

The Intentional Use of Language

Kids mirror what we say and do, and what we don't. The more we think aloud and make our thinking visible to them, the more likely children will make their thinking visible to us, and especially to each other. Our intentional use of language can serve as a model for how people in school and in the world offer and seek inspiration, support, and kindness.

When we routinely use language like this:

- “Are you OK?”
- “Can you help me?”
- “Let’s invite . . .”
- “This reminds me of you . . .”
- “Do you want to join us?”
- “Can I help?”

We hear children talking to each other like this:

- “Are you OK? I know you’re sad because you forgot to bring your notebook from home, but you could share mine. I’ll write on this side, and you can write on that side. We can write our names at the top so we can know whose are whose.”
- “Can you help me figure this out? You know how you shared that trick your grandpa taught you about multiplication? The ‘hand thing’? Can you show me that again? I keep forgetting the last part.”
- “Let’s invite Dionne to play with us during after-lunch recess today. He was all by himself yesterday—did you see him just sitting over there by the big tree?”
- “I found this awesome book called *The Proudest Blue*! There’s a girl in it who reminds me of you! And her hijab is blue just like yours. Do you want to read it with me over by the window? I think you will really love it!”
- “Nora, do you want to join us? I know you’re interested in mermaids—look at all the books we found in the library!”
- “Can I help you with that? I’ve had a lot of practice with getting zippers on coats unstuck.”

When children speak to one another in these ways, they’re showing us they understand that they’re part of a community where everyone belongs—they’re becoming aware and accepting of their needs and the needs of others,

and they're developing a collection of strategies for what to say and do. They're learning what it's like and how it feels to be compassionate, caring, and kind. This too is where our power lives.

How Kids Sustain, Support, and Inspire Each Other

In communities where learners and learning thrive, children learn with and from each other. Sometimes this happens naturally, but it's too important to rely on serendipity alone. In Figure 3–5 you'll find examples of intentional, authentic routines that offer opportunities for kids (and their teachers) to sustain, support, and inspire each other throughout the school year.

