

The Power of Our Words Notes

Chapter 1

Brief Summary: This chapter digs into the ways a teacher can use effective language in his/her classroom. This language is used in interacting with students. The general guidelines include: Be direct and authentic, Show faith in children's abilities and intentions, Keep it action oriented, Keep it brief, and Know when to be silent.

Key Ideas

1. Respect the students
2. Be consistent
3. Keep students engaged in learning

Real Life Examples

1. I have seen as well as used myself the strategy of noticing positive behavior and saying, "I like how _____ is using her body basics right now" while some students are goofing around.
2. I have had a professor who over generalizes to the class that this test/chapter will be/is supposed to be easy. So if it wasn't easy for me, I feel stupid because "it is supposed to be easy."

Reflection of Teacher Language

Areas of strength-I've avoided baby talk, because I have noticed how effective it is to talk to all ages in the same tone. This shows respect to them.

Areas needing growth- I have not always followed through on my expectations of the class. Sometimes after explaining my expectations, when the class gets out of hand, I don't always follow through and nip it in the bud. I also have used threats and warnings in my expectations, therefore making the students feel like I expect them to misbehave. I have repeated directions many times to students who didn't hear them the first or second time, this enables them not to listen the first time. I have also used voice-overs and repeated the answers students provide me.

Future practice- I want to be a teacher who describes the behavior of the student, not the students character or attitude. This way the student doesn't feel like a bad kid but knows their behavior needs to be changed.

Chapter 2

Brief Summary: Teachers should be motivators and encouragers of the students helping them envision themselves in their future as successful people. Teachers who use envisioning language aids in students being able to see that their actions in the present affect their future.

Key Ideas

1. Help students envision themselves being successful
2. Set positive tone

3. Have faith in the children's ideas

Real Life Examples

1. I have seen classrooms where the teacher does not make list of class rules, but the student's do. That way, we are valuing the student's ideas and they have more of an initiative to abiding by them.
2. Our hopes and dreams assignment in the beginning of the year was a great example of what teachers can do with their students in helping them envision a positive goal for their future.

Reflection of Teacher Language

Areas of strength- When I have led lessons in the past, I often try to allow student's scientists or mathematicians to help the students envision who they are in the classroom. This can help shape their identity and growth as a student.

Areas needing growth- When setting my expectations of the students, I want to work on being more positive. If I set the positive behaviors I expect, instead of the negative ones I don't want to see, then students see that I have faith that they will rise to that level in their class time.

Future practice- I would like to emphasize how student's work relates to their future and outside world. I would hope this would be a motivator and encouragement that the work they do now is not all for nothing.

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Chapter 3

Brief Summary: This chapter digs into the importance of asking students open-ended questions to challenge themselves to think things through. Open-ended questions also spark student's curiosity to learn more about a topic, learn from the ideas generated by peers, and see how much they already know about a subject. They also help student's find solutions to their problems, rather than just giving them the answer.

Key Ideas

1. Promote children's engagement
2. Generate student's goals and ideas
3. Allowing student's to feel validated

Real Life Examples:

1. I have been in a class where the teacher was not asking open-ended questions, she was either telling them the answers or leading the witness. The student's ideas were not validated, and neither was their engagement.
2. During our Bubbleology unit, we were encouraged to ask a lot of open-ended questions to prompt the student's thinking. I would ask questions such as, "What has happened so far?" "What else might you like to try?" and "How might you solve this problem?"

Reflection of Open-Ended Questions

Areas of strength: If a student wants the answer to a tough problem, I ask them what strategies they can use, or help them think of ways to find the solution even though it may be tempting to just give them the answer.

Areas needing growth: Sometimes I tend to lead the witness, if the student's are taking too long to answer, or not giving the 'right' answer. Situations like these are times where I probably shouldn't be asking open-ended but close-ended questions because there is a particular answer being sought out.

Future Practice: The practice of using open-ended questions is really useful tool to get children engaged as well as learning from their peers. I plan on learning and practicing the right times and ways to ask open ended questions.

Chapter 4

Brief Summary: This chapter talked about the importance of listening and how it benefits a classroom and relationships.

Key Ideas

1. Pause and Paraphrase
2. Listening helps student's feel known
3. Listening helps children feel part of a community

Real Life Examples:

1. Many times I have heard students say, "I don't know" when asked a question, and instead of asking more questions and actually listening to the student to fully understand what exactly they don't know.
2. During our first grade lit block, I had the opportunity to work with a girl and help her write a story. She decided to write a story about her family. She revealed some shocking things to me that she may have not shared with me if I hadn't worked with her one-on-one and really listened to what she had to say.

