; such as reading and writing skills, organizational skills, and time management skills. In fact, many skills from the traditional classroom are important in the online learning environment, as well.

According to an article from the Minnesota State Careerwise website, many new online learners start with an unrealistic vision of what learning in this environment is like. While many students think of the benefits of flexibility and convenience in these courses, they are not considering the time, energy, <https://assignbuster.com/scaffolding-approaches-online-and-face-to-face-learning/>

and specific skill set needed to be successful (Minnesota Department of Education). The article discusses a list of needs and skills a successful online learner must have; stating persistence as the top need. Those who succeed in online learning are willing to work through any technical issues, a new type of communication style with teachers and peers and be willing to stick to a study schedule. They must be motivated to finish and have the ability to work independently and use effective time management skills to help organize the time needed and requirements for their courses.

Communication is a key ingredient to progressing through and completing an online course and looks and feels very different in an online environment. The majority of communication is written and could take place through email, texts, discussion boards, and online chats. Students must understand the importance of using correct grammar and complete sentences; as well as following appropriate netiquette guidelines. It is very easy to have a misunderstanding or misperception with written communication. Having a good study environment is key to an online student's success as it sets the stage for all being able to focus on all of these skills mentioned above. Being free of distractions, comfortable, and having the ability to focus allows for success with these skills (Minnesota Department of Education).

According to an article from Faculty Focus, Alred and Adams believe educators must find a way to support students in this new learning environment; where technology is unfamiliar, students experience an isolation from teachers and peers, and experience a lack of face-to-face interaction with others (Alred, Adams, 2018). Several scaffolding strategies shared in the article that would support students transitioning to the online

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environment include offering early orientations and communicating information about yourself, expectations for the course, and guidance for how to navigate the new tools and resources they will be using. Building confidence early can make a difference in students' experience from the very beginning. Posting weekly announcements and reminders; as well as additional resources and how to use those resources can be used for support will help students feel a strong connection with the learning experience and their ability to be successful (Alred, Adams, 2018). Being proactive in scaffolding takes some of the stress out of the new learning environment while making the experience rewarding, successful, and building intrinsic motivation in students. As Miltiadou and Savenye discuss in their article about enhancing student success in the online environment, positive relationships with the teacher and peers build intrinsic motivation. Success as an online learner depends on a student's ability to work independently and find motivation in completing requirements and reaching goals (Miltiadou, Savenye. 2003.)

Challenges and Differences in Online Learning

Although there are many similarities in the skills and engagement strategies used for student success in traditional and online learning, it is important to remember that online learners may not have a full understanding of what to expect as they begin their learning experiences. Many of us have experience as traditional learners and know what to expect; online learning is a new adventure that requires strong support from all stake holders to create a successful learning environment.

To face these challenges, teachers will need to work closely with students to be sure they feel supported and understand how to be successful with assignments and learning experiences. Teachers must create clear procedures and be sure each student fully understands expectations. Communications must be clear and details so there is no room for confusion.

As teachers work to create assignments, they must be aware that students have many distractions around them that could lead to lack of engagement in the content or focus on learning. Online students have the ability to walk away at any moment, so the teacher must structure learning and practice opportunities in a way that students understand, follow, and feel engaged in order to meet the goals of the teacher and student (North Carolina Community College System).

A summary of research by Thomas Brush and John Saye explores the impact of hard and soft scaffolding of teachers and students in a multimedia supported learning environment. They found that in curriculum development, there are two types of support: soft and hard scaffolds. Soft scaffolds are dynamic, situation-specific supports provided by a teacher or peer to help with the learning process. This type of scaffolding requires teachers to continuously diagnose the student progress and provide quick, specific feedback for students. Soft scaffolding happens during the learning process and while students are engaged in the activity (Saye & Brush, 2002). In an online learning environment, these types of learning experiences do not have the opportunity to happen as frequently as in the traditional setting. As students engage in more student-led, independent asynchronous work teachers have to search for opportunities to incorporate the soft scaffolds <https://assignbuster.com/scaffolding-approaches-online-and-face-to-face-learning/>

into synchronous learning times. Helping students think more deeply about topics or guiding their learning with questioning are soft scaffolds that will help students progress during these live teaching sessions (Saye & Brush, 2002).

Hard scaffolds are built-in supports that teachers can insert into curriculum in advance based on student data and needs. This type of scaffolding can be asynchronous curriculum and provide students with guidance and support as they are working independently (Saye & Brush, 2001). With the primary learning setup up being asynchronous, teachers must master how to best use hard scaffolds in online learning. These scaffolds support students when they are working independently; therefore, they are an integral part of the learning process when engaging and motivating students to succeed. Saye and Brush share several examples of what these hard scaffolds could look like, such as integrating hyperlinks into reading assignments that would allow students to further research the topic they are studying and, structure student journals, and student guides to help students organize and analyze information (Saye & Brush, 2001).

Successful online teachers understand the importance of using good resources, implementing engaging and supportive strategies and scaffolding, and have the ability to build relationships with students that fosters confidence and self-motivation for learning.

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