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ABSTRACT

This research project described strategies to improve listening skills. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten and second grade students in a midsized midwestern city who exhibited inadequate listening skills, which interfered with comprehension accuracy. Current research addresses the problem indicating teachers have an incorrect assumption that students entering school have the ability to listen. Literature shows a discrepancy in the amount of time spent listening during the school day compared to the amount of time students are instructed in reading, writing, and math. As much as 80% of the school day is spent listening, and yet little, or in most cases, no time is spent teaching listening skills. Numerous research articles attest to the enormous importance of having good listening skills to be successful throughout life. Research indicates possible solutions to correct the listening deficiency are direct instruction of listening strategies. Children's literature should be used to teach skills, which help students develop their ability to focus, summarize, and find the purpose for listening. Teachers also need to model good listening techniques and visual imagery to ensure improvement in listening and comprehension. Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' visualization and listening abilities. The students also showed a dramatic increase in the knowledge of the characteristics of a good listener. Appendixes contain: parent documents (an explanation of the intervention, consent letters, consent form, survey, and tally sheet); student documents (pre- and post-listening survey, and tally sheets); teacher documents (explanation of intervention, teacher listening survey, and tally sheets); blank weekly journal entry forms; a Ready to Listen checklist; "Picture This" documents (activities, a student worksheet, criteria for scoring rubric, individual student score sheet, classroom average score sheet, and tally sheets); and a 32-item annotated bibliography of children's literature. (Contains 54 references and 11 figures of data.) (Author/RS)

Improving Listening Skills

Through the Use of Children's Literature

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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This research project described strategies to improve listening skills. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten and second grade students in a midsized midwestern city who exhibited inadequate listening skills, which interfered with comprehension accuracy.

Current research addresses the problem indicating teachers have an incorrect assumption that students entering school have the ability to listen. Literature shows a discrepancy in the amount of time spent listening during the school day compared to the amount of time students are instructed in reading, writing, and math. As much as 80% of the school day is spent listening, and yet little, or in most cases, no time is spent teaching listening skills. Numerous research articles attest to the enormous importance of having good listening skills to be successful throughout life.

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This is dedicated to those who have "listened" patiently for the past two years.

Thank you Layton, Richard, Steve, and our families
for your support, understanding, and encouragement.

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We owe you a new red pen!

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted kindergarten and second grade classrooms exhibit inadequate listening skills which interfere with comprehension accuracy. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher anecdotal records, student responses to oral directions, assessments which indicate inferior student listening performance, and teacher observations.

Immediate Problem Context

This research takes place in one elementary site in an urban midwestern setting. For purposes of this research, the two targeted kindergarten classrooms and one second grade classroom have been designated Classroom A, B, and C.

The Site

The school is a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary building with a total enrollment of 313. The ethnic breakdown is 90.7% White, 7.0% Black, 1.3% Hispanic, and 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islander. Low-income students comprise 21.1% of the school population. The attendance rate is 95.7% with a 12.7% mobility rate. The chronic truancy rate is 0.6%. The average kindergarten class size is 19.3, with the average third grade class size being 17.5 (School Report Card 2001).

The site houses 15 regular division classrooms. There are two classes of kindergarten, three first grades, two second grades, three third grades, two fourth grades, and three fifth grades. Three additional classrooms of Emotionally Behavior Disordered (EBD) students, who are included in the regular division classes as stated in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), influence the student population. These EBD kindergarten through fifth grade students are bussed to this site from their home schools within the county. Other classrooms in the building house a computer lab, an art room, a music room, a speech and resource room, a teachers' workroom, and the district technology support specialist. Also, an Internet computer lab is located in a small room directly off the library.

The school day begins at 8:55 a.m. and concludes at 3:30 p.m. The students have 35 minutes for lunch and a 15 minute recess. First through fifth graders also have a 45 minute fine arts period on a four day rotation, consisting of art, music, library, and physical education. The students leave their regular classrooms to attend these classes, which are taught by fine arts specialists.

The instructional staff consists of 28 full-time teachers, 13 aides or attendants, 1 principal, 3 secretaries, 3 custodians, and the district technology director. Additional staff members include an outreach worker, a social worker, a school nurse, and a speech language therapist, all of who are full-time district employees but are shared among other schools within the city. This site also has the services of a hearing impaired specialist who services two counties. The ethnic background of this staff is 88.6% White, 3.8% Hispanic, 3.8% Native American, 1.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.9% African-American. There are 45 females and 7 males employed at this site. Currently, 13 staff members hold a master's degree and 15 staff members hold a bachelor's degree. The staff has been teaching an average of 15.5 years.

