

# Key Language Moves

The language  
of thinking

The language  
of community

The language  
of identity

The language  
of initiative


The language  
of  
mindfulness

The language  
of praise &  
feedback

The language  
of listening

# The Language Of Thinking

- ❑ Language plays an important role in promoting students' thinking.
- ❑ There are many words that describe the action of thinking → inquire, generate, question, imagine, puzzle, explore, justify, examine, compare and so on.
- ❑ Being more specific in our use of language directs students to use specific cognitive acts.
- ❑ When we draw students' attention to causal processes, we create a "strategic narrative" that becomes available to them (Peter Johnston, 2011)
- ❑ This means we use our language to cue, promote, and make visible the various strategic narratives of learning.
- ❑ Metacognition involves monitoring and directing of one's thinking.
- ❑ The language of thinking needs to be modelled and actively used by all members of the learning community, including teachers.
- ❑ It begins with teachers and leaders highlighting and reinforcing what it is we want.
- ❑ **Noticing and naming is a much more specific way of employing the language of thinking** than just trying to use more thinking language.
- ❑ Think about the following questions:
  - ❑ What kinds of thinking are needed to be successful?
  - ❑ What do I want to reinforce?
  - ❑ To what do I call students' attention?



What you  
notice & name  
you get more  
of!



# The Language Of Community

- ❑ A group of people dedicated to learning with and from each other in a cooperative rather than competitive manner.
- ❑ Using personal pronouns tells the listeners where the speaker is focusing his or her attention, such as using the pronoun 'we' suggesting that attention is shifting to the group as a collective. It also has the ability to show learners that the teacher is thinking and learning with the group, for example '*We are going to examine different perspectives.*'
- ❑ Our language reveals our priorities, beliefs and intentions and should be regularly examined to ensure it is revealing what we want.

# The Language Of Identity

- ❑ Engaging in learning using the specific metalanguage of a subject area as well as it's unique ways of operating, thinking and behaving.
- ❑ A tool for avoiding *aboutitis* → teaching about the subject rather than engaging students as members of it.
- ❑ Our language both conveys intention and cues behaviour.
- ❑ When we recognise that true understanding of a discipline (e.g. Mathematics) involves learning its processes and ways of thinking as well as its content knowledge, then we naturally create opportunities for developing those abilities.
- ❑ In using the language of identity, we are not only placing students in a specific role related to a specific subject area but we are also highlighting the types of behaviour and ways of thinking and operating.



# The Language Of Initiative

- ❑ Initiative is often referred to as *agency*
- ❑ The ability to make choices and direct activity based on one's own resourcefulness and enterprise.
- ❑ This entails thinking about the world not as something that unfolds separate and apart from us but as a field of action that we can potentially direct and influence.
- ❑ This involves:
  - ❑ Identifying possible actions
  - ❑ Weighing their potential
  - ❑ Directing attention
  - ❑ Understanding causal relationships
  - ❑ Setting goals
- ❑ Ask yourself:
  - ❑ Who is doing the thinking?

# The Language Of Mindfulness

- ❑ Can language cause us to be more aware, mindful and flexible?
- ❑ Language is subtle in its presence but powerful in its impact upon our thinking.
- ❑ Mindfulness is defined as:

*‘an open, flexible state in which new categories and possibilities can more easily be created’*

- ❑ The use of conditional words keep the mind open and flexible, for example the word *might*
- ❑ Conditional language needs to be modelled by teachers. Through modelling students begin to adopt the use of conditional language as well.
- ❑ Students are quick to pick up on the fact that teachers don't want them to guess correct answers but instead want them to make meaning of complex issues collectively and build on the ideas of others.
- ❑ Conditional language is not about forgoing answers, but it is about forgoing the early closure to the process of finding answers.



# The Language Of Praise & Feedback

- ❑ Praise needs to be carefully considered – *What are you praising? What is your reason for praising?*
- ❑ Carol Dweck (2007) suggests that “*praise is intricately connected to how students view their intelligence*” and therefore “*praise of one’s abilities may produce a burst of pride but ultimately be detrimental to learning.*”
- ❑ Dweck suggests that “*praise which draws attention to a person’s efforts and actions is more likely to encourage ongoing learning, risk taking, and the embracing of challenge.*”  
For example, I see you have pushed yourself.
- ❑ Good feedback is situational and highly dependent on the learner and the task at hand.
- ❑ It is important for the language to be specific, descriptive and informative so that it tells them what they did well and what they might need to work on in the future.



# The Language Of Listening

- ❑ Listening is one of the most powerful ways we show respect for and interest in other people's thinking.
- ❑ Sue Patton Theole says "*Deep listening is miraculous for both listener and speaker. When someone receives us with open-hearted, non-judging, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand.*"
- ❑ We need to pause our own talk and give students time and space to air their thoughts.
- ❑ Good listeners ask authentic questions to clarify points, unearth any assumptions they may be bringing to the situation, and be sure of the speaker's intent.
- ❑ *What do you think about what \_\_\_\_\_ said?*
- ❑ *Let's follow that line of thinking; what's the action that might follow from it?*