Choice Words

How Our Language Affects Children's Learning

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Contents

Foreword

About twenty-five years ago I noticed that primary-grade teachers often used language differently, depending on whom they were teaching. From recordings of reading instruction, I documented three differences in the ways teachers interacted with more and less successful readers (Allington 1980). They interrupted successful readers less often and waited longer for them to figure words out, and their comments to them focused on making sense rather than on the details of print, on sustaining their efforts rather than on correcting them. They said, "Does that make sense?," "Does that sound right?," and "Let's try that again," rather than, "Sound it out." All their comments to more successful readers suggested that reading was about making sense. Although I knew this was a critical difference, I didn't follow those instructional conversations any further. I don't think I understood that these seemingly small differences were simply the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the importance of the language we use with children day in, day out.

About a decade after that study was published, Peter Johnston and I began a sustained collaborative research partnership. Peter tried over the next decade to help me learn to notice other aspects of teacher instructional talk. Perhaps it was my roots in direct instruction as an instructional model that held me back. I tended to focus on what I dubbed explicitness and thoughtfulness and strategies talk while not noticing the social, moral, and personal aspects of teachers' language. Perhaps, too, it was the relative infrequency of the sorts of talk that Peter describes in this skinny book that made noticing it difficult for me. Sitting day after day in the classrooms of the many superb teachers we studied together, I noticed the strategy talk. I noticed the overwhelmingly positive nature of these teachers' interactions with their

students (see also Pressley and his colleagues 2003). I noticed the more conversational nature of the instructional interactions (Allington 2002). I didn't notice most of the things Peter was noticing while observing many of the same classrooms.

It's not that what I noticed was wholly trivial, but that I had no way of thinking about what I saw and heard that would allow me to notice what Peter noticed and to understand what Peter explains in this book. I knew about self-regulation, metacognition, self-efficacy, and a variety of other psychological frames for explaining differences between readers, and even between classrooms. By analogy, I was able to notice that the Florida Gators had sacked the opposing quarterback but was unable to see the crucial breakdown in pass blocking that allowed that to happen. So, even though Peter and I spent a decade working together in these classrooms, reading this book has provided me with new eyes. I will verify the reliability of the observations he details. I heard these teachers say these things. I will testify that his analysis of the talk in these rooms provides the reader with powerful insights into just how forcefully language shapes thinking about reading and writing, and about becoming readers and writers and social beings.

Peter also noticed that others, both teachers and researchers, have attempted to convey the power of the sort of talk that teachers in this book routinely use as they go about their work. He illustrates many of the ideas with talk from other studies. But I think Peter is the first to pull all this together in a format that is engaging and accessible to the broad education audience, and to give every reader new eyes for observing classrooms.

I wish I had written this book. Actually, I wish I'd been able to write it. I am truly grateful for *Choice Words,* and I wish there was a way to ensure that every teacher, teacher educator, school administrator, and researcher would read it. Maybe then our discussions, our lessons, our research, and maybe, our educational policies could move beyond debating what sort of lessons garner higher test scores, and instead, focus on how our lessons develop not just readers and writers, but literate citizens for a democratic society.

RICHARD ALLINGTON

Acknowledgments

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I cannot thank enough the wonderful teachers who let my colleagues and me into their classrooms to document their teaching practice, particularly the ones I observed personally. They taught me so much. Each showed me a different face and voice of the genius of teaching. I hope that this book does some justice to their remarkable daily work.

I have quoted quite a bit of material in this book, and I appreciate the consideration of the publishers who gave me permission to do so: the American Psychological Association, Guilford Press, Heinemann, Stenhouse, and Teachers College Press. I particularly appreciate the per-

mission to reprint the poem by Herb Warren that appears as a frontispiece. If you would like to read more of his wonderful poetry, the book *Herb's Poems* is available only from the Friends of H. J. Warren at Box 399, Camden, Maine 04843.

I have been blessed with a wonderfully supportive group of colleagues at the State University of New York at Albany: Jim Collins, Cheryl Dozier, KaiLonnie Dunsmore, Ginny Goatley, Mark Jury, George Kamberelis, Donna Scanlon, Margi Sheehy, Sean Walmsley, and Rose Marie Weber. Along with Mary Unser and Linda Papa, they sustain my work.

