Teach Substitute Words

Why should I do it:

- Some students are stuck in a cycle of negative self talk and negative self image
- Teaching them alternate ways to think about and express themselves can increase work productivity and behavior
- Some students use profanity as a regular part of their conversation and get in trouble for this in school, even though it may be acceptable at home or routinely heard in the home, therefore, giving them alternative words to replace these profanities with can help them to keep from getting suspended and in trouble

When should I do it:

- When a student gets frustrated or has repeatedly disclosed they “aren’t smart”, “don’t get it”, “can’t do it” or any other self-defeating thoughts
- When students slip with profanities a lot
- When students use profanity or inappropriate language as a regular part of their speech and conversation

How do I do it:

- Provide normalization and reassurance for the student that everyone gets frustrated or stuck on something
- Tell student, they don’t have to stop being frustrated but maybe try using another statement.
- Examples of replacement statements:
    - I can’t do it -> I can try again
    - I’m not smart -> I am really smart in math
    - I don’t get it -> I can ask for help
- Take a student aside and brainstorm some words they will use in place of profanity or inappropriate language, like darn instead of dam, bummer in place of shit, etc
    - The student will need frequent reminders and practice until they develop a new habit of using the replacement words, so be patient and supportive, giving reminders and cues when needed