

# 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 Personal Agency (vs. Rescuing)

- Through verbal interactions with students experiencing difficulty, 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 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 Knowing (Conditional versus 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.

## Language of Listening

- Teachers use body language, facial expressions, and questioning to demonstrate that they are genuinely interested in what students have to say. A listener actively seeks to capture what the other person is seeking to express and may ask questions to either clarifying meaning or facilitate more thinking.