The original red-brick building of this site was built in 1912. It consisted of 10 classrooms on three levels. An addition was built in 1939 with 12 more classrooms, an office, a library, 6 new restrooms, and a gymnasium with a stage. The gymnasium also serves as the school cafeteria, with a full kitchen attached. The building is not handicapped accessible, with the exception of a ramp that was built within the last 10 years, allowing entrance to the gym. High ceilings, granite staircases, and brick walls add charm to the school and give it a unique look. Nevertheless, these same characteristics amplify the daily noise level.

The school is situated on 4.3 acres of land in an upper-middle class residential area. A hospital supply store and its large parking lot share the west border of the campus. The front of the building faces south and is parallel to a busy street. The playground runs along the north and east side of the building and a high fence protects the children from traffic. A small blacktopped section divides the grassy soccer field from the newly installed modular playground equipment area. Immediately to the west is the blacktopped parking lot with student bicycle racks along one end. Student bicycle riders must navigate through this congested parking lot when traveling to and from school. The majority of the school population lives within walking distance. A stoplight and three crossing guards assist the students when crossing the congested streets and have helped to ease safety concerns.

The grounds of this school create a friendly welcome. A freestanding, lighted sign near the front entrance of the school informs parents, students, and the community of upcoming events. Six years ago the school was allocated money to create a butterfly garden, which is also located in front of the building. Bird feeders, benches, and a brick memory walkway in the butterfly garden add to the aesthetic beauty of the campus. This peaceful area is used and enjoyed by the entire school population.

The targeted school's mission statement reads as follows:

> This school will provide students an equal opportunity to achieve higher levels of learning in a safe, caring environment, through the cooperative efforts of students, staff, parents, and the community. We believe that all students can learn. Our mission is to develop concerned responsible members of society who are life-long learners and problem solvers with an appreciation and respect for themselves and our ever-changing global society. (School Report Card 2001)

To promote the values identified in our mission statement, the targeted site offers several opportunities for academic, leadership, and athletic development. Programs to support academic enrichment include Geography Bowl, Homework Help, Readermania, spelling bees, Young Authors, and Scrabble Club. Participation in Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Club, student council, and in a student lunchroom assistants program provide opportunities for student leadership and social growth. Athletic development is enhanced through after school basketball programs for fifth grade boys and girls.

Traditionally, this school has benefited from an exceptionally active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Members of this group enhance the school experience by volunteering their time to sponsor fundraisers such as book fairs, an annual ice cream social, a spaghetti supper, a silent auction, Market Day, and candy bar sales. The funds generated have been used for purchasing computers, televisions, video cassette recorders, shelving units, fans, speakers for student assemblies, library books, money for teachers to use in their classrooms, playground equipment, and additional items. The PTO has also developed many beautiful landscaped areas

and continues to maintain them. In addition, these devoted members volunteer their time in the classroom, supporting the academic endeavors of both students and teachers.

Classroom A

The targeted Classroom A houses a self-contained all-day kindergarten. It is a spacious, carpeted room with much character. A non-working fireplace with a stone facade and wooden mantle are the first things most visitors notice. A big bay window also adds to the beauty of this unusual room. Suspended light fixtures are attached to the 12-foot ceilings, and student artwork hangs from them with colorful yarn. There are two walls of high windows with blinds that add much light and air to the room without being a distraction for a daydreaming child. The students of this room are too small to see the playground or street outside. Kindergarten students can see only the sky, treetops and an occasional squirrel. Old-fashioned blackboards in the room swivel around to reveal cloakrooms with hooks for coats and backpacks.

Posters, bulletin boards, charts, and books abound in this print-rich environment, giving the children a great deal of exposure to letters, words, and sentences. *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, by Norman Bridwell, is a favorite book of the class, and the famous character is the mascot of the room. A 10-foot felt wall hanging of Clifford adorns the bulletin board in the hall. Other Clifford posters and books decorate the room. A collection of dolls and animals from other popular children's books also trims the fireplace mantle and shelves of the classroom. A framed poster of "All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," by Robert Fulghum, hangs on the wall, as well as colorful wall-hangings of kites and rainbows.

In the center of the room there are four kindergarten-sized rectangular tables arranged in a square for workstations. Five chairs are at each table. The workstations are labeled red, blue, yellow, and green, according to colored baskets in the center of each table. These baskets hold

student materials such as glue, pencils, and easy-readers. Another kidney shaped table and a long worktable provide spaces for teacher directed centers with small groups.

Furniture and walls create a cozy perimeter that encloses the area where the students sit for large group activities and calendar work. Two teacher desks, a student worktable, a chalkboard wall, and a main bulletin board workstation surround this secluded corner. The area is far from the door and distractions of the hall. It gives the children a chance to listen without being disrupted and to have an opportunity to be boisterous, when necessary, without disturbing other classes.

