

Reframing challenging behaviour



Look for opportunities to show students a new picture of themselves. Instead of pointing out what's wrong, describe what's right and what still needs to be done.

Intentionally use positive descriptions rather than negative descriptions. For example:

Negative descriptions	Positive descriptions
Demanding	Has high standards
Loud	Enthusiastic
Argumentative	Opinionated, strongly committed to goals
Nosy	Curious
Wild	Energetic
Explosive	Dramatic
Distractible	Perceptive

Four simple steps to rename and reframe with positive language:

1. Think of a student with a challenging behaviour.
2. Rename one or more of his or her challenging traits as positive traits.
E.g., stubbornness = determination
talking back = honesty
constant movement = energy
3. Identify the positive traits you want to encourage him or her to practise.
4. Put into a positive sentence.

Example:

With a student who tends to talk back, "Mattais, I appreciate your honesty in stating your opinion. How can you make your point in a more respectful way?" With an active, restless student, "Havla, you have great energy. Now you need to turn that energy on your social studies project and finish up that chart."

