Empower Learners Through Practice Opportunities

UDL CHECKPOINT 5.3: Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance
—Scaffold assessments and provide in-class support as well as post-assessment feedback to improve learners' comfort and confidence in the course and build their overall fluencies.

What is it?

Successful learners are able to navigate their academics in a variety of fluencies (including reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking). However, these fluencies must be developed by the instructor and within the classroom setting. Scaffolding assignments, modeling correct skills, supporting learners through practice, and providing comprehensive instructor feedback creates learners who are more fluent and comfortable with the course's content.

Why do it?

Learners can feel overwhelmed with coursework, causing them to complete assessments improperly or not at all. This ultimately leads to unfavorable academic experiences and a barrier between the learner and the material. Scaffolding assessments improves learner proficiency, allowing them to understand and then build upon various aspects of the assessment or course topic. Additionally, allowing practice time within the classroom, with the instructor present to answer questions, helps learners to internalize the material and increase their overall knowledge. These practices, coupled with prompt feedback, can help students better learn the material and succeed in the course.

How can I apply it?

Here are some ways that you can empower students through practice.
- **Provide accessible and differentiated notes.** By providing verbal (audio), written, and/or video options for notes, all learners will be able to engage with the course's information in a way that is comfortable and beneficial to them.
- **Demonstrate through differentiated models.** Because no two learners are alike, it is important to offer multiple examples and models that show different approaches and strategies to achieve the same end goal.
- **Scaffold assessments.** Breaking down complex assessments and projects allows learners the opportunity to complete and master portions of the assignment in a systematic and regulated manner.
- **Give timely and comprehensive feedback.** Providing feedback shortly after an assessment is submitted helps learners become aware of what they need to improve in future tasks. Additionally, differentiating the manner in which the feedback is provided can help various types of learners better understand what is expected of them.

Summary

Successful learning is best achieved when the instructor acts as a mentoring guide to learners. This means that it is the instructor's responsibility to meet the learners where they are at and allow them opportunities to practice improving their knowledge and abilities in the course. When this happens, learners will feel validated and empowered to continue their academic journey.