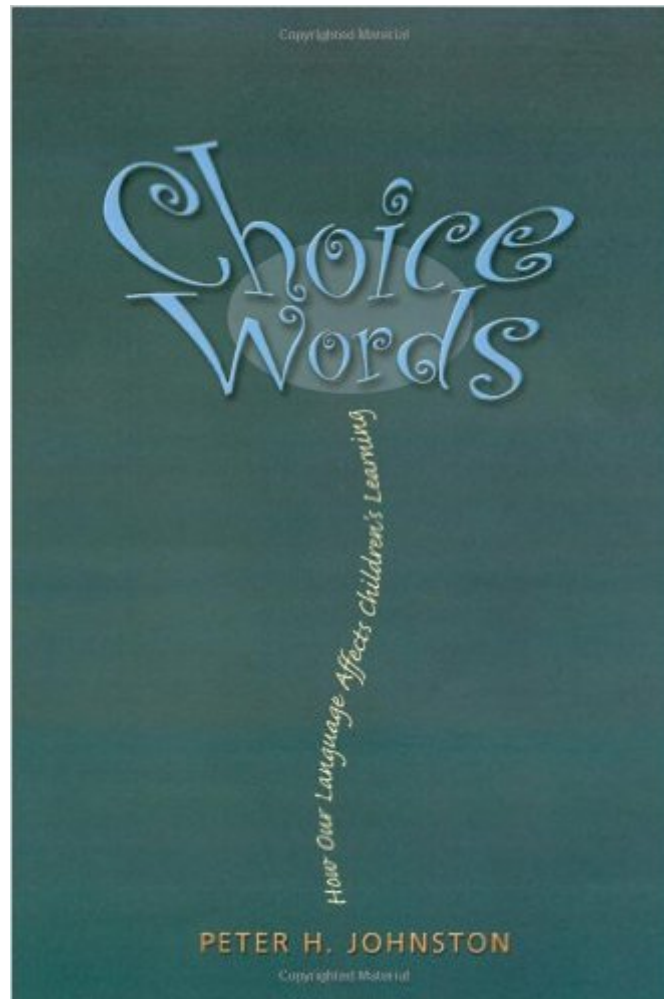


The book was found

Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning



Synopsis

In productive classrooms, teachers don't just teach children skills: they build emotionally and relationally healthy learning communities. Teachers create intellectual environments that produce not only technically competent students, but also caring, secure, actively literate human beings. *Choice Words* shows how teachers accomplish this using their most powerful teaching tool: language. Throughout, Peter Johnston provides examples of apparently ordinary words, phrases, and uses of language that are pivotal in the orchestration of the classroom. Grounded in a study by accomplished literacy teachers, the book demonstrates how the things we say (and don't say) have surprising consequences for what children learn and for who they become as literate people. Through language, children learn how to become strategic thinkers, not merely learning the literacy strategies. In addition, Johnston examines the complex learning that teachers produce in classrooms that is hard to name and thus is not recognized by tests, by policy-makers, by the general public, and often by teachers themselves, yet is vitally important. This book will be enlightening for any teacher who wishes to be more conscious of the many ways their language helps children acquire literacy skills and view the world, their peers, and themselves in new ways.

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Customer Reviews

Peter Johnston's new book *Choice Words - How Our Language Affects Children's Learning* grew out of his work with exemplary teachers. For the past decade, Johnston and his colleagues have observed, interviewed, and reported on what makes an effective teacher. A key aspect of his

research centers on the language teachers use in the classroom with their students. This thin, teacher-friendly volume is filled with excerpts from real classrooms and gives the reader a sense of eavesdropping on some of the best instruction in the country. Johnston turns the traditional idea of teacher as keeper-of-information on its head and invites the reader to consider the alternatives. Through a classroom community of social justice and democracy, children learn to question themselves and build agency as they emerge into the literate world. Johnston's goal is to build a sense of agency within each student that ultimately adds to the larger classroom community. This idea of agency involves a child's sense of himself and his abilities. By developing the child's personal narrative of success, rehearsed frequently as a self-reminder and teaching tool for classmates, the teacher equips him with a knowledge and self-awareness that feeds on itself. The child becomes confident when new problems appear and moves through familiar steps of problem solving. Questions like "How did you figure that out?" and "What problems did you come across today?" underscore the idea that problems are not failures, but rather normal occurrences that can be overcome by using certain strategies. In addition to building these powerful narratives, teachers can reflect a child's knowledge through questions that solicit thorough explanations for what is known and draw connections between ideas. Questions like "How did you know that?", "How else . . . ?" and "How could we check?" enable students to articulate what they know and construct deeper meaning. Trust me, it's a good one!

I couldn't put it down--which is often said of a novel, but maybe not so often about a professional book. I truly read the book for six hours, and only took a few breaks. I started out highlighting what I found provocative, but soon realized that that wasn't enough. I got out my post-its, and began to note bits of wisdom I didn't want to forget. I think I must have added 50 post-its!! It's not that the information is so new, but rather that it is such a reminder and "emphasizer" about how we talk to children, and treat them in our classrooms. I thank Mr. Johnston for his thoughtful approach, and love the organization of the book. I've shared bits and pieces of what I've read with the staff at my school, and plan to continue to do so for the rest of the year. I've ordered two more copies of the book to share with colleagues. Thank you for this inspiring book.

We are using this book as a book study group in our elementary school. It serves as a great springboard for conversation about teaching strategies and learning. The book provides insights to new teachers as well as seasoned teachers and can serve as a way to share and reflect as a learning and teaching community.

Choice Words is a powerful book in terms of thinking about how we can both engage and motivate our students through discourse and dialogue. Our students today are reading less and less and often and do not know how to articulate their thoughts and ideas (aside from what they "learned" in the latest movie they saw). Throughout the book Johnston lists statements and questions that help students learn how to articulate their thoughts, which will hopefully lead to future empowerment. The author does not discuss which theories and methodologies are most successful for teaching reading and writing; the focus is on helping children create meaning from what they read, learn to think and articulate their thoughts independently, and become successful participants in a democratic society.

This book does a great job of making you really consider the words you use with your students as a teacher. Not only does it give great advice, but it also gives some great tips and examples of how to approach common situations and what to say. Also, the appendices are pretty informative as well. Johnston does a great job!

This book really changed my thinking about how to speak to children to promote the best learning, and what to say. Our words are powerful tools in the 'teacher's tool kit' and must be used with care.

This is an important work for any teacher to read. It helps the teacher focus on how he or she can actively shape a student's identity by helping the student to develop a firm concept of self. Detailed questions and examples are given. I found this work very helpful to think about, although I don't intend to teach reading or become a reading coach. The work has helped guide me into thinking about how to turn students into powerful, confident, human beings. Wonderful! Love it!

Tho' many of the things Peter Johnston says in the book, I already know, it was good to review and it got me to thinking about how I come across to my students and how I can BETTER get them to do their own thinking and inquiring by the language (questioning) I use with them. It is a concise book and one that I'm sure I'll be referring to many times in the future.

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