

Implementing Affirming Feedback during Foundational Skills Instruction

Framing interactions with productive language

Purpose

This resource extends the **Instructional Practice Guide (IPG)** indicator 2F (i.e., “Students from historically marginalized communities consistently receive supportive feedback that affirms their abilities and potential as readers and writers”) by providing examples of asset-based and affirming language. Though the IPG is meant to evaluate student experiences and/or teacher actions, this resource is not related to evaluation or providing a score during a classroom walkthrough. Instead, this resource addresses the question, “What does it look like/sound like to help multilingual learners feel successful as readers and writers in their languages?” Through the use of asset-based and affirming language, educators and students can begin to shift their thinking to focus intentionally on **funds of knowledge**, high expectations, and a growth mindset.

Below you will find guidance for leaders and teachers about:

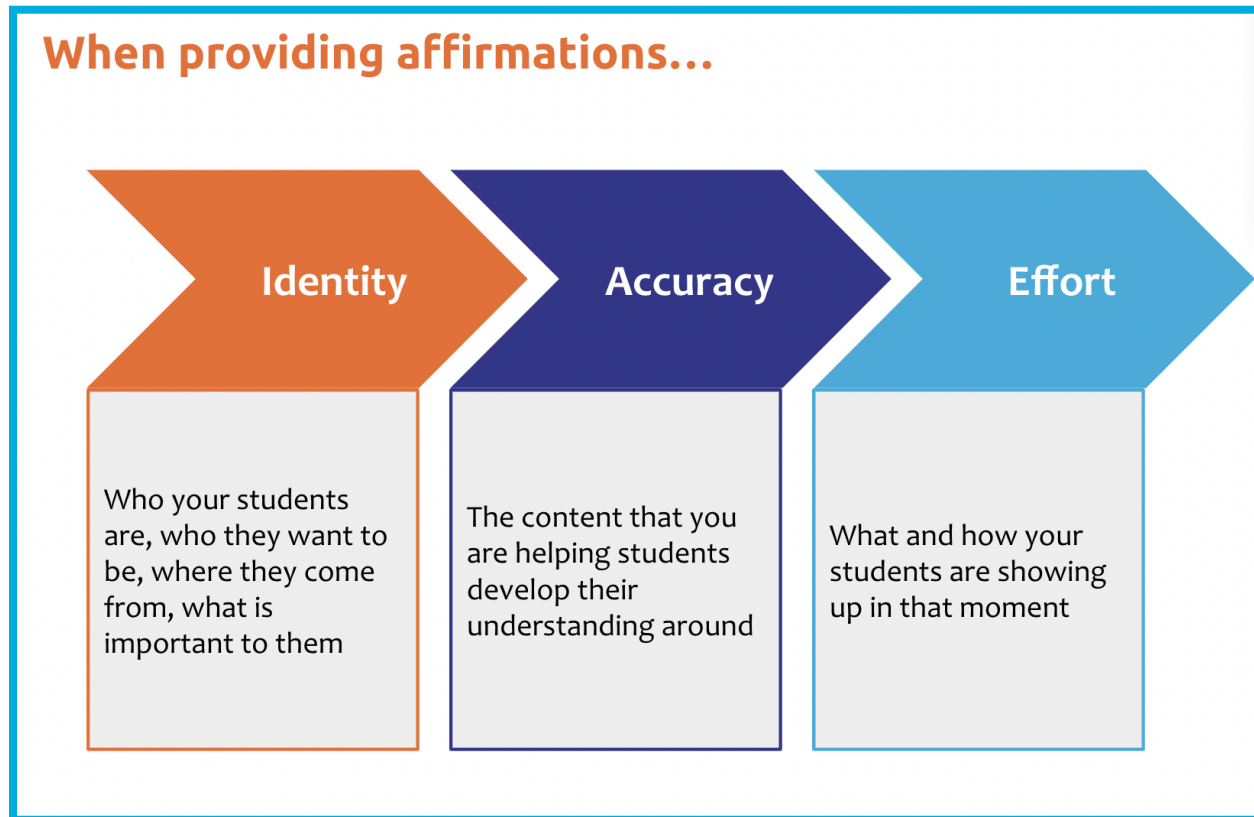
1. supporting students in speaking about themselves in an asset-based and productive way
2. affirming student identities and skills within foundational skills instruction
3. speaking about student performance in a way that honors their strengths
4. reframing common, problematic labels in a more productive light
5. considering instructional next steps that center teacher actions
6. speaking about colleagues and families as partners in this work

It is leaders’ responsibility to ensure that all staff speak to and about students, colleagues, and families using a strengths-based lens.



Evidence of the strongest implementation of indicator 2F includes: *a variety of individual students and includes precision and nuance unique to the student's work.*

When we think about affirming student abilities and potential, there are three categories: Identity, accuracy, and effort.



In this graphic, “accuracy” refers to the discipline or domain-specific skill of the lesson. Feedback about accuracy includes directions toward mastery of a skill (e.g., reinforcing articulation gestures when practicing a sound covered in the lesson).



