

Think back to a time when you interacted with a student and your words had an extremely positive impact on that student. What was the impact? How did the student(s) react? What made your words so powerful?

Based on the reading, how did this promote student growth?

Think back to a time when you interacted with a student and you wish you could go back in time and change your conversation with a student. What was the impact? How did the student(s) react? What made your words so powerful?

Why Our Words Matter to Students

Our words hold more power than we may realize. Because language permeates nearly every interaction between teachers and students, it shapes how students think about themselves and school, how they act, and how they learn. Intentionally weaving positive language into our teaching enables us to promote students' growth and learning in three key areas:

- ▶ Academic skills and content knowledge
- ▶ Social and emotional learning skills
- ▶ Collaboration and community

Across all of these areas, language allows us to articulate a vision, convey faith that students can attain that vision, give feedback that names students' strengths, and offer guidance that expands their skills, knowledge, and confidence. Specifically, teacher language:

- ▶ **Helps students build positive identities**—What we say to students can deeply affect their sense of who they are and who they might become: scientists, writers, musicians, entrepreneurs, leaders. When we focus on the positives in students, we can inspire them to develop the skills they need to achieve their goals, turning hopes into realities.
- ▶ **Expands students' thinking**—Our words can help students understand how they think and work, giving them insight into what they are capable of and how they can articulate and achieve academic, social, and behavioral goals.
- ▶ **Builds trust between us and our students**—When we invite students' questions, ideas, and feedback and maintain a respectful dialogue, we gain more insight into their lives and forge more trusting relationships. Greater trust, in turn, leads to more prosocial and positive academic behaviors, especially self-motivation and autonomy.
- ▶ **Promotes positive peer-to-peer relationships**—Our words and tone can create an atmosphere of respectful interactions among all students. By influencing them to become self-motivated learners and to value their peers, we can promote deeper and more engaged learning while also building a sense of belonging and community.
- ▶ **Influences students to use language skillfully themselves**—When we model the positive use of language, our students pick up on that and start to use positive language themselves. The result is that the classroom becomes a richer place of collaboration, with students actively helping each other learn and grow.

Clearly, positive language is a powerful teaching tool. By harnessing this power, we can open the doors of possibility and hope for young adolescents and help them develop into capable and confident lifelong learners.

Reinforcing Language Defined:

Characteristics of Reinforcing Language:

- Names concrete specific behaviors
- Emphasizes description over personal approval
- Used with all students
- Points out progress toward mastery
- Uses a question to extend students' thinking

Impacts of Reinforcing Language:

- Focus on practice and effort
- Form positive self-vision
- Focus on their strengths
- Become more self-motivated
- Recognize growth

Reinforcing Language Sentence Starters

- ▶ I noticed . . .
- ▶ I see . . .
- ▶ You remembered to . . .
- ▶ You all helped to . . .
- ▶ You made sure you . . .
- ▶ You worked hard to . . .
- ▶ You followed our rule _____ by . . .
- ▶ Did you notice . . .
- ▶ One of the reasons you/your group was successful today was . . .
- ▶ I can tell you . . .
- ▶ Because you _____, your work _____.

Reminding Language Sentence Starters

- ▶ Think about . . .
- ▶ Who can remind everyone . . . ?
- ▶ How can you . . . ?
- ▶ What's the next step . . . ?
- ▶ What might be difficult about . . . ?
- ▶ What can you do . . . ?
- ▶ Show me . . .
- ▶ What might help you . . . ?
- ▶ Who can tell me/us . . . ?
- ▶ Remind me . . .
- ▶ What are the rules . . . ?

Redirecting Language Sentence Starters

- ▶ Stop. [State desired behavior]
- ▶ It's time to . . .
- ▶ Focus on . . .
- ▶ Move to . . .
- ▶ Use . . . [quiet voices, materials safely, etc.]
- ▶ Pause. Get started on . . .
- ▶ Clean up . . .
- ▶ Right now, you need to . . .
- ▶ We will begin when . . .

Reminding Language Defined:

Characteristics of Reminding Language

- Start by establishing clear expectations
- Statement or reminder
- Direct tone and neutral body
- Proactive or reactive
- Brief
- Watch for follow-through

Impacts of Reminding Language

- Become more responsible for themselves
- Take time to think before acting
- Develop autonomy and competence

Redirecting Language Defined:

Characteristics of Redirecting Language

- Be direct and specific
- Name the desired behavior
- Keep it brief
- Always a statement
- Observe and follow through

Impacts of Redirecting Language

- Safe and productive environment preserved
- Preserves dignity of students
- Students have clarity of expectations