

Introduction

The Commission on the Whole Child (2007) emphasized the importance of educators focusing on the whole child in order to assist all children to “develop all of their gifts and realize their full potential” (p. 7), rather than working solely on academic achievement. The commission suggested:

Through interactions with responsive, respectful adults—regardless of their role within a child’s life—children learn to imitate, and then internalize, valued social, physical, cognitive, or ethical behaviors. When children believe that the adults around them care about who they are and what they know and what they can do, they are more likely to respond to what those adults value and take those values as their own. (p. 16)

As Gene R. Carter, executive director for ASCD, asked, “If the student were truly at the center of the system, what could we achieve?” (Commission on the Whole Child, 2007, p. 4).

Stories abound of students who succeeded against all odds because teachers or other adults believed in them and expressed that belief both verbally and nonverbally. On the other hand, the news is also filled with stories of adults and children who expressed

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Developing a Mind-set for Communicating Invitationally with Students

What do you believe? What do you *really* believe about students, learning, the classroom, your role, and what you would like to accomplish? What do you presuppose about students and learning? Do you believe that students are basically responsible, valuable, and able? Do you believe that educating students is a cooperative, collaborative process, and that your students have untapped potential? Do you believe that all of your students can and will learn? Purkey and Novak (1996) state that those involved in invitational education “work toward developing caring behaviors, nurturing environments, person-centered policies, engaging programs, and democratic processes” (p. 5). They suggest that invitational education is based on five principles:

1. People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
2. Educating should be a collaborative, cooperative activity.
3. The process is the product in the making.
4. People possess untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor.

Teaching

As we teach, we can use language mindfully to help students learn even more quickly. According to Forsyth and colleagues (1998), “teacher talk that is clear and explicit empowers learners, especially struggling readers and writers” (p. 9). When they studied how teachers interacted with their students, they found that expert teachers clearly explained to students what they wanted them to do. They created specific learning goals and communicated them clearly to students. They provided feedback to students, and they helped students to reflect on what they did. They concluded that “clear instruction does not occur by happenstance but results from a set of instructional actions that teachers use consciously to promote learning” (p. 15).

Rowe (1998) suggested that teachers are more likely to focus more on arranging the physical layout of the classroom than on what they say to encourage learning in their students. She added that teachers generally tend not to be aware of their talk and how it impacts students and their learning. In order to focus on the language that she used with students, she devised questions that she regularly asked herself: “How can I learn to talk differently with students? What other changes in the classroom environment are necessary to support changes in my talk and that of my students?” (p. 106). What might be some questions that you could be asking yourself on a daily basis as you are interacting with students whom you teach?

Planning for the Future

We all know from personal experience the importance of planning—particularly planning for the long term. Students who can look into the future and see themselves next week, next month, next year, 5 years in the future, 10 years in the future, and more tend to be more successful in planning and succeeding than students who can only see tomorrow or perhaps the next day.

37. “In the Long Run”

When learners perceive something as a limitation, we can help them to visualize it over a longer span of time in order to show them that where they are is just one instant in a lifetime of experiences. When I took a yearlong course in chemistry in high school, I struggled. In order to keep my grades up, I spent many nights at the local university library reading chemistry books to help me understand the various concepts that the teacher was presenting.

When I went to the University of Tennessee, chemistry was the major freshman “flunk-out” course in the College of Home Economics. As a result of studying the chemistry textbooks at the university when I was in high school, I was able to do well, while many other students had difficulty with the course. In the long run, my perseverance in a difficult situation paid off.

When students express limitations, it is usually because they see themselves only in the present, rather than incorporating the past or the future. Use the phrase “in the long run” to help students visualize themselves over a longer span of time.

- “I am spending a lot of time learning this.”
- “How might that really be a gift *in the long run*?”
- “I can’t do this yet.”
- “How might that be the very best thing *in the long run*?”
- “I am struggling to learn this.”
- “In what ways could that be the biggest benefit of all to you *in the long run*?”
- “I am having difficulty.”
- “What might be the benefits of that difficulty *in the long run*?”

Potential Functions for This Tip: Teaching, Planning for the Future, Responding to Objections, Encouraging Students, Influencing Students, Resolving Conflicts

Figure 1

100 Tips for Talking Effectively with Your Students

	<i>Building Relationships</i>	<i>Teaching</i>	<i>Planning for the Future</i>	<i>Responding to Objections</i>	<i>Encouraging Students</i>	<i>Influencing Students</i>	<i>Resolving Conflicts</i>
1. Acknowledging Learners' Current Experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Adverbs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. "After . . ."		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. "And" or "Yet"—No "Buts"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. "As . . ."		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. "At This Time . . ."			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. "Because" and "Since"		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Becoming Someone Else			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. "Before Friday" Instead of "By Friday"		✓	✓			✓	✓
10. "By Doing X . . ."		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Can Do	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Choices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Choosing To			✓	✓	✓		
14. Consciously Noticing				✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Contexts		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
16. Continuing		✓	✓		✓		✓
17. Counterexamples				✓	✓	✓	✓
18. "Create for Yourself . . ."		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
19. Curious		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20. Denominalizing		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21. Do It—Don't Try to Do It		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22. "Don't . . . Unless You Really Want To . . ."		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23. Eliminating "I"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