A play kitchen area, dress-up clothes and hats, and shelves of toys and manipulatives are tucked out of the way in the bay window area. Other areas of importance include a private library corner, where the class guinea pig lives, an art center with an adjacent sink for easy clean up, and two large computer cabinets with three computers. One computer is Internet accessible. These computer cabinets also hold a 25-inch television and a video cassette recorder (VCR). The television is networked to the computer so that programs can be shown to the entire class.

Along the fireplace wall there are curtained shelves that house teacher materials. Under these shelves are small individual lockers where students can store their own supplies such as crayon boxes, gym shoes, and rest mats. These small lockers are hidden by large wooden doors, which help make the room look more orderly.

The children in Classroom A are engaged in language arts, science, social studies, math, and health throughout the day, using a theme-based curriculum. The teacher addresses all the children during a one hour large group time, and again during a center time when the class is divided into four 15-minute small base groups. Each day the children work in two independent base groups and two teacher-directed centers. A scheduled parent volunteer helps with the

independent centers, keeping the children on task. Kindergarten students have two 15-minute outdoor recesses, weather permitting, and a 45-minute rest period when students rest on mats and relax in the middle of the day. A time is also set aside each day for art, music, gym, or library on a rotating four day basis. The classroom teacher teaches every subject, although an aide is also with the students for two-thirds of the day.

At the end of the day the children have a 35-minute free time to engage in many activities. At this time students may choose from a wide variety of activities, which include working with manipulatives, using art supplies, reading books, playing house, playing with cars and trucks, or creating puppet shows. Social and language activities, which are so important to the young child's development, are enhanced during these free choice activities. During this time the teacher of Classroom A can observe, make anecdotal records, and interact with the children at a more relaxed pace.

Classroom B

Classroom B, an all day kindergarten classroom, is easily recognized by paintings of multi-cultural children which surround the door in the hallway. These pictures were hand painted on the wall so the kindergartners could always find their classroom. The most unique element, setting this classroom apart from others, is the wonderful stone fireplace at the east end of the classroom. The mantle holds stockings at Christmas, mittens all winter, stuffed animals, and special pictures. The sun-drenched room faces the south, so the room is always bright and cheerful. Seventy-five percent of the south wall is encompassed with four large windows, which overlook the school butterfly garden. The children, being small in stature, must stand on chairs to see outside or to bird-watch or to enjoy the beautiful butterflies in the garden. This classroom faces a very busy street, which is a wonderful source of conversation, but the noise level from

trucks, cars, motorcycles, and, of course, emergency vehicles is difficult to ignore. The walls above the fireplace and at the east end of the room have life-size painted Winnie the Pooh characters. These were hand painted and add to the aesthetic charm of this room. The twelve foot ceilings have two long fluorescent lights traversing the length of the room. The lights have children's art work suspended from them to add interesting color and beauty to the room.

It is quite evident to everyone that words and numbers are an integral part of this classroom. Colorful bulletin boards, posters, charts, songs, children's work, the question of the day, the daily news, and pertinent messages are placed strategically throughout the room. This is truly a print-rich environment for children. Many word charts with pictures are hung around the room, which are used as a resource for the children as they discover new words to read and write.

In the front center section of this carpeted classroom are five groups of tables. Each table may be occupied by six children. Each table group is made up of two small trapezoid tables joined together to make one large hexagon. The children perform many cooperative learning activities in this arrangement. Daily lessons are taught in these configurations. Along the north wall is the old-fashioned children's coat closet, which has a chalkboard on each of the six door sections. The doors pull out to open, exposing the hooks and two shelves. Once the children have their coats and backpacks on their hooks, the doors are closed and the chalkboards can be utilized.

On the north wall, past the coat closet, is a built-in shelving unit. The lower four shelves hold many games and activities the children use during free play. The remaining upper shelves are filled with teacher materials. The space in the back corner of the room has a cozy carpeted area to read, put together puzzles, or build with a variety of blocks. Bookshelves in this section of the classroom are filled with age appropriate books, puzzles, a variety of games, and

manipulatives. Under the counter, in two large plastic tubs, are wooden blocks which are easily accessible to the children as they build their creations on the floor. On a small red trapezoid table in a wire cage is the lovable classroom pet, Lightning Furry, the guinea pig. He is delighted when the children carry him, read to him, pet him, and build new homes for him out of the wooden blocks. He squeals with delight when the children save him some of their lunch.

The entire wall on the west end of the room is covered with a chalkboard and two bulletin boards. Above the chalkboard is a long, narrow bulletin board where the D'Nealian alphabet is displayed. At the south end of the chalkboard is a bulletin board with the calendar and weather charts. The bulletin board on the south wall is always covered with a theme related display. "Old Glory" flies proudly in this corner of the room.

