

Clarity

22 Verbal Behaviors That Let Kids Get Smart

Teacher starts by asking a good open-ended question that gets students thinking. Then...

1. Asks students to explain the thinking behind their answers whether they're right or wrong.
2. Asks students if they agree or disagree with a student answer.
3. Asks students to comment or add on to a student's response or idea.
4. Creates and then facilitates dialogue between students about their ideas.
5. Asks follow-up questions that are similar to ones just discussed to see if student really understands.
6. Asks students to make connections to something another student said or something else they know.
7. Credits meaning to student comments, even obscure ones, and probes for the student's thinking...and does the same with incorrect answers.
8. Uses wait time, allowing students to struggle, and dwells with the student's thinking, sticking with them.
9. Comes back to a student to check and clarify what his or her thinking is, given the comments of other students.
10. Asks questions to surface discrepancies between what the student says and the information in front of them: "How can that be? What's going on there?"

Students:

11. Do the majority of the talking.
12. Are expected to explain their thinking.
13. Show they are listening to one another.
14. Are willing to admit confusion or not knowing.
15. Challenge each other's thinking nonjudgmentally.
16. Take initiative to explain another student's thinking, including how he or she might have made an error.
17. Students who get it quickly take responsibility for helping those who don't.

Other teacher observables:

18. Provides a clear visual display of the (mathematical) idea.
19. Gives encouragement.
20. Praises good thinking.
21. Validates students who acknowledge confusion.
22. Expresses confidence in the students explicitly.

Source: Jon Saphier, MaryAnn Haley Specca, and Robert Gower. 2008. *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills*, 6th ed. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching, p. 196.



The Four Intentions Behind Teacher Behavior in a Class That Let Kids Get Smart

1. To know what and how this individual student is thinking about the content—*Curiosity*
2. To cause dialogue between and listening among students—*Student Talk and Interaction*
3. To provide encouragement, acknowledgement, and safety for students to risk speaking—*Climate*
4. To make an idea more clear and accessible through models, visuals, and sequence of questions—*Clarity*

