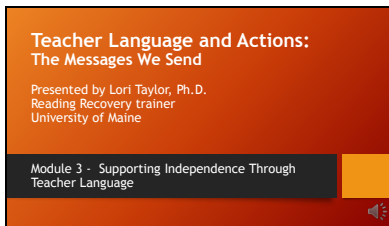


Teacher Language and Actions: The Messages We Send

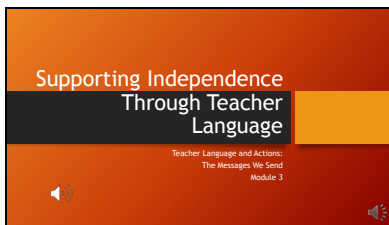
Module 3: Supporting Independence Through Teacher Language

— Facilitator Script and Notes —

Slide 1



Slide 2

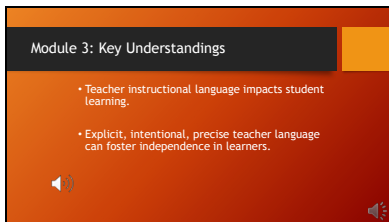


Facilitator Script:

Teacher Language and Actions: The Messages We Send

The emphasis of this professional development series is on the power of teacher language and actions, and the messages we provide for our students in what we say and do. There are four modules in the series. Module 3 provides a focus on Supporting Independence Through Teacher Language.

Slide 3



Listen to these words from Peter Johnston, Author of Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning and Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives:

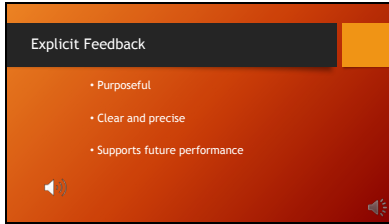
"Changing our talk requires getting a sense of what we are doing, our options, their consequences and why we make the choices we make."

"Our language choices have serious consequences for children's learning and who they become as individuals and a community."

"The language we choose in our teaching changes the worlds children inhabit now and those they will build in the future."

Certainly, teacher instructional language has the potential to impact student learning. In this module, participants will have the opportunity to consider how explicit, intentional, precise teacher language can foster independence in learners. Specifically, we will think about specific feedback, praise, and interference of teacher language in learning opportunities.

Slide 4

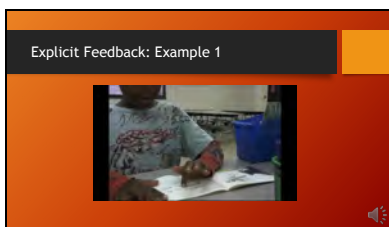


In a recent article in Educational Leadership, Dylan Williams, a professor in London, explains that feedback is only useful if it helps students improve performance.

He suggests that the purpose of feedback should be not to rate the quality of work, but to provide information as to how to improve it. He also recommends that feedback assists learning when a teacher provides enough information to send the learner into new territory, thinking and doing something differently than they have already done. Rather than providing exactly WHAT to do, for example, we might prompt the learner about what to use, or HOW to think about solving a task. At the same time, effective feedback creates an opportunity for success, and should be precise enough to support new learning.

Peter Johnston, in his book Choice Words (2004) also speaks to the importance of feedback, in building agency. Johnston (p. 35) states that “pointing out to a student what worked well is not enough. Teaching requires moving beyond that to what is next for the student’s development”. He goes on to explain that this means setting up a possible future for action. He notes that we must provide a reason for the child to use the feedback we provide, by inviting action on the learner’s part, as well as a sense of agency in the ability to use the information in next steps.

Slide 5



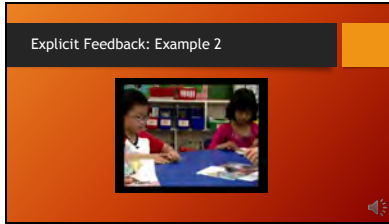
Facilitator Notes — Observe and Discuss

At the end of this interaction, the teacher provides feedback **on the thinking** that the child did during his reading. Discuss ways in which the language used by the teacher was purposeful, clear and precise, and supports future performance.

Questions that may prompt further discussion:

1. What different examples of teacher language might have a different effect?
2. What would the teacher need to know about this particular student at this particular time in order to make decisions about what feedback to provide?

Slide 6



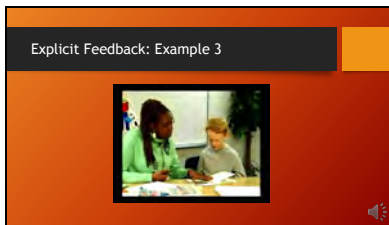
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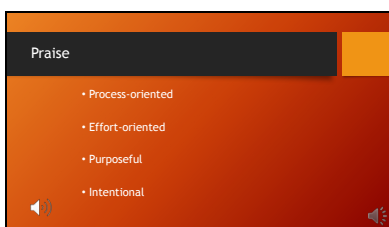
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Slide 8



Facilitator Script:

Praise may be closely related to feedback. In Opening Minds (p. 40) Peter Johnston suggests that if praise is provided in teaching and learning interactions, the best options are process or effort-based comments, rather than personal trait-based statements. For example, feedback in the form of praise such as, “you found a good way to do that” is more powerful to learning than, “you are so smart”.