Reflection of Listening

Areas of strength: I often use the technique of paraphrasing when I talk with students.

Areas needing growth: When students are talking, I have a hard time checking out my own agenda and allowing myself truly hear what they are saying and not thinking about my response or what I have to do next.

Future Practice: I wish to utilize the pause and paraphrase techniques of listening. A goal I will set is when a student is talking to me I want to really listen and not be thinking about the next thing I am going to do or say.

Chapter 5

Brief Summary: Reinforcing Language is most effective when it is concrete and specific towards a student's behavior and work, rather than general empty praise. Reinforcing language focuses on the positive work the student is doing rather than always focusing on what needs improvement.

Key Ideas

1. "We want children to be motivated toward cooperative, careful behaviors for the sake of themselves and for the group." (pg.99-100) rather than to please us.
2. Reinforcing language is purposeful to instruct or bring change by effectively naming specific and concrete behaviors.
3. Find positives to name in all students

Real Life Examples:

1. During clinical practice, I have seen a particular teacher use phrases such as, "I am seeing some of you quickly and quietly putting your stuff away and lining up."
2. Other times, I have see phrases thrown around such as, "I really love how_____is doing _____. This elevated a particular child while others were left feeling inadequate. I have also see many instances of empty praise that is too general and isn't concrete or specific.

Reflection of Reinforcing Language:

Areas of strength: I try to not give general empty praises of "good job" or "excellent". I am usually more specific in what they did positively with concrete examples.

Areas needing growth: I need to grow in the area of making statements that may drive students just to please me rather than finding motivation in themselves. An example is that in the past, I have said things like, "I love how_____is_____. This is only emphasizing my personal approval.

Future Practice: In the future I would like to be concrete and specific in my reinforcing language to foster growth in the student's and give them a chance to develop internal motivation.

Chapter 6

Brief Summary: Reminding Language helps children stay organized, responsible, safe and on-task. Rather than being a broken record reminder, allow students to remember the expectations you clearly set earlier.

Key Ideas

1. Reminders should prompt children to remember themselves
2. Use brief statements
3. Use reminding language throughout the day

Real Life Examples

1. I have witnessed teachers handle students who are misbehaving or off-task by asking them, "What are you supposed to be doing right now?" The student answers and realizes what they need to be doing differently rather than the teacher coming up and nagging the child to behave.

2. If the expectations are not set beforehand clearly, the students will not be able to know what they are supposed to be doing. I have seen in another class that the teacher would remind the students for them, and the students simply do not want to do the task so they don't.

Reflection of Reminding Language

Area of Strength: I have reminded children in a variety of ways in clinical practice, sometimes it is effective.

Areas needing growth: The reminding language that I have used in the past is me telling them what is expected, very rarely do I use questions or brief statements to remind. I have been the broken record reminder, and in cases like that, the students lean on me telling them what **to do, so they have no reason to listen carefully to instructions.**

Future practice: I plan on setting my expectations clearly, so I have lean on asking student's questions to remind rather than reminding them for them

Amanda Brown

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Chapter 7

Brief summary: While using redirecting language, we must be direct and specific, name the desired behavior, keep it brief, phrase redirections as a statement, not a question, and follow through after giving a redirection.

Key Ideas

1. Use statements instead of questions
2. Name desired behaviors instead of just stating what you don't want them to do.
3. Be direct and specific about exactly what you want the students to be doing.

Real Life Examples:

1. I have seen many teachers ask students to do something rather than making it into a statement that is direct and specific. For example, "I am going to ask you to stop talking and listen." instead of, "Blue table, quiet down and listen up."

2. Many times in the hallways I have heard the phrase, "Stop running!" or "No running!" rather than naming the desired behavior in saying, "Stop. Walk."

Reflection of Redirecting Language:

Areas of strength- I have made redirecting statements before such as, "Clean yours desks before you leave" or "Throw away your scraps", It seems more effective when I use direct statements towards children so there is no confusion of what is expected of them.

Areas of growth- I have used question statements quite a lot in my practice. It's almost me trying to be polite and respectful, but it gives the students the opportunity to choose not to listen to me because I asked them rather than told them. I have said, "Will you please listen up?" "Would you please have yours eyes and ears on me please?" The problem with asking questions with a please to students who are misbehaving, they may see me as a pushover and just say no.

Future practice- In my future practice, I will be making brief and specific statements and name the desired behavior, rather than asking them to behave.

