

Reframing Teacher Talk

Each moment that adult and children interact with one another is an opportunity to build positive relationships (Ostrosky & Jung, 2017). It is important for adults to use a variety of strategies to build these positive relationships with children, because these interactions influence children's social and emotional development.

(EI 6.1 Conversational Abilities)

<p>Say this:</p> <p>"I see you used paint, blue crayons, red crayons, and yellow crayons on your picture. Tell me about it."</p>	<p>Instead of this:</p> <p>"Pretty picture, I like it!"</p>	<p>Because:</p> <p>For young children, art is often about the process not the final product. We should acknowledge the process they use to create the work, not give our approval of the final product. Also, telling children their artwork is pretty or beautiful teaches them to create things for teacher approval, not for self-satisfaction. It is also worth mentioning that children sometimes create pictures of monsters, bad guys, and other things they intend to be mean, scary, or ugly. Telling them these pictures are pretty is not meaningful to them.</p>
<p>Say this:</p> <p>"Remember, we walk in the classroom to keep our bodies safe."</p>	<p>Instead of this:</p> <p>"No running!"</p>	<p>Because:</p> <p>Directions to guide behavior must be clear and concise. There are many ways to "not run" in the classroom (crawling, jumping, skipping, etc.) but there is only one way to walk. When children receive clear directions with no room for interpretation, they are more likely to respond with desired behavior.</p>

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<p>Say this:</p> <p>“Katrina, do you see Angela waiting for a turn with the truck? She is waiting very patiently and hopes you are almost done.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>“Angela, Katrina is playing with the truck right now. Tell her you would like a turn when he is finished. I’ll help you find something else to do until then.”</p>	<p>Instead of this:</p> <p>“Share with your friend.”</p>	<p>Because:</p> <p>When a child wants a toy that another child has, it is an opportunity for the teachers to assist the children in developing good social skills. Teachers should help children recognize the feelings of the other child and validate both children’s desire for the toy. By assisting children in using their language skills to make their desires and frustrations known, teachers aid children in learning how to resolve conflicts on their own.</p>
<p>Say this:</p> <p>“This is kiwi fruit; it’s sweet like a strawberry.”</p>	<p>Instead of this:</p> <p>“Eat that for me.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>“I really wish you’d try a bite.”</p>	<p>Because:</p> <p>Teaching children to eat for adult approval can lead children to develop unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food. Instead, encourage children to explore new foods by pointing out the sensory qualities of the food.</p>

References:

Ostrosky, M. M., & Jung, E. Y. (2017). Building Positive Teacher-Child Relationships. *Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*, 1–4.

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.