

## Language Strategies - to support and develop self-esteem and engagement with learning

This guidance is designed to enable adults to communicate a whole school consistent approach that can support pupils in feeling psychologically safe and to encourage ownership of their behaviour.

In addition to whole school practice, the PSHE curriculum and school motivators that support children's emotional and social development, specific language used by adults on a daily basis can provide essential support to the development of a child's view of him/herself as a learner, develop their locus of control and thus intrinsic motivation to learn.

Language strategies that influence motivational patterns can encourage an incremental/malleable view of intelligence and a mastery orientation in our learners. This is ... learning for self-knowledge and 'fun' not entirely focused on recognition by others.

(paraphrased from Dweck, C, 2000)

'For all children of all ages, engagement is the liberation of intrinsic motivation. To keep them engaged as active participants in learning is the task of all teachers, not least so that they enjoy learning and appreciate the intrinsic rewards the process itself can bring. Only then will success, achievement, attainment and progress flow.'

(Carpenter, B, 2017)

Language is probably our most powerful tool for influence ... but most challenging to us as **we have to change** our patterns of communication to influence others: 'The meaning of our communication is the response we get.'

(Mahony, T, 2003)

### Some examples of positive language in the context of learning and teaching:

- **Teaching and reinforcing the Rights, Responsibilities, Rules and Routines on a regular basis and though using reminders:**

*'What's the rule about ...?'*

*'I have a right to teach and I expect you to remember your responsibility to listen, thank you'*

*'Class... I need you to remember you have a responsibility to let each other learn, quiet now, thank you'*

**It is important to remember that rules have the potential to provide us with freedom and equality, to encourage mutual respect and are not useful in their power to accuse others.**

- **Using the language of choice** (using choices you sense they will buy into and where both options you suggest are preferred by you, and resulting in logical consequences so that the consequence **teaches** a new behaviour where possible).

If it is not teaching a new behaviour, how is it helpful?

- **Using the solution–focused language of hope and recognition of their strengths/resourcefulness** (especially those who have usually responded better to avoiding a sanction) **such as:**

*‘Well done Fred, how did you manage to complete this sentence in the time we had?’*

*‘I can see a lot of effort went into this work Sally, it makes me feel pleased, I bet you tried to be quiet to concentrate on this’*

*‘You managed to get the same amount done yesterday so I am confident that you can do the same today and you will get all of your break time’*

*‘This is going to be fun, I know this because I got excited when Mrs ... and I were planning it. It will be even more fun if we choose to follow the rules’.*

*‘James, Simon and Lewis, is there anything stopping you from lining up in silence?’*

*‘Mary, you assessed yourself with a smiley face for the writing yesterday, is there anything stopping you from reaching your target today?’*

- **Keeping the ‘conscientious crew’ going ... communicating the significance of enjoying the journey (the process) and pleasure felt by perseverance, encouraging the pupils to notice ‘where they have come from’ as well as ‘where they are trying to get to’.**
- **Focus on relationships rather than results, and the relationships will make the results possible.**

It is most important to match the style of feedback to the child, with their self-esteem. If we think negatively of ourselves we may be only emotionally ‘comfortable’ when the feedback is negative (*we can reject praise as it can contradict our core beliefs*). To challenge a pupil’s negative view with sincerity we can try to make it as low-key and casual and effort-related as possible and link the praise to other people to emphasise the ‘team effort’.

*‘I like the team work by everyone at Green Table ... thank you for choosing to share the equipment fairly’.*

*‘Yesterday we all made a lot of effort with our writing, I enjoyed reading what you have tried hard to write, especially the words you have chosen, let’s try just the same today’.*

*‘I just know you are all going to be able to complete as many questions as you can by choosing to be quiet and think about each other concentrating’.*

*‘I am optimistic that we can all be on ‘Green’ by the end of the session’.*

*'This activity needs good listening skills from everyone, I know you can help each other to do this.'*

**This language also develops a sense of belonging in the class community.**

Bill Rogers (2014) describes the concept of '**preferred practices**'

'This relates to a **school-wide consciousness** about the way we – as teachers – *characteristically* seek to lead and manage... behaviour... Even on our bad days our leadership can model respect as well as normative fallibility.'

He states that 'The term **preferred** is deliberate; there are some behaviour management practices we prefer (when it comes to management and discipline) because of certain values we hold. **Core** values such as mutual regard, mutual respect and dignity of the individual give a focus and direction to our daily management and discipline practice.'

The [videos](#) produced by Osiris Educational describe specific practice.

## **Working with an individual child or group:**

Refer to the [Assessment Guide for Teachers](#) - if it is deduced that the child displays **low self-esteem related to learning**, additional provision, to the high quality practice described above, may be required. There is a range of resources that could be used individually or in a group, this would depend on the age of the child. For young children provision that supports a broad range of skills may be most appropriate, such as:

[Time to Talk: A Programme to Develop Oral and Social Interaction Skills for Reception and Key Stage One](#) (often described as Ginger Bear group) by Alison Schroeder (LDA Learning).

## **Resources that can be incorporated into group circle times and adapted for developmental stages within Key Stages One and Two:**

- *Helping Children to Build Self-Esteem* by Deborah Plummer (2001) (Jessica Kingsley Publishers).
- *Language Development: circle time sessions to improve communication skills* by Marion Nash Spirals series (David Fulton Publishers).
- *101 Games for Self-Esteem* Jenny Mosely & Helen Sonnet (LDA Learning).

## **References:**

Carpenter, B (2017) *Engagement: from Principles to Practice* available here: <http://engagement4learning.com/blogs/engagement-from-principles-to-practice/> [accessed 14.3.17]

Carpenter, B (2015) *Engaging Learners with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities* Abingdon: Routledge

Dweck, C S (2012) *Mindset: How you can fulfill your potential*. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

Mahony, T (2003) *Words Work How to Change Your Language to Improve Behaviour in Your Classroom* Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.

Plummer, D (2001) *Helping Children to Build Self-Esteem* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Rogers, B (2011) *Classroom Behaviour - A Practical Guide to Effective Teaching, Behaviour Management and Colleague Support*, London: Sage Publishing.

Bill Rogers: Preferred Practices <http://osiriseducational.co.uk/osirisblog/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Pref-practices-Whole-school-approach-to-behaviour-leadership.pdf> [accessed 20.11.16]