

## The Power of Language

In hopes that we can use language that is both positive and encourages students to reflect on their choices, we are sharing one resource that the teachers have found helpful this year. We would like for you to try this language at home and in the classroom with students. This is an area that takes a lot of practice, but well worth it as we are all trying to communicate in ways that will help students succeed.

Language that a parent or teacher uses with a child can be a powerful tool to help students internalize expectations. Effective language that helps students make appropriate choices for their learning has the following characteristics according to the Responsive Classroom Approach:

- Is clear, simple, and direct
- Is genuine and respectful
- Gives specific positive feedback rather than general praise
- Focuses on the child's action or behavior rather than their being
- Avoids qualitative or personal judgement
- Shows faith in children's abilities and potential

**Three types of language to use:** (adapted from *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn*, Denton 2007)

**Reinforcing Language:**

- \* Names concrete behaviors
- \* Applies to all
- \* Points out approximations to goal
- \* May be followed by a question to extend their thinking
- \* Used in steps to model behavior that we want to practice

Examples:

“ I notice...”

“I see...”

“ I hear...”

“You've really been concentrating on your chapter, Jen.” “What in the chapter is really interesting to you?”

## **Reminding Language:**

In everyday life we often tell our listener what we want them to remember. In the classroom, reminding language prompts students to do the remembering themselves.

- \*Are based on clear expectations that have been established
- \*May be a question or a statement
- \* May be proactive or reactive
- \* Are used when teacher and student are calm
- \* Are briefly stated
- \* Follows modeled behavior

Examples:

- “Show me...”
- “Remind me...”
- “What can you do to solve that problem?”
- “I will begin when everyone is ready.”
- “Think about where you will sit so you can do your best work.”
- “Group, remind me how we will move safely during clean up”

## **Redirecting Language:**

When students are doing something that is dangerous, when they are too emotional to remember expectations or when they are deeply invested in their off-task behavior to correct themselves we give clear, non-negotiable instructions.

- \*Is direct and specific
- \*Names the desired behavior
- \*Is brief
- \*Sets firm limits
- \*Makes a statement rather than asking a question

Examples:

- “Stop. Wait to hear the directions.”
- “It’s time to listen.”
- “Clean up your work area.”
- “Scissors are for cutting paper only.”
- “Use kind words.”
- “Walk.”

For more information about the guiding principles of the Responsive Classroom Approach visit: [www.responsiveclassroom.org/](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/)