

Example for Zone of Proximal Development:

- A child is learning to cut with scissors. Her actual development in her “scissors-cutting process” involves holding the scissors with two hands (one hand on each of the handles) in order to open and shut them and she struggles with getting the paper into the scissors because both hands are occupied with the scissors.
- Her potential level of development (what she can do with assistance) involves the teacher holding the paper so the child can use both of her hands to cut through the paper successfully.
- In order to support the child in being able to cut paper by opening and shutting the scissors with one hand, the teacher scaffolds her in the following ways over a period of time:
 - First she holds the paper while the child uses both hands to open and shut the scissors, moving the scissors through the paper – this helps to establish confidence in the child that she can cut.
 - Next, the teacher may continue to hold the paper while she works with helping the child learn how to hold the scissors in one hand and the coordination involved to open and shut the scissors with one hand – the teacher in this case may actually have her hand over the child’s hand with the scissors so the child can feel the movement of the teacher’s hand that she will eventually mimic.
 - Next the teacher may continue to hold the paper while the child works on mastering the movement of the scissors in one hand.
 - Once the child has mastered this, the teacher may then have the child help her hold the paper while the child cuts through.
 - Finally the child masters holding the paper in one hand while cutting with the other without any assistance from the teacher (this becomes the child’s new actual level of development). – The process of reaching this new level of “actual development” could take anywhere between a few minutes to a few months.