Providing affirming feedback to students

A building that truly honors students' assets will encourage students to see their strengths and build positive identities as members of the learning community, as growing scholars, and as readers and writers. Though the sample statements below were developed with teachers in mind, many are examples of affirmations that students can provide to each other.

Model and reinforce self-affirming language: *Identity*

One of the ways to affirm student identities is by modeling and reinforcing asset-based language as they discuss their learning and performance using phrases like these:

- There is a lot that I know and can do that can help me learn new skills and information.
- I will persevere through challenges and become stronger and even smarter.
- My brain is a muscle, and I am working on its growth. My mistakes are part of the learning process.
- I am making my brain stronger every time I try a new skill!
- I've made progress in understanding _____. I am really good at _____ and can use that to learn _____.
- We are all readers and writers.
- I can use my language to help me learn a new language and/or new skills.
- Multilingualism is a superpower! My brain is stronger when I know multiple languages.

Respond to students during a lesson: *Accuracy and effort*

One of the ways to affirm student identities as readers and writers is to provide feedback that affirms their abilities and potential beyond stating if answers are right or wrong. Supportive feedback also normalizes making mistakes and acknowledges them as an integral part of the learning process.

- We may not be able to do _____ yet, but we are practicing so we can.
- I really appreciate how you are trying your best to become a better reader/writer. Next time, can you try _____?
- You are making so much progress! I appreciate how you _____. That's what good readers/writers do.
- Wow! I loved how you used your language to make a connection.



- I see how you would think _____. Let's try it this way _____.
- Friends, let's stop and listen to/look at _____'s work. Let's think about how _____'s response gives us a good example....

Honor the language abilities of multilingual learners: *Identity, accuracy, and effort*

There are a variety of ways teachers can honor and affirm students' backgrounds by making explicit connections to their languages. A few examples are included below:

- When learning or practicing the initial /h/ sound, tell Spanish-speaking students that they probably have heard the /h/ sound in “juego” (“I play”). Point out that the sound is represented by different letters in the two languages: “j” in Spanish and “h” in English.
- When learning the /m/ sound, ask students what words in their languages have the same sound. Provide an example to prompt students: “manzana” for apple.
- Ask students for the pronunciation or term in their primary language(s) and try to repeat it, noting that it might not be perfect, but it is important to try.
- Recognize/note that the student learned [in] a certain way and now adding to that in a new way.
- Consistently note how the class can appreciate and show respect for different ways of speaking, thinking, processing, and interacting. Emphasize how learning an additional language helps the brain to grow. (See examples of self-affirming language above).

Additional examples can be found in [Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Foundational Skills Instruction](#) and [Bridging Foundational Skills Between Languages](#).

Reframing language

In the subsections below, you'll find common deficit-based statements that you may hear and some examples of how you can reframe those statements to be asset-based.



Discuss student work/performance/skill sets

Does <u>not</u> honor strengths	<u>Honors</u> strengths
Student doesn't know/can't ____.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student knows/can ____. • Student has not yet mastered ____. • Student may not have shown proficiency with ____ yet, but they can ____.
Student doesn't have experience with/background knowledge about ____.	Student comes with a unique set of skills and experiences that I can leverage and draw connections to support new learning.
<p>Student pronounced/articulated [sound/sound pattern/word] imprecisely.*</p> <p>*It is important to note that feedback should be focused on the skill(s) of the lesson. "Error correction" for skills not explicitly being taught and practiced can be counterproductive.</p>	<p>Student knows/uses another language that influences their learning of a new language. I can make connections to the student's language to help them progress toward mastery of the skill faster. For more information see Bridging Foundational Skills Between Languages.</p>

Adjust any labels or descriptors used

Does <u>not</u> honor strengths	<u>Honors</u> strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low/no literacy • Illiterate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early/emerging literacy in a new language • Rich language skills in primary language
At-risk or low socio-economic status	Students who are systematically under-resourced (i.e., students who lack access to important resources due to experiences in poverty)



Intervening/remediating	Accelerating/enhancing/expediting learning
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Reflect on instructional steps

Does <u>not</u> honor strengths	Honors strengths
I taught it, and I don't know why they didn't get it.	This lesson helped build background. Next, I can ____ to move students closer to mastery. Is someone willing to review my lesson preparation with me to see what I could maybe try differently next time?
I can't meet this student's needs because of time, support, resources, etc.	I can use the resources I have and my collaborators to find creative ways to support each student in the class. Is someone willing to help me problem-solve around ____?

Discuss colleagues and families

Does <u>not</u> honor strengths	Honors strengths
These teachers/my collaborative partner/students' families can't/don't...	These teachers/my collaborative partner/students' families can ..., and I can build on that to/by...
Families don't speak English and can't help their students learn to read.	Families have rich language backgrounds and can use language in the home to discuss stories, learning strategies, and how they use language to build relationships and communicate.