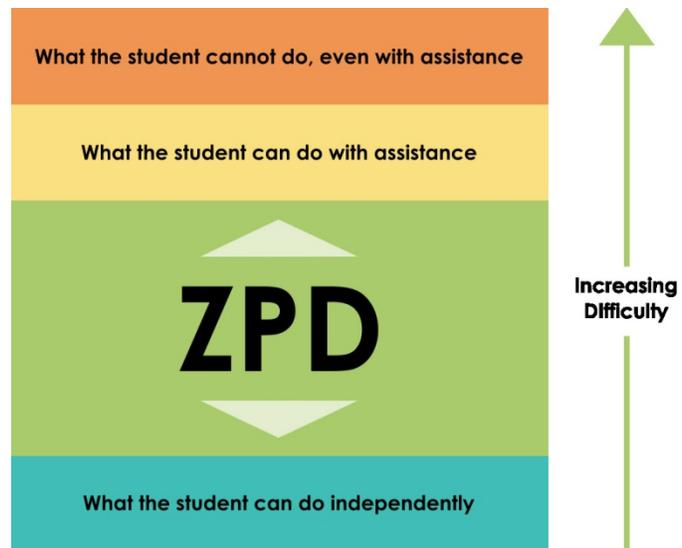


# How to Use CPAA to Teach in the Zone of Proximal Development

## What is the zone of proximal development?

The *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) is the difference between what a student can do independently and what he or she is capable of doing with targeted assistance (*scaffolding*).

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky coined this term in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to describe the sweet spot where instruction is most beneficial for each student – just beyond his or her current level of independent capability.



## Why is the ZPD so important for instruction?

Instruction focused within a student's ZPD is not too difficult or too easy, but just challenging enough to help him or her develop new skills by building on ones that have already been established. Students are most receptive to instruction within their ZPD because it represents the next logical step within their ongoing skill development. Without reliable information on students' constantly evolving ZPDs, it is difficult to identify who is ready for more challenging material and who needs additional assistance.

## How and why is the concept of ZPD built into CPAA?

CPAA has been designed to help locate where instruction will be most effective for each student. Unlike summative tools that measure achievement, CPAA is a formative tool meant to help teachers guide that achievement in the right direction. CPAA reports do this by identifying which material students are ready to learn and which specific instructional next steps can help.

A traditional assessment can only identify what each student can do independently (what he or she has *already mastered*). However, to guide instruction, we must concentrate instead on skills that students are *on the cusp of learning* (skills in their ZPD). To identify these skills, we need to pinpoint not just what students already know (what they can answer correctly), but also what they *almost know* (what they can answer correctly with a bit scaffolding or targeted hinting).

To locate the ZPD for each student and determine what he or she can *almost* do independently, CPAA mimics a teacher’s one-on-one guidance. Questions adjust to provide every child (performing at, above or below grade level) with material that is appropriate and challenging. A correct response leads to a more difficult question; an incorrect response is followed by scaffolding. This adaptive structure makes for a more targeted experience for students and a more meaningful assessment for educators.

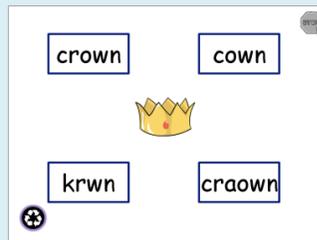
### An Example of Scaffolding in CPAA

If students are unable to correctly spell the word “crown” using the letters shown, they will see a follow-up question (with scaffolding) in which they are asked to choose the correct spelling from four options.

#### Initial Question



#### Follow-up Question with Scaffolding



## How can I use my CPAA reports to teach in the zone?

**CPAA scores are meant to be interpreted as a measure of readiness as opposed to a measure of proficiency.** CPAA reports take into account not only how each student performed independently but also how he or she performed with scaffolding. In a general sense, you can think of the scores for each concept in this way:

 The student was not able to answer many grade-level questions, even with assistance. (*Below Expectation*)

 The student was able to answer many grade-level questions independently (and perhaps some questions with assistance). (*At Expectation*)

 The student was able to answer many grade-level questions with assistance, but not independently. (*Approaching Expectation*)

 The student was able to answer practically all grade-level questions independently and may have moved on to questions above grade level. (*Above Expectation*)

**In choosing next steps that can help each student and the whole class,** note that CPAA activities are recommended for students based on their assessment performance. In the same way that CPAA’s dynamic structure ensures that the assessment takes place within each child’s ZPD, the resulting list of individual activities will suggest relevant instruction within each child’s ZPD as well. If you want to plan additional interventions, keep in mind that students scoring below expectation on a concept might not yet have this concept in their ZPD and may need instruction in more foundational concepts before moving on.

When looking for the most detailed understanding of any student’s assessment experience, navigate to the individual student’s report and click on the **Full Report** tab.

- Click on “**Open all subconcepts (details view)**” (A) to see how the student responded to particular questions (correctly, correctly after seeing a hint or incorrectly, even after seeing a hint).
- In the example below, in Blending, (B) you can see that this student answered one question correctly with a hint and another question correctly without needing to see a hint. This level of detail is included to allow you to dig deeper when necessary.
- You can click on the relevant recommended activity (C) to learn what you can do next to help this student.

The screenshot shows a report interface for a student named Veola Merideth. The top navigation bar includes 'Report Areas' with tabs for 'Report Card', 'Full Report', 'Progress', and 'Activities'. Below this, there are filters for 'View' (Language Arts, Mathematics) and 'Language Arts' (Writing, Phonemic Awareness, Reading). The 'Phonemic Awareness' section is highlighted in green and shows a status of 'Approaching Expectation'. A green circle 'A' points to the 'Open all sub concepts (details view)' button. Below this is a paragraph of text describing the student's performance in the beginning section, including details about blending sounds, rhyming, and matching. A legend indicates that a green checkmark means 'Correct answer', a yellow checkmark with a hint icon means 'Correct answer with hint', and a red X means 'Incorrect answer'. A table titled 'Blending' compares what the student was able to do versus what she should be able to do. A green circle 'B' points to the 'Blend the given sounds to form a word: phone' activity, which is marked as 'Correct answer with hint'. Another green circle 'C' points to the 'Grab What?' recommended activity.

**According to teachers, here are the top two benefits of incorporating the concept of ZPD in CPAA:**

1. Since the assessment includes material within each student’s ZPD, students are exposed to questions that are not too easy or too difficult. This keeps them engaged throughout administration and even gives them a chance to learn while they take the assessment (by exposure to scaffolding).
2. Using the concept of ZPD helps to gather more nuanced information about student learning. Beyond getting a question right or wrong, there is a gray area in between where many students fall and CPAA helps identify students at various points along this progression.