

Better Learning



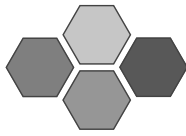
THROUGH
STRUCTURED
TEACHING

A Framework for the Gradual
Release of Responsibility

Douglas Fisher | Nancy Frey



Better Learning



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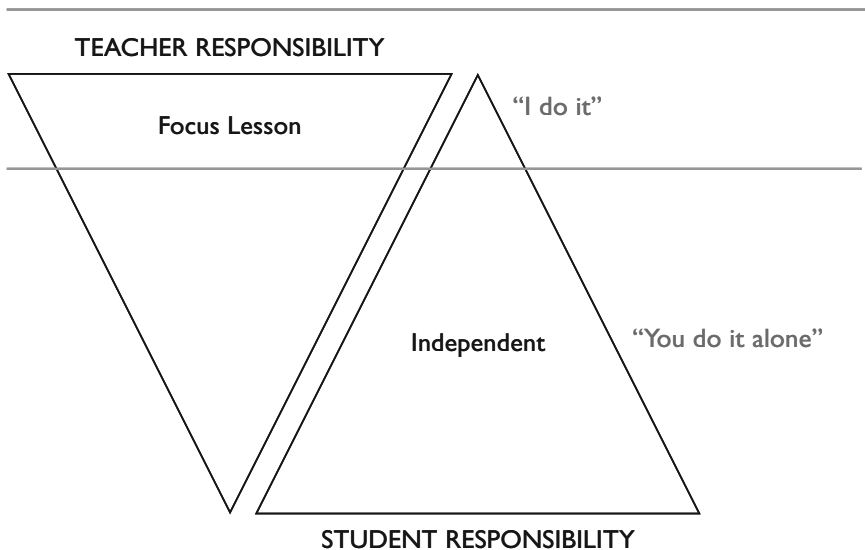
provides students an opportunity to apply that knowledge in a new way.

When Learning Isn't Occurring

Unfortunately, there are still classrooms in which responsibility is not being transferred from knowledgeable others (teachers, peers, parents) to students. These classrooms do not operate on an apprenticeship model in which scaffolding is used to ensure success. For example, in some classrooms, teachers provide modeling and then ask students to complete independent tasks. This approach is graphically represented in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

In some classrooms . . .



This instructional model is all too familiar. The teacher demonstrates how to solve algebra problems and then asks students to solve the odd-numbered problems in the back of the book. Or

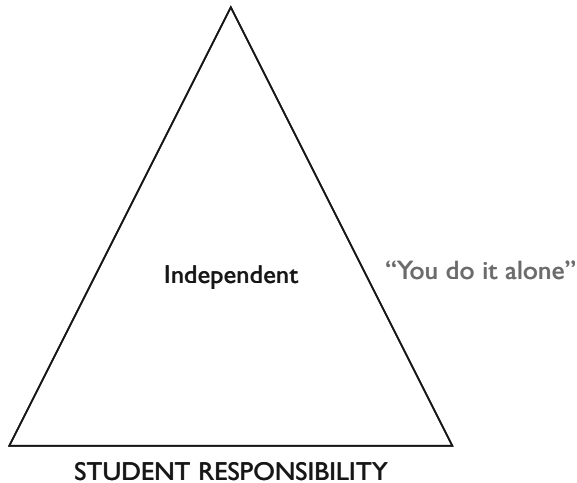
a teacher reads a text aloud and then asks students to complete a comprehension worksheet based on the reading. In both of these cases, the teacher fails to develop students' understanding of the content through purposeful interactions.

Sadly, there is a classroom model worse than this, at least in terms of instructional development. In some classrooms, students are asked to learn independently day after day. This approach is graphically represented in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3

In some classrooms . . .

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY



Some teachers assign pages from a textbook to be read and then require students to answer questions at the back of the book, over and over again. Other teachers spend hours at the photocopier creating packets for students to work on independently, hour after hour. There really isn't much teaching going on in these classrooms. It's mostly assigning or causing work.

Focus Lessons: Establishing Purpose and Modeling

The first phase of a gradual release of responsibility model is the focus lesson. This is the time when the teacher is demonstrating, modeling, and sharing his or her thinking with students. Although this segment may be brief (5–15 minutes), it is powerful. This is the time when the teacher uses the students’ attention to introduce the concept, skill, or strategy they are to learn. This task is accomplished through one or more approaches designed to make the learning transparent to learners. The notion of transparency is critical to the focus lesson. In order for students to acquire new knowledge, they need to witness a more knowledgeable other (the teacher) using the strategy being demonstrated. Moreover, they need to be invited into the mind of that more knowledgeable other. This is accomplished by sharing one’s thinking—making it transparent to students not only how it is done but how decisions are made in the successful completion of the task.

Figure 3.1

Scaffolding types and examples

Type of Scaffold and Task Complexity	Definition	Learning Tool Example	Language Example
Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of support • High level of task complexity 	Learner produces something new with the information.	Templates	“Based on the graph, what do you believe they should do next?”
Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate level of support • Moderate level of task complexity 	Learner manipulates information.	Graphic organizers	“Use the bar graph to arrive at your answer. What does it tell you?”
Reception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of support • Low level of task complexity 	Learner applies information.	Textual and visual information	“Look at the diagram at the bottom of the page to answer.”

Assessments are used in school for a number of reasons, including the following:

- To assist student learning
- To identify students’ strengths and weaknesses
- To assess the effectiveness of a particular instructional strategy
- To assess and improve the effectiveness of curriculum programs
- To assess and improve teaching effectiveness
- To provide data that assist in decision making
- To communicate with and involve parents (Kellough & Kellough, 1999, pp. 418–419)