

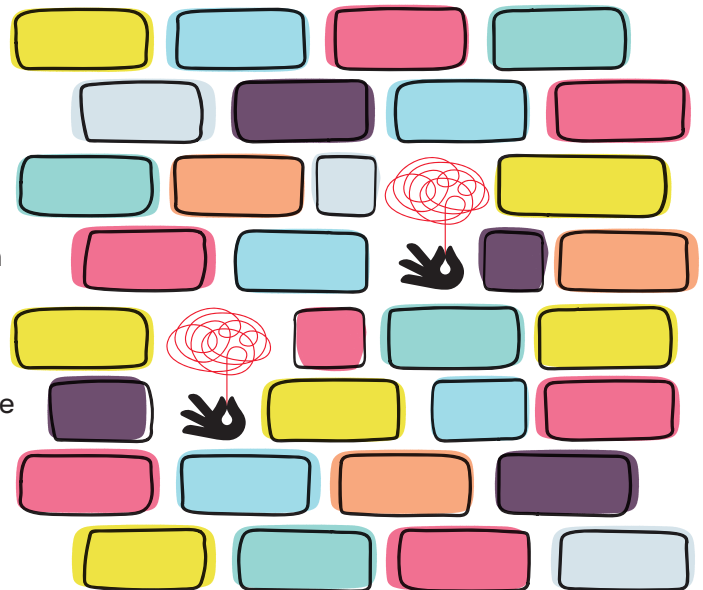
BUILDING BLOCKS

Learning Gaps

The difference between what a student has learned and what they are expected to learn at a particular age or grade level is called a **learning gap**. Learning gaps, if left unaddressed will compound over time, causing students to struggle, lose confidence, and increase the likelihood that these students will eventually drop out of school or at a minimum, not reach their potential. If a student is experiencing a learning gap with a foundational skill, such as reading or basic math, the difficulty can impact all aspects of the student's education.

The Tutor Doctor Building Blocks

At Tutor Doctor, we believe that a student's education needs to be built on a strong skills foundation and that each of these skills is a **building block** that supports the new learning a student accomplishes each year. When there is a learning gap, one or more of these building blocks are weak or missing, creating an unstable skills foundation. As a student works towards new learning, these gaps widen and skills and knowledge fall through the cracks, causing students to struggle and lose confidence in themselves. Our mission of changing the trajectory of a student's life is the rebuilding of those missing or weak building blocks to shrink the learning gaps and help our students be successful, independent learners.

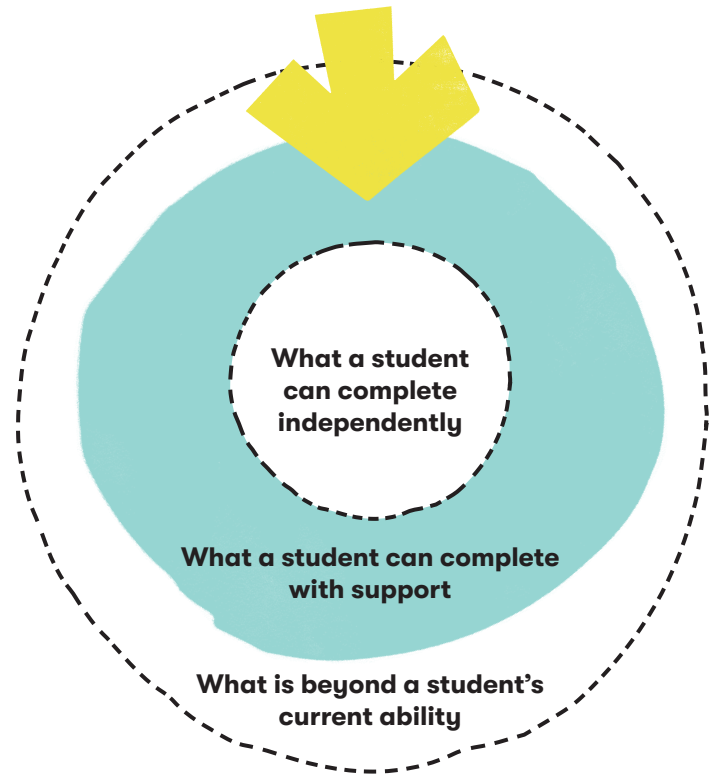


Rebuilding the Building Blocks

Educational theorist, Lev Vygotsky, developed the idea of the **Zone of Proximal Development**. The Zone of Proximal Development is the area of learning where a task or skill is too difficult for a student to master on his/her own but can be completed with the guidance of a more experienced person. The theory behind this approach is that if a student is in the Zone of Proximal Development for a task, providing them with some assistance from an adult or more experienced learner will boost their abilities, allowing them to complete the task and acquire the related learning. This technique is also called **Scaffolding**. If a task is too hard, a student will become discouraged and quit. If a task is too easy, a student will become bored and quit.

It is important that we motivate students to work within the zone where a task or topic is challenging, but not beyond their ability to accomplish with our support. Consider when a child is learning to walk. They cannot support themselves while taking those first steps. The parent does not leave them to struggle but holds their hand to help support them until they are able to take steps independently and slowly steps further and further away to let them take a few more steps on their own. As with the baby, once the student has mastered the task or skill, the guidance or “scaffold” can be removed and the student will be able to complete the task or skill on his/her own. This is what Tutor Doctor strives to achieve through tutoring. As tutors, we provide the guidance and support (or the “scaffold”) to help our students develop the skills and rebuild the building blocks that have fallen into a learning gap, allowing them to build up their skills foundation and succeed independently.

ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT



Building Beyond Academics

The Tutor Doctor Building Blocks are not just about creating a stable academic foundation, they are also about creating a solid foundation of confidence. Students who are missing building blocks are also missing confidence. As new learning falls through learning gaps, a student's confidence begins to fall through those gaps as well. This creates a chain reaction where the student is less likely to push themselves towards new or challenging learning for fear of failure and a decreased belief in their abilities, so less and less learning takes place. As a result, the student is less likely to reach their full potential in school and other areas of life.

Tutor Doctor believes that academic success is achieved when a student has the ability to confidently sustain performance at higher and higher levels. Each solid Building Block that we help a student place raises his or her confidence, allowing them to reach further for the next Building Block. In this way, we are not just providing an academic scaffold, but a confidence scaffold as well. Just as an athletic coach works to sustain the confidence level of the athletes he or she trains and pushes them to achieve greater success, we as Tutor Doctor tutors build up the confidence of our students and push them to achieve greater academic success. We are more than just tutors, we are academic coaches. We create the academic and confidence scaffolds which allow our students to gain the knowledge, confidence, and success which will reach beyond the boundaries of a student's education and begin to influence all aspects of their life. This is how we know we are successful and this is how we change the trajectory of a student's life.