Why Silent Modeling Is A Powerful Strategy

By Michae Linsin

Done right, modeling has the power to teach your students virtually anything you want them to be able to do.

And in a way they won't soon forget.

The problem, however, is that most teachers don't model very well.

They gloss over details. They rush through important steps. They cut short what should be a thorough and engaging process.

They also tend to talk too much, adding information that only distract students from learning.

One sure way to avoid these mistakes, while at the same time ensuring excellent instruction, is to model in silence.

Here's why:

It makes you more interesting.

When you take away your ability to talk, you naturally become more demonstrative and therefore more interesting to your students. Your body language, facial expressions, and movements—out of sheer necessity—become compelling and communicative, attracting every eye in the room.

It purifies your instruction.

When you model in silence, you're assured of providing the purest form of instruction. You never have to worry that the wrong choice of words—or too many words—might taint, confuse, bore, or draw your students away from what you want them to learn.

It makes paying attention easy.

Although you still have to [ask for attention](#) before beginning any modeling exercise, once you have it, you'll have far less trouble keeping it. By narrowing the senses your students need to one, following along and understanding what you expect becomes easy.

It triggers an unforgettable movie in their mind.

When you model in a silent but highly detailed way—as if you're an actual student completing the precise steps you want them to take—they will see themselves in their mind's eye successfully doing the same, which then sticks in their memory.

It allows direct access.

When you model wordlessly, all students—including second language learners—have direct access to your best instruction. No one is left to fend for themselves, ask a neighbor, or guess what you expect from them. Its simplicity removes impediments to learning.

It improves performance.

The best feature of silent modeling is that it improves performance. As soon as you release your students to practice what they've learned, you'll see the very moves, steps, and actions you demonstrated minutes before materialize right in front of you.

Better Teaching

Although silent modeling is good instruction, it's not a strategy you'll want to rely on every time you model. The truth is, including carefully chosen words and explanations can be additionally effective.

The good news is that silent modeling will make you better able to do this. It will train you to speak more precisely, thoughtfully, and powerfully. It will shine a light on the importance of being highly detailed, yet simple and on target.

It will keep you focused on delivering what your students need to know to be successful.

And nothing more.