Marie Clay's work on prompting children in Reading Recovery stimulated my thinking about teachers' responses to children's reading—and almost everything else in literacy teaching and learning. Jim Collins and Becky Rogers played an important role in developing my interest in and understanding of teachers' use of language. Becky and, more recently, Paula Costello have helped extend my interest and my thinking through sharing articles and discussions. Conversations with Cheryl Dozier and Barbara Gioia over the years of teaching together have also helped my thinking enormously.

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Throughout the writing, I have been sustained, as ever, by my family: Tina, Nicholas, Emily, and Samantha. To them I must apologize for my frequent failures to engage them through the language I know to be most helpful. I hope they forgive this frailty.

Extension

Analyze the following transcripts in terms of their invitations to agency and see whether there are ways to enhance them.

Transcript 1

Bill: You worked hard on this page. Where was the tricky part? [*The student points to the word* through.] Look at the picture and tell me what she did.

Peter: She went over the fence.

Bill: It could be *over,* but check to see if what you read looks right.

Peter: No, it's not *over.*

Bill: How do you know?

Peter: There's no *v.*

Bill: Good checking. What would make sense?

Peter: I don't know.

Bill: Would *through* make sense?

Peter: Oh, yeah—"through the fence."

Transcript 2

Kathy: Today's story is called *Cat on the Mat.* Look at the last word in the title; that word is the same as your name, isn't it?

Matt: I don't know.

Kathy: Sure it is; your name is Matt, isn't it? And this word is *mat,* except this word only has one *t* instead of two *t*'s like in your name. I will read you the story and you read along. "The cat sat on the mat. The goat sat on the mat. The cow sat on the mat. The elephant sat on the mat. SSppstt." Can you sound out those letters?

Matt: *Ssssss. Tttt.*

Kathy: Good. I'll finish the book now: "The cat sat on the mat."

Both these transcripts are from the exceptional book *Partners in Learning: Teachers and Children in Reading Recovery* (Lyons, Pinnell, and DeFord 1993) pages 162–163 and 151, respectively. Although there are some productive examples of teacher talk in the first transcript, both examples are shown in that book to be problematic. The first is problematic because the teacher did not realize that Peter had lost track of

conception of reading instruction—what she was trying to do. She was trying to get the student to recognize and sound out words that were beyond her student's capability rather than trying to arrange for him to take control of reading the book.

> structures are first engendered in play, so that meaning arises and abstracts itself from everyday contextualization. He says, "From the point of view of development, creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought" (Vygotsky 1978, p. 103). If this should be true, and it may well be, it means that play has a direct, not an indirect, relationship to cognition. (p. 72)

Following Bakhtin, Sutton-Smith (1995, p. 71) observes that "laughter is the most primitive form of parody and satire by which the sanctity of established ways gets impugned. It is life's basic form of unofficial response." In other words, it is a good vehicle for flexibly breaking rules and borders. As a vehicle for progressing to critical literacy, playfulness with language might also be indispensable.

An additional benefit, as I mentioned at the outset, is that playfulness can develop children's interest in language. For example, having read William Steig's *The Amazing Bone* (1976) with students it becomes possible for me to add into my classroom vocabulary "As I live and flourish . . ." and to stop inappropriate behavior with "Have you no shame, sir!" or, better, "You worm, you odoriferous wretch!" or even "Yibbam sibibble!" These latter can be used to admonish because children's awareness of the source makes their use funny, taking the personal edge off the reprimand. At the same time, it builds the children's vocabulary and their interest in language, and shows them an excellent resource for further language development.

A Longer Example

At this point, I think we should put some of the brief snippets of language into context, so let me give another elaborated example of a teacher-student interaction that pulls together much of what I have already presented. Consider this transcript of a writing conference taken from an excellent book called *How's It Going?* by Carl Anderson (2000).

> Carl: You know, Maya, you're just like a lot of writers who write memoirs. Like Jean Little, for example. You know that story from *Little by Little,* the one in which her classmates make fun of her because of her eyeglasses?
>
> Maya: Yeah.
>
> Carl: Both you and Jean Little packed several scenes into a single piece of writing. But Jean Little didn't just stretch the first scene and list the rest. She stretched most of the scenes, the scenes that really helped us understand what she went through. You could revise by trying to make your memoir more like the ones you've read in class so far this year. That's what I want you to try—picking one of these other scenes and stretching it like you stretched the birthday candles.
>
> Maya: Okay.
>
> Carl: Which one would you want to try?
>
> Maya: Maybe . . . I kind of like it the way it is.
>
> Carl: I can understand that. But I'm still going to challenge you to take a risk as a writer by trying out Jean Little's way of stretching several scenes. And if you decide you don't like what it does to your piece after trying it, that's okay. . . . I nudge students to try things I think will help them grow as writers. So which scene do you want to stretch—the scavenger hunt, the sleeping routine, your mom tucking you in . . .
>
> Maya: I think my mom tucking me in.
>
> Carl: [*starts her on a new piece of paper*] I'll check in with you later in the period to see how it goes (pp. 77–78).

