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**Structuring** refers to the choice, matching and sequencing of learning tasks and signalling how they contribute to learning goals. Great teachers share learning aims with their students in ways that help students to understand what success looks like. This does not mean simply writing out lesson objectives or (worse still) getting students to copy them down. Abstract statements of learning aims may be useful but are certainly not enough. To specify learning aims properly, teachers also need to have examples of the kinds of problems, tasks and questions learners will be able to do, as well as examples of work that demonstrates them, with a clear story about how and why each piece of work meets each aim. Great teachers also help students to understand why a particular activity is taking place and how current learning fits into a wider structure. They draw attention to key ideas and signal transitions between activities that focus on different parts of the journey.

A component of structuring is the selection of learning tasks. Tasks must present an appropriate level of difficulty for each student: hard enough to move them forward, but not so hard that they cannot cope, given the existing knowledge and resources they can draw on. Tasks must also promote deep rather than just surface-level thinking (Hattie, 2012), focusing on abstraction, generalisation and the connectedness and flexibility of ideas rather than just reproduction of facts or procedures. In planning a curriculum, tasks must be sequenced so that prerequisite knowledge and skills are accessible and fluent when they are needed. Great teachers build in opportunities for review to check this is the case – and adapt their plans if not.

Great teachers also recognise that complex tasks often require scaffolding: beginning with a simplified or limited version of the task to make it manageable. This often requires some differentiation, as different learners may begin with different levels of readiness and different capacity for learning new material. A knowledge of individual students’ needs, including SEND, comes into play here. However, one of the defining characteristics of great teachers is that they require all students to achieve success (Hattie, 2012). Scaffolding provides a gentler entry, but the destination remains the same. Lower-attainers may take longer and need more help, but the job of teachers is to ‘disrupt the bell curve’, not just to preserve it (Wiliam, 2018). The crucial thing about scaffolding is that you take it away as ideas and procedures become secure and fluent: by the end, those complex tasks are accessible to all.