

Characteristics of Effective Teacher and Child Language

Effective language is empowering, respectful, consistent, and encouraging. When you model effective language you add to a caring classroom culture and teach children the skills they need to make friends and interact in the world.

	Description	Teacher Language Examples	Child Language Examples
Empowering	Empower children by giving them opportunities to participate and cooperate. Let children know you believe they are capable and that their knowledge, ideas and discoveries are valuable and important.	<p>“Can you help remind us how to put a book back in the appropriate basket?”</p> <p>“Show what you will do when you want a turn to talk.”</p>	<p>“We did so well with our time moving from our desks to the rug. Can we try for a class record today?”</p> <p>“I remember when you read that book last time. I bet you can use the same strategies again.”</p>
Clear and Firm But Not Threatening	Be clear and honest about what you want children to do. Firm does not mean threatening. A student should never feel they need to exhibit a behavior out of fear. Tone is important here. It should be matter-of-fact and respectful.	<p>“Friends, I need everyone to stop and listen right now.”</p> <p>“I see many supplies being gathered. We’ll begin when everyone is ready.”</p> <p>“Please hang up your coat and sit in your chair.”</p>	<p>“I would like a turn now.”</p> <p>“[Friend’s name], it’s time to do our assignment now.”</p>
Trusting and Respectful	Show faith in a child’s ability and possibilities for growth. “Treat others the way you would like to be treated.” The language we use with our children should be the language we hope that someone would use with us.	<p>“Tell me a way that you would like me to help.”</p> <p>“I notice that all backpacks and coats are in the cubby area. What else can we do to make the area even cleaner?”</p>	<p>“I feel hurt that you didn’t want to sit next to me on the rug.”</p> <p>“Who can help me find a safe way to hold the thermometer?”</p>

WHAT MATTERS IN EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION
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	Description	Teacher Language Examples	Child Language Examples
Encouraging and Positive	Focus on, and help students to notice what is going well and/or partially correct. Keep it objective and nonjudgmental. Use: “I notice…” instead of “I like…” Using positive language inspires and motivates students by conveying your belief in their intentions and ability to be successful.	<p>“I noticed that you made a wise choice this morning when you knew just where to go when you needed a new piece of paper.”</p> <p>“You showed kindness when you asked _____ to join your game.”</p>	<p>“I saw _____ lend a pencil to _____ when he needed one.”</p> <p>“You took care of me when I needed help figuring out a hard word.”</p>
Process Oriented	<p>Recognizing behaviors that are partially correct and/or behaviors that show improvement or effort can be a launching pad for new learning.</p> <p>“The most important piece is to confirm what has been successful (so it will be repeated) and simultaneously assert the learner’s competence so she will have the confidence to consider new learning.” –Peter Johnston, <i>Choice Words</i></p>	<p>“I noticed that you were so careful with your chair and the way you walked and sat down on the rug. You have been working so hard! Show me you remember the last step.”</p> <p>“I noticed a lot of listening and pausing to think before talking.”</p>	<p>“My turn and talk partner worked hard trying to answer our question today.”</p> <p>“Thank you for helping me when I was stuck on a word.”</p>
Specific and Consistent	Use language that is consistent and explicit. Too many words can confuse and overwhelm children. Be specific about what you want children to do. Define abstract terms like “responsible” or “respectful” by naming what behavior looks like. Let students know what you WOULD LIKE them to do, not what you do not want them to do.	<p>“I see you remembered to put your book back in the exact basket where you found it. You are taking such great care of our materials.”</p> <p>“Be responsible: put the book back in the bin you found it in.”</p>	<p>“Thank you _____ for pushing my chair in for me when I forgot.”</p> <p>“We all helped each other with cleanup and we finished faster.”</p>
Planned and Reflected Upon	Knowing and using the most effective language takes thought, practice, reflection and rehearsal. It shows that you are striving to be proactive rather than reactive to a student’s behavior.	<p>“Let’s begin our Class Meeting reflecting on the language we will use with each other when we work in groups this afternoon.”</p> <p>“I noticed friends giving supportive clues to each other. What are some other things you noticed that made this activity go well?”</p>	<p>“Can you ask me to help you in a kind and friendly way?”</p> <p>“We took turns sharing out today.”</p>