This conference is really quite forceful, but when Carl returns to Maya, she is satisfied with the outcome and chooses to make use of the new writing she produced. The chart on the following pages reviews in

tabular form what I see as significant pieces of this conference.

Perhaps it seems in places as though I am stretching the intentions and the implications. I don't believe so, but if even half of my inferences are true, repeating these discursive currents over and over each day cannot help but have a powerful effect, the more so because it is not only Carl who is applying this discursive pressure toward agentive narratives. Once these conversations become natural in the classroom—ways of talking and interacting that imply roles, relationships, positions, authority, agency, epistemology, topics of conversation, and expected identities—they also become part of children's conversations.

In this chapter and the previous one I have emphasized the kinds of conversation that encourage children to become agentive, to act for themselves and see themselves as active and thus responsible. In part, this involves recognizing multiple ways of seeing and solving problems, and a certain relish in doing so. If we fail to accomplish this, it does not bode well for them once they leave the educational environment. Unfortunately, it remains possible (perhaps even common) for learners to leave school believing that they know a great deal yet unable think for themselves, not seeing themselves as active, inquiring individuals. The more we help children build a sense of themselves as inquirers and problem-solvers, and the less they see boundaries between domains of inquiry, the more they are likely to transfer their learning into the world beyond school.

Even this is not enough. I want children to see themselves not only as inquiring individuals, but as inquiring individuals who are part of a diverse community that inquires, whose members, through their active participation and diversity of perspective, contribute to each other's intellectual growth. It is to this aspect of teachers' talk that I now turn.

Carl's Talk	**Commentary**
Maya, you're just like a lot of writers who write memoirs.	Carl offers a specific identity: authors who write memoirs. He names memoirs as a kind of writerly thing to notice.
Like Jean Little . . . that story from *Little by Little,* the one in which her classmates make fun of her because of her eyeglasses?	Carl uses a specific example to show that the identity claim is not empty praise. It shows the parallel between the writing and the writers, but also between the two lives. *Like* also becomes more normalized as a way of talking and thinking.
Both you and Jean Little packed several scenes into a single piece of writing.	Carl extends the evidence for the identity and opens a possibility for Maya's life and text narratives, and establishes the equivalent epistemological authority. He names "scenes" as something to be noticed—analyzing the task.
But Jean Little didn't just stretch the first scene and list the rest. She stretched most of the scenes . . .	Carl articulates and names the process used by the mentor author and notes that it is one Maya has already used—further task analysis.
that really helped us understand what she went through.	Carl shows the consequences of the author's use of the process/strategy, and the agentive, intentional nature of writing.
You could revise by trying to make your memoir more like the ones you've read in class . . .	Carl opens an agentive possibility for Maya's writing along with an identity challenge.
That's what I want you to try—picking one of these other scenes and stretching it like you stretched the birthday candles.	Using positional authority, Carl requires Maya to pick up the challenge, retelling the previous agentive narrative to maintain the sense of agency. The task analysis maintains choice and opens the possibility for later strategic planning in writing.
Which one would you want to try?	Carl offers choice, and thus agency in the process, but constrains the possible narratives.
I can understand that. But I'm still going to challenge you to take a risk as a writer by trying out Jean Little's way of stretching several scenes.	Recognizing Maya's expression of her own agency, Carl adds to his positional authority the challenge to the identity already offered. This is an offer of a narrative with a specific identity and a challenge to overcome. If she picks up this challenge, she cannot help but pick up the authorial identity. To the extent that the identity is inviting, the narrative is inviting.