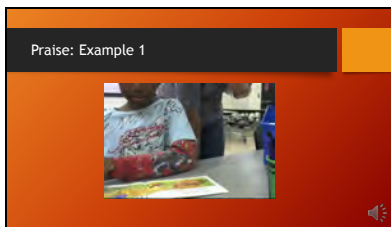
It is important to think about the purpose of praise, for learning, and to be intentional with our wording in order to convey the message we want learners to have.

While praise may be seen as encouragement, and in some cases may serve as such, there are times when praise can actually hinder learning opportunities, or efforts.

*Johnston further discusses this in his book *Opening Minds*, and offers some alternatives to praise, including causal statements. Causal statements point out to the learner what he/she did and to what outcome. Such statements are positive, but don't offer judgement, and provide the learner with information to use at another time, rather than just an assessment of how it went this time.*

Causal statements refer to the process or the effort, and support a learner in recognizing something that he or she did, that they may use at another time, making this type of praise generative.

Slide 9

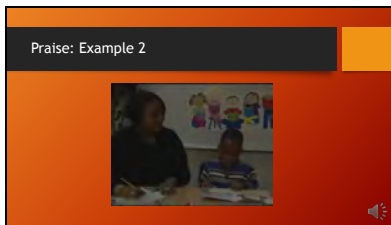


Facilitator Notes– Observe and Discuss

Discuss the praise offered by the teacher in this interaction. Are there examples of process-oriented comments? Effort-oriented?

Discuss how the final statement could be generative for this child. Are there missed opportunities or other options regarding praise that may have been alternatives here?

Slide 10

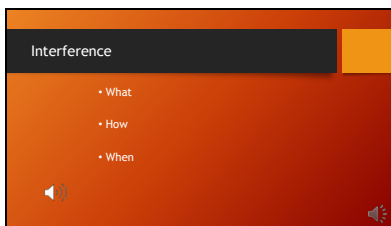


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Slide 11

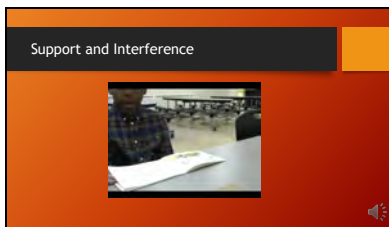


Facilitator Script:

*Teacher language can support or hinder independence. In *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individual Learners, Part 2*, Marie Clay reminds us throughout the text that in order to ensure accelerated learning for students in Reading Recovery lessons, teachers must use crisp and precise instructional language, in order to support independent problem solving and not interfere with it. Too much teacher talk may confuse a child, draw his or her attention away from the task at hand, or interfere with the opportunity for independence. Clay warns against unnecessary talk and suggests an “economy of words” (p. 87).*

Whether in a 1:1 teaching interaction or a group setting, knowing our learners well is critical in knowing how to support and not interfere with the learning. Teachers need to carefully consider what to say, how to say it, and when to speak in order to provide scaffolding for student thinking and learning, but not detract from it. Indeed, it is a complex dance of responsive decisions, based upon our observations and interactions with our students. Of course, teaching language that in one instance serves to support learning may in another instance actually interfere. Being intentional in our use of language can ensure that we provide the most explicit and precise demonstrations, prompts, praise and feedback for our students.

Slide 12



Facilitator Notes – Observe and Discuss

Consider what the teacher said, how she said it (tone, pace, etc.) and when she said it. You may wish to re-play the segment, stopping each time the teacher talks to discuss these aspects.

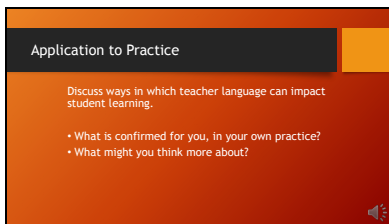
- Discuss how independence was fostered or hindered by the teacher's language.
- Discuss the inferred impact the teacher's language may have had for this student.

Also, note actions taken by the teacher:

- fingers under the pages
- turning of the pages
- pencil and hands on the text
- masking card on a word

Discuss how these teacher actions may foster or hinder student learning or independence.

Slide 13

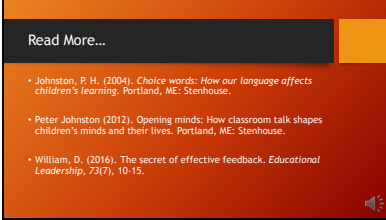


Facilitator Notes –Discuss

Discuss as a whole group, in small groups or partners, or invite individuals to complete a quick-write to consider ways in which teacher instructional language can impact student learning.

- How does explicit, intentional, precise teacher language foster independence in learners?
- What new thinking will you take into your classroom tomorrow regarding praise and feedback?
- What other things are you thinking about?

Slide 14

A presentation slide with a dark red background. At the top, there is a dark grey rectangular box containing the text "Read More...". Below this box, there is a list of three references. In the bottom right corner, there is a small speaker icon.

Read More...

- Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Peter Johnston (2012). *Opening minds: How classroom talk shapes children's minds and their lives*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- William, D. (2016). The secret of effective feedback. *Educational Leadership*, 73(7), 10-15.

Slide 15

A presentation slide with a dark red background. In the center, there is a dark grey rectangular box containing the copyright information. In the bottom right corner, there is a small speaker icon.

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