

The Language of the Classroom

The Language of Community (vs. Distance)

Pronoun choice can communicate a sense of inclusiveness, collaboration, and community (we, us, our); or it can deliver a message of division, separateness, and control (I and you)

Language of Identity

Language can bring students into new words and invite them to step into new identities as scientists, writers, authors, mathematicians, thinkers and so on. These words communicate that it is learning to do and act authentically that matters, not just learning about the subject.

Language of Noticing & Naming

As the more knowledgeable adult, teachers have the power to name and notice the thinking that students are doing, providing them with more sophisticated language for their thinking: "That's an interesting connection." "You've really generated some new ideas." "That's a new theory."

Language of Initiative

Through verbal interactions teachers can convey to students that they are active, decision-making agents in the learning process: "How are you planning on..." "What are you wondering about?" "What did you decide about that?" or they can step in and rescue students by making these decisions for them: "What you need to do next is..."

Language of Listening (vs. Directing)

Showing genuine interest through clarifying, verifying, challenging, extending, inviting. The language of listening often involves questioning, eye contact, and a body posture that is open and facing the speaker.

Language of Knowing (Conditional vs. the Absolute)

Language frames ideas and information as set, fixed, and absolute ("It is..." "What's the answer?"), or as evolving, complex, and conditional ("What's another perspective on that?" "It might be." "One way is...")

Language of Feedback & Praise

Teachers use language to direct feedback and praise either on behavior or on learning. Effective learning feedback aims to guide future learning and is specific, descriptive, informative, sincere, and action-oriented as opposed to global, judgmental, reflexive, and purely evaluative.