. . . if you decide you don't like what it does to your piece after trying it, that's okay . . .	Carl offers Maya a narrative in which she can regain the agency he has temporarily taken away by limiting her choices.
I nudge students to try things I think will help them grow as writers.	Reminding Maya of his role as a teacher, Carl reminds Maya of her identity as a writer, but 'help them grow' indicates that she also has an agentive role in her growth.
So which scene do you want to stretch—the scavenger hunt, the sleeping routine, your mom tucking you in . . .	'So now that you have agency as a writer and a learner, how do you want to retell your life narrative?' Carl offers specific choice, and hence agency. With the specificity is the recognition that he is interested in Maya's life details, strengthening his relational position and Maya's authority.
I'll check in with you later in the period to see how it goes.	In case Maya decides to abandon the offered narrative, Carl at once closes the door on the lesser narrative and shows interest in her personally and as a writer.

Extension

If you would like to shift the conversations in your classroom in the direction I have described, begin by planning ways to get children into open public conversations.

1. Analyze the following interaction from Debbie Miller's classroom (Miller 2002b). Notice the ways in which she positions the students with respect to each other, herself, and the subject they are studying, and how she extends their sense of agency. Consider any other comments you might add, or what you might do differently.

    DM: Oh, you guys, look at all this new learning. What's going on? Can you talk to me about what you've been doing?

    S1: Well, we learned a lot.

    DM: Well, tell me some of the things you've learned.

    S1: Well, I learned that the ocean has layers.

    S2: Yeah.

    DM: So what does that mean it has layers?

    S1: Like, you know what in the rain forest has layers? Well, it's just like it except in the rain forest it has more layers than . . . this only has three . . . three.

    S2: Yeah, three.

    DM: So you mean like in the ocean there's a top layer, is that how it goes? And then a middle layer . . .

    S1: and a bottom layer.

    DM: Wow.

    S2: Yeah, and I learned that the twilight layer . . . zone . . . is the middle layer.

    DM: Yeah.

    S2: It is 1,000 meters below.

    DM: Below where?

    S2: The surface.

    DM: Oh, the surface. Perfect.

    [*After further discussion*]

    DM: It's so interesting. I'm learning so much just sitting here. I better let you guys get back to work. Thank you for teaching me about those kinds of fish. And is the rest of your plan just to keep reading and recording?

S1: Yeah. You see this one?
DM: Keep going. You guys are doing great.

2. Next time you are reading aloud to the students, ask no questions and begin a pattern of annotating and pausing. At interesting points, say "Wow," and pause expectantly, or say, "I wonder if [some possibility] . . ." and pause. Most of all, if anyone says anything, show interest—"Oh, interesting . . . [with enthusiasm]"—then pause. Under no circumstances offer any hint of judgment—"good," "right," "yes," and so forth. Offer a relevant comment such as, "I've felt like that before . . . [pause]." When you do ask questions, make them wide open, such as, "Anyone else had that sort of feeling [experience]?" The rules of engagement for you include not judging any responses and providing ample thinking time. If pausing for longer than a breath is difficult for you, try counting slowly in your head to five—or ten—before picking up where you left off.

3. Get a conversation going in which you are not likely to be at the center. Marg Wells (Department of Education Training and Employment 2000) used the following strategy with second graders. First, they conducted a survey in the class, asking their concerns about their lives in and out of school, about their neighborhoods and the world. In that context, they asked what made the children worried, angry, or happy, and what they would like to change. From this came topics that were relevant and engaging for the children and that brought multiple perspectives and commitment.

4. Get the children to ask questions about a book you have read with them. Encourage as many as possible and write them on chart paper. Censor none. Read them all back, commenting on what an interesting collection of questions they have, and telling them that because they obviously won't have time to find answers to all of them, perhaps they could select three to answer or think through either as a class or in small (diverse) groups with their own selections. Once they can do that, you can get a little fancy by getting them to ask questions addressed to the author, such as what they would like to know that was not in the text.

5. With older students, if only some are prepared to tackle issues in book discussions, write a controversial position sentence on the board and see who agrees or disagrees. For example, if the class

has read *Puss in Boots,* the statement might be "In this book, Puss lies to everyone and even murders someone all for his own benefit. He is not the 'good guy.'" If they are reluctant to take a position, ask them to go and stand by the position (yea or nay) by which they are most persuaded, understanding that as the class discusses it, they can change their position. In science, they might do this with predictions and then discuss how they might establish credibility for their positions.

