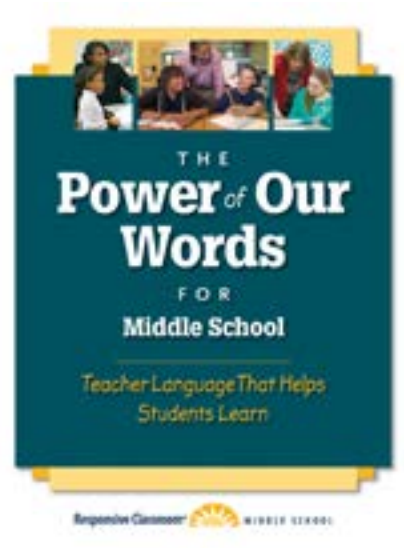


The Power of Our Words for Middle School: Teacher Language That Helps Students Learn

From *Responsive Classroom*



Chapter 1. Getting the Most from Teacher Language: Using Our Words to Make a Difference

“Positive language is a powerful teaching tool” (3). Some characteristics of effective teacher language are to “match body language to words,” “notice the positives,” and “describe behavior, not character” (4–5).

Why do you think there is such a strong connection between effective language and behavior?

Using teacher language effectively begins with being direct, genuine, and respectful in our communications with students. How can we show our faith in students’ abilities and intentions?

“Silence allows for all student voices to be heard” (6). How can silence facilitate really listening to students? How can using signals instead of words to get students’ attention contribute to developing positive teacher language?

Chapter 2. Envisioning Language: Giving Students a Vision of What’s Possible

Envisioning language affirms that students are knowledgeable and competent learners. It serves to inspire by projecting possible positive outcomes. Whether addressing students individually or as a group, this type of language can build feelings of belonging and community. Precise language helps create a clear picture in a student’s mind when a teacher uses envisioning language. How does precise language impact the power of envisioning language?

Use the practice charts on pages 20 and 21 to jot down ideas and keep track of your use of envisioning language.

Chapter 3. Reinforcing Language: Helping Students Move to Higher Levels

Reinforcing language gives students specific feedback with clear information about what the student has done well. Effective reinforcing language requires close observation of the student in order to reflect strengths and positive actions. Why might giving reinforcing feedback in private be more effective than a public declaration?

Use the practice charts on pages 34 and 35 to jot down ideas and keep track of your use of reinforcing language.

Chapter 4. Reminding Language: Guiding Students to Meet Expectations

Helping students to remember and meet established expectations is the focus of reminding language. Reminding language can be used both proactively and reactively. How do you currently remind your students about expectations? How are your practices different from or in line with those suggested in this chapter?

Use the practice charts on pages 46 and 47 to jot down ideas and keep track of your use of reminding language.

Chapter 5. Redirecting Language: Getting Students Back on Task

Students sometimes need help, in the form of explicit directions, to stop off-task behavior. Redirecting language names the desired behavior in a brief, clear, matter-of-fact manner. Why are those three attributes (brief, clear, matter-of-fact) important to the skillful use of redirecting language?

Use the practice charts on pages 58 and 59 to jot down ideas and keep track of your use of redirecting language.

Chapter 6. Open-Ended Questions: Stretching Students' Academic and Social Learning

With no predetermined right or wrong answer, open-ended questions encourage students to develop thinking skills. What are some of the benefits of open-ended questions for students? What are appropriate, effective times to use open-ended questions with students?

Use the practice charts on pages 73 and 74 to jot down ideas and keep track of your use of open-ended questions.