

USE LANGUAGE THAT BUILDS TRUST

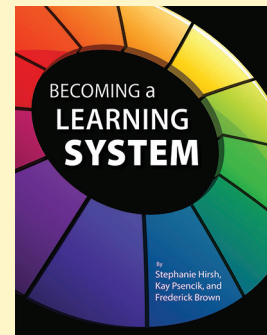
Trust serves as the connective tissue that allows teachers to question current practices, take risks, and try new strategies because they are confident their leader supports and encourages their creativity and innovation as they work to achieve their goals. Use this tool to gain a deeper understanding of the power of language in creating and sustaining trusting relationships.

Becoming a Learning System

By Stephanie Hirsh, Kay Psenick, and Frederick Brown

This tool is adapted from *Becoming a Learning System*. Based on Learning Forward’s definition of professional learning and Standards for Professional Learning, *Becoming a Learning System* outlines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors district leaders need to lead, facilitate, and coach school leaders and leadership teams to embed the definition and standards into schools’ daily routines. Built on the ideas explored in *Becoming a Learning School*, the chapters in this comprehensive tool kit are supplemented by dozens of additional tools. *Learning Forward, 2014*

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| <p>PURPOSE: Consider the effects of language on relationships that build and sustain trust.</p> <p>TIME: 1-1½ hours</p> <p>MATERIALS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of pp. 56-57 for each group member. • Pens. • Highlighters. | | |
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| STEPS | | TIME |
| 1 | Ask participants to read “The power of language” on p. 56. Ask that they underline statements that resonate with them and draw boxes around key words. | 10 minutes |
| 2 | Have them share underlined statements with a partner and explain why these statements were particularly meaningful. | 5 minutes |
| 3 | Ask group members to read and respond silently to the four questions on p. 57. | 20 minutes |
| 4 | Ask that group members practice a conversation with a partner or the group, responding first to question 3 and then to question 4. | 10 minutes each round |

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE



Let's consider the power of our language. How is language action?

- We continuously make assertions and assessments about the world around us and ourselves in it.
- Through our language, humans coordinate action. We make declarations, requests, offers, promises, and complaints.

Language is part of the coherence between body and emotions. We use certain speech actions to maneuver our world based on our assertions and assessments.

- Assertions are the facts about the world. (The world rotates on its axis. I am 45 years old.)
- Assessments are judgments that we make based on our observations of the world. (This cookie is really good. That child is challenged to learn. That teacher does not want to change.)

Most of our language is assessments we make as we observe the world. As we view the world through our lenses, we observe results. Observations lead us to select actions. It is our observations of the world that open up opportunities for us or shut them. If I believe that I cannot learn, I won't try. If I believe women cannot fly

planes as well as men and I am a woman, I won't try. If I see the world as full of opportunities for me and view myself as capable of anything, I will actually "see" more opportunities than if I focused on my limitations.

We coordinate action when we make:

- Declarations;
- Offers;
- Requests;
- Commitments;
- Conditions of satisfaction;
- Declines;
- Complaints; and
- Apologies.

Leaders are called upon every day to have conversations that motivate, assess, invent, and support. Leaders must discuss performance, coordinate action, and build trust. Organizations are fundamentally networks of conversations.

It is not the state of the world but our current understanding of trust that restricts our ability to have the conversations needed to nurture, build, and rebuild trust.

| DIRECTIONS | |
|------------|---|
| 1 | Bring to mind an instance when someone made a promise to you and then failed to fulfill it. How did that show up in your language, body, and emotion? |
| 2 | Bring to mind an instance when you did not keep a promise. What were the consequences? How did that show up in the language, body, and emotion of the person to whom you made the promise? In your language, body, and emotion? |
| 3 | What declarations do you need to make? To whom? What language, body, and emotion do you need in order to make those declarations? Practice with your study group. |
| 4 | What conversation do you need to have with someone right now that you have been putting off because your assessment is that it will be difficult? What language, body, and emotion do you need to have that conversation? Practice with your study group. |

Source: Hirsh, S., Psencik, K., & Brown, F. (2014). *Becoming a learning system*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.