Four Fourth Graders

These four "cases" are adapted from "Teaching and Learning Literate Epistemologies" (Johnston, Jiron, and Day 2001)

Mandy

Mandy says that a good writer "writes fast. . . . [For example] when the teacher tells us to write a story then it doesn't even take her . . . not even ten minutes." Mandy does not talk with other students about their writing. She "wouldn't want to hurt their feelings or nothing because sometimes when someone comes up to them and says, 'Oh, you're a bad writer,' and everything. Then, they'll tell the teacher . . ." Mandy says that they should not give other students ideas, "because then that would be giving them things that you thought of in your head. . . . Then they'll have, probably, the same stories."

Good readers, she says, are "all the kids that are quiet and they just listen . . . they challenge themselves . . . they get chapter books." Asked to describe herself as a reader or a writer, she says she doesn't understand the question. She does not know how she could learn about another child as a reader or writer.

Asked whether they do research in her class, she says she is unsure what it is. When it is explained, she says they don't do it. Mandy expects on her report card an "excellent" for writing and a comment like, "Mandy has behaved and she is nice to other classmates." To help a classmate become a better reader, she would tell him or her to "stop fooling around because the more you fool around, the more you get your name on the board and checks . . . [and] . . . if he doesn't know that word, if he doesn't know how to sound it out or if he doesn't know what it means, look it up in the dictionary."

In talking about books, Mandy makes no connections across books or with personal experience (pp. 226–227).

Steven

As a writer, Steven is confident about the significance of his own experience and the experiences of others. He uses these in his writing to figure out audience and characters. He took three weeks to write one of his pieces, including "some really hard struggles" (said with relish). In a reflection about a piece of writing he says, "But then I said to myself, well, where's a place that gets the reader in good suspense so they want to read on, but it's a good stopping place?" And, "So I was looking at it and I'm like, well, how can I say that this statue, I mean that this trophy is really important to me. And how can I make it . . . make that word 'trophy' be more symbolized in the statue. And I based it on the trophy, but it was really about a statue."

What he does well as a writer is "express my feelings well" and "really get out what I want to say," but sometimes he gets "into a staring match with a blank page."

In his research on racial segregation in airports, he tried two different libraries and the Internet, and called the local airport. He has not encountered discrepant information sources yet, but if he did, he would "take those two opinions and put them together and then I would have a variety of what one author thought and what the other author thought. So I would just put them together . . . and see what I came up with . . . or perhaps try to even it out."

Asked whether there are any good authors in his class, he says, "For the funny part, Jessie is really funny. He writes a lot about fantasy stuff. . . . Ron's a pretty good writer . . . and he's a little better at drawing than writing . . . Emily [in her mystery] gave details. She described the characters. It was a really good mystery because it had a point and it had something that the reader had to figure out." He has a great deal of knowledge about the structure of different genres—realistic fiction, fantasy, mystery, and biography, among others. Commenting on his own piece, he says, "Unlike most mysteries it has a sad ending."

He routinely makes connections among the books he reads and has specific criteria for what he appreciates about particular books (p. 229).

Henry

Describing himself as a writer, Henry says he's "Typical. I don't, like, . . . finish a final copy and start writing another story right away. . . . It takes me a little longer. I write a lot of stuff that's happened to me. Like, I have entries about like when I was at the beach with my friends, or I can borrow [ideas]." The most recent thing he learned as a writer is "how to be more organized," and next he would like to learn how to write longer stories because "I have lots of information . . . I know I've got more."

Conferences with friends, he says, "give me, like, ideas to put in there . . . [or] they think it's good, it's got enough details and stuff then I could meet with the teacher." Asked whether there are different kinds of readers in his class, he says, "Like Steve, he reads longer books than other people. And Dan. When he gets into a book, you're not going to stop him, like if you say, 'Hey, Dan, listen to this sentence.' He's . . . not going to come out of that book. Jenny, she reads hard books like Steve. But, umm, she finishes books, like, really fast. . . . Priscilla. She really likes to read mysteries. She reads long stories, like Nancy Drew." He also notes that, like him, Roger enjoys the Bailey School Kids books. To learn about a pen pal as a reader, he would ask, "What kind of books do you like? Who's your favorite author? What book are you reading now? . . . Have you read any good books lately?"

To help a classmate become a better reader: "If they are reading harder books that are too hard for them, [tell them] not to push themselves as much . . . maybe later in a couple of months read those books. Push them to the side and read, like, books that are at your level."

