

2025 HANDOUTS FROM 9/2 TEACHER TALK/REDIRECTION

Teacher Talk & an Equity Lens

(Building Relationships, Creating Culture)

Types of Teacher Talk:

- Team cohesion
- Continuity of care
- (Behavior) support
- Safety & awareness
- Sharing the load (team care)
- Highlighting strengths

The content of our teacher talk helps build classroom culture, and what we say can communicate and answer the questions:

- *What is valued here?*
- *Whose identities are centered?*
- *How do we respond to difference?*
- *Do I belong here, as I am?*

*This Year, focus on using your Teacher Talk to also build relationships and Culture. *You won't be able to do this all the time! And it's okay, sometimes you will need a different tone/strategy. But there is always time after to build relationships or repair if needed.**

Scenarios: From Reaction to Relationship-Centered Practice

Scenario	Response	Relationship-Centered / Building
Child won't transition to snack	"Teacher J, Emily's not listening again."	"Teacher J, Ellie is really focused on her puzzle. I'm going to give her a reminder & some choices."
Child is yelling (dysregulated)	"Can someone take over? I can't with him."	"Teacher Chris, E is having some big feelings. I need to take a break to keep my body calm before we solve the problem. Can you be with him?"

Redirection & Teacher Talk: Equity-Centered Practices

Redirection

Shifting from fixing or enforcing norms to relationship-centered support:

- Fixing → Relational responses
- Enforcing norms → Co-regulation, curiosity, identity-affirming support
- Instead of asking “How do I stop ____?”, shift to “How do I support & connect?”

Focus Areas

Last Year: Focused on HOW & WHY

- Clear, concise, consistent, calm
- Classroom safety & structure

This Year: Deepening practice in relational & equity-centered redirection

Perfect Strategy for the Beginning of the Year: You don't need a relationship to use redirection and be successful. In fact, it can help build relationships.

Reflection Prompts

- What does your body & voice communicate when a child is struggling?
- It won't/can't always be “perfect” or relationship-building — reflect, debrief, & repair when it isn't.
- What's one kind of teacher talk you want to do more?
- How do you know you're doing enough? That it's working?
- What do you want your words to model (for team & kids)?

Expand Teacher Talk as Inclusion Practice/Building Culture

Expanded Purpose	What It Sounds Like	Why It Matters
Normalizes Access	“Let’s bring Jordan’s visual schedule so she knows what’s next.”	Builds classroom culture that treats access as standard, not exceptional
Affirms Culture and Language	“Kavi’s mom taught us the Tamil word for ‘flower’, what a beautiful word.”	Children hear their cultures and languages valued in daily conversation
Counters Implicit Bias	“Elliot is showing so much persistence with that puzzle.”	Shifts from noticing only “problems” to recognizing competence, especially for marginalized kids
Models Repair and Reflection	“Teacher Sonia, I spoke too quickly just now, I’m going to try that again more clearly.”	Children and adults see that mistakes are normal, and accountability is part of caring
Promotes Emotional Safety	“Teacher Max, Zainab’s voice got really quiet, I wonder if she’s needing something soft or maybe some space right now.”	Attunes to and honors all communication and centers co-regulation
Resists Surveillance/ Centers Care	“Teacher Quinn, I want to check in with Bo. I noticed a shift and want to support him.” (vs. “He’s being defiant again.”)	Avoids framing behavior as threat or disorder, especially for Black/Brown/disabled children

Redirection: Focus on creating more opportunities for Relationship-Centered Redirections (How can you support and connect while redirecting?)

Examples:

Scenario	Response	Relationship-Centered
Child won't transition to snack	"Teacher Jay, Ellie's not listening again."	"Teacher Jay, Ellie seems really focused on her play. I'm going to try giving her a gentle heads up and offer some choices."
Child is dysregulated and yelling	"Can someone take over? I can't with him right now."	"Teacher Lisa, Elijah's having a really big moment, I need to take a break to keep my body calm before we solve our problem. Can you come be with him?"
Task sharing	"I'll do toileting again, like always."	"Teacher Mo, I've got diapers this round. Can we tag-team next time?"

Handout: Goal/Reflection (Provide some printed, and others to screen shot)

Norms: Take some time during a team meeting to reflect on your teacher talk and create some norms around your classroom communication.

Reflection Prompts for Debrief

Ask:

1. What kinds of teacher talk came easily today?
2. Were there moments you were thinking something but didn't say it out loud?
3. How did your teacher talk support children's identity, access, or sense of belonging?
4. Were there any moments where tone or language felt out of alignment with your values?
5. What's one phrase you want to practice using more intentionally?

General Goals for Teams

- Brag about at least 3 children in earshot each day (notice who you are/not talking about)
- Narrate 1 emotional experience per group time (“Thank you for telling me that was frustrating, I could see it in your face.”)
- Name and affirm a child’s cultural identity out loud at least once a day (music, food, holidays, multilingual language use “Teacher, I heard Mina using Spanish with her mom at drop off today, did you know she speaks more than one language?”)
- Narrate something you see that affirms disability and access and when peers/adults support this (Sensory, Gestures, Mobility, Access tools. “Teacher Ryan, Adrian is using his walker to get to the rug, he is moving so confidently. I also saw David moved his cube chair so there is space for Adrian to come to circle.”)
- Check in with your teammate out loud (in front of kids) to model collaborative relationships

- _____

- _____

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