

Teacher Talk Examples – Primary & Elementary School

Primary School — Risk

There is a boy in my class who is really struggling with addition. He is relatively shy and is definitely timid. There is no way that he wants to be made fun of for making a mistake, so when he is unsure of something you can see him shrink into a shell. I began using “Thank you for taking a risk” this week when my students volunteered answers. After seeing me do this for a few days in math, he became more comfortable. I could see this right away from his body language. Normally when we start addition, he puts his head down as though he were saying, “Let’s get this over with.” For the past couple of days he has been different. He has his head up along with his hand and is willing to take a risk. His addition is getting a little better, and he is more willing to participate, especially now that he is known as a risk taker!

Elementary School — Freedom Phrases

As a fifth-grade teacher, I like my students to become more active in decision-making and take responsibility for what they choose. I decided to use a Freedom Phrase with a particular student.

The girl I chose is constantly “in my face,” asking if she can sharpen her pencil, borrow the stapler, get a piece of paper, and so on. She does this even though I tell the kids at the beginning of the year that they do not have to ask to do these things as long as they choose to do them at appropriate times. She still asks. I have also reminded this particular child that she does not have to ask me.

On Tuesday, the girl asked me if she could sharpen her pencil. I simply replied, “If you can do it without disturbing the class, you decide.” She gave me a confused look. I smiled at her and went back to what I was doing. She looked around the room, saw that the kids were working on their art projects, and decided to sharpen her pencil.

I like the Freedom Phrase and will make a conscious effort to continue to use it.

Elementary School — Choose, Pick, Decide

I like the Choose/Decide/Pick tactic. I have always expressed to my students that they have the power to choose to follow rules and gain positive consequences or not follow the rules and take the consequences that go with that choice. Using this language helped immensely with one of my students this week. He chooses to throw temper tantrums

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occasionally and had one on this particular day. We went out in the hall, and I asked him what happened. He kept saying, “Robert made me.” I said, “No, you chose to do this. What happened?” Again he said, “Robert was . . .” Then we talked about how you choose your own behavior, and although somebody might do something that you do not like, you still choose how you will react. I asked him to come up with some ideas of how he could respond other than having a temper tantrum. He had the weekend to think about it. We regrouped on Monday and discussed his ideas.

I really like empowering our children so that they can learn to think for themselves and make choices.