Henry enjoys adding to class discussions of books. "Like Mrs. Hopkins says when we are in the literature group, I always have something to relate to the book." He finds other students' experiences and interpretations of the book interesting, except "If they talk about some of the really little details that you don't really need." He feels comfortable disagreeing with other students and quotes what he said to a classmate on a particular occasion. He enjoys reading, and often makes connections between books. He also thinks some of the students in the class are good authors, because, for example, when "Emelia read hers . . . it was really long, but I'm like, what's going to happen next? . . . Once you get into it you want to know what's going to happen next. Their mysteries are really a mystery." This is not always true with commer-

cial books. "Like it says the 'Boxcar Children Mysteries' on the front of the book and it says the mystery of the missing something . . . and then, like, I can't get the mystery out of it. . . . It just doesn't give it to you."

When he encounters conflicts among books when researching a topic, he says that one of the authors "probably hadn't done his homework." His strategy for dealing with such situations is to consult more sources (pp. 228–229).

Millie

Millie chose *Superfudge* to read "because it was, like, challenging, the words that was in there. . . . Because we don't read that book until fifth grade and I was going to try it." She likes realistic fiction, though she does not have a term for describing it. She thinks that as a reader, "I'm not all perfect in reading. But I'm good. But I mess up a lot because when you mess up, you learn from your mistakes."

Asked whether there are different readers in her class, she uses a good/not-good continuum and levels: "Well, they can read more better than me because when they read, they don't mess up as much as I do . . . they are on a higher level than me." She says that she has changed as a reader "because I'm reading more and more and bigger stories than last year." What she would like to learn next is to "learn books harder than chapter books . . . so I can almost get on a higher level." She likes to add to discussions when they have them. For example, the class disagreed on whether the author of *Stone Fox* should have let Searchlight die. She never disagrees with the teacher.

Her best piece of writing she thinks took fifteen to twenty minutes, and she selected it because "We had to write what does responsibility mean and I won." Asked what she does well as a writer, she says, "People tell me that when I write, I write good because . . . I say what I want to say, not what somebody else says. I don't take people's ideas, I just think of my own and just write." The thing she learned most recently about writing is that "if you write and you copy off of somebody that means you're not . . . you're acting like you're not a real writer. 'Cause if you were a real writer, you would think of your own ideas to make your own story." Her friend is a good author because she "tells examples . . . and she makes her stories long."

To help someone with writing: "If they need help, or in spelling . . . in cursive I would give them . . . 'cause I have sheets, spelling sheets that

you can trace and stuff . . . and they can practice." Asked whether they do research in her class she says, "The research we do, like if we need a word that we don't know what it means, we will look it up in a dictionary." She has never encountered conflicting sources of information (p. 227).

APPENDIX C

Analysis of Debbie Miller's Interaction with the Class and Brendan

Debbie Miller's Comments	Analysis
DM: Can I tell the other really brilliant thing that you did?	Asks student's permission to share his skill and knowledge, thus maintaining his authority. "Really brilliant" might have pointed to a less helpful stable characteristic such as "smart," but here it is associated with the strategies used, making it smart to use strategies.
Brendan had read this book before, but what he did was, he just picked it up again,	It is okay to reread books.
right?	Checking with the authority to make sure the story is accurate from his point of view, reminding the class, and Brendan, of his authority.
And then, when he read it again, he said, "I never knew this. This is a poem" . . .	When we reread, we can notice new things in part because our focus is different. One thing to notice is poetry.
The first time he read it and the second time and the third time he was just thinking about learning the words and figuring out the words,	Reading something a lot can be useful. Notice what happens in your mind when you read.
Right, Brendan?	Checking with the authority to make sure the story is accurate from his point of view, reminding the class, and Brendan, of his authority.
But then, this time, he made this big discovery that it's actually written as a . . . [poem].	Be sure to notice surprises because they are often important, new information. Pauses to invite children's participation in the reconstructed think-aloud.

. . . who would have thought that a nonfiction book could actually be poetry?	Reminder of surprise and its significance, both the immediate learning and for future possibilities.
He learned that today, and that's because I think he had read it before.	Rereading often leads to new learning.
B: And Mrs. Miller didn't know that [big smile].	Brendan recognizes his own authority, his own agency, along with the feeling of associated pride. Understands that children can teach teachers, and the underlying principle of distributed cognition.
I didn't know that, and you taught that to me.	Affirms student's successful learning and his teaching, and reaffirms that teachers don't know everything.
I wrote it right down here in my notebook.	Additional affirmation, again asserting the student's authority.
Thank you, Brendan.	One final mark of respect for the student, and of the value placed on learning.

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