A special, old, wooden rocker is in the corner of a favorite part of the room. This is the area that is devoted to large group time. The rocker is beside the big book easel under a large bulletin board. Much of the day is spent in this area during language-arts activities, story time, music, puppetry, number concepts, plus large group discussions. The children have plenty of room to sit comfortably on the floor without being crowded. The record player, compact disc (CD) tape player, and records, CDs, and tapes are on a cart beside the big book easel.

On the south wall, in front of the windows, are two large computer cabinets. These cabinets were specially built for this site three years ago and hold up to four computers. In the first section of the cabinet is a Macintosh computer with Internet hook-up. The children use this computer daily with age-appropriate programs. In the second compartment of the cabinet the teacher's personal retired apple computer is housed. The children utilize this computer with older programs to improve and master many kindergarten skills. Because of the age of this computer, it is not accessible to the Internet. On top of the cabinet is a 25-inch television (TV)

with a VCR which may be hooked up to the computer so the entire class may preview or view a computer program at the same time. The TV VCR is also used to show classroom videos. The second cabinet has a listening center for the children to hear taped stories. At the end of one of the cabinets is the classroom dollhouse. This is a favorite place for family role-playing activities using the variety of dolls in the dollhouse.

Beyond the computer cabinets, under the large windows, are three filing cabinets and two teachers' desks. The teachers' desks allow a special place to store completed assignments, evaluation materials, important notes from the office, and daily lesson plans.

The housekeeping area is in the southeast corner of the classroom. The round wooden table with four chairs, the wooden stove, a sink, a refrigerator, and a cabinet are used daily by both girls and boys. The dolls, highchair, stroller, shopping cart, telephones, and the endless supply of dishes encourage the children's imagination to run wild. During the year this space becomes a doctor's office, a restaurant, a family kitchen, and a grocery store.

The water table and the art center are in front of the fireplace on the tile floor. The children have a never-ending supply of paper of all colors, shapes, and sizes, colored markers, pencils, templates for tracing, and crayons. Using a wealth of items, the children are constantly creating artistic masterpieces. The paint easel is beside the sink for daily painting experiences. On both sides of the fireplace are bookshelves covered with bright curtains and small lockers, where the children's rest mats and teacher supplies are stored.

Classroom B's morning is dominated by academics. Language arts and phonemic awareness activities with theme-related units are taught to the entire class during the first hour of the morning. After a fifteen minute recess, the children are engaged in small group math exploration activities for 25 minutes. For 45 minutes the children are divided into four small

groups for centers. Two centers are teacher-directed, one is parent-volunteer directed, and another works independently. Centers are followed by a 35-minute lunch and recess period. After lunch the children have a 45 minute story time and rest time. Fine-arts, art, music, physical education, and library are taught daily for 30 minutes on a four day rotation schedule by the classroom teacher. Social studies, science, and health are incorporated into the curriculum for 30 minutes daily. Every afternoon for 30 to 40 minutes, the children are engaged in free choice activities, which encourage language skills, problem solving skills, and positive social interactions.

Classroom C

Classroom C is the library of the targeted school. It is located on the second floor in the southeast corner of the building. Because this is an older building, the library has a wonderful large bay window area. When a window replacement project was completed two years ago, two of the five windows were eliminated. As a trade off, the library now has screens on the windows, which are great for keeping the bees out. New mini-blinds were installed to help deflect the sunlight.

Built-in, dark-finished, wooden bookshelves are along the west wall of the library. The bookshelves are seven shelves high. Nevertheless, due to the height of the elementary students, only the lower five shelves are utilized. On the higher shelves are seldom used reference books, various types of artwork, inspirational reading posters, and the Readermania traveling trophies. There are six sections of shelves with an opening between the third and fourth section large enough to hold the card catalog. Above the card catalog is a painting from the book *Miss Nelson is Missing*, by Harry Allard. Along the north wall are four shelving units, which, with the east wall bookshelves, hold the majority of the easy-to-read collection. A door after the fourth unit

leads into the Dell computer lab. Continuing along the north wall are four more built-in bookcases. This is part of the nonfiction collection and used mainly by the third, fourth, and fifth grade students, so books are shelved on a shelf higher than the easy-to-read section. Even then, shorter students need help retrieving books from the top shelf. The north wall ends with a small storage closet, in front of which is a book cart holding nonfiction paperback books for the older readers. The east wall has two built-in shelving units for more nonfiction. A large window provides a view of an ancient maple tree which continues to be the home of generations of squirrels. On the other side of the window are two more built-in shelving units that house the beginning of the fiction collection. The south wall faces the street, and there is a window overlooking the butterfly garden. A freestanding book cart holds paperback books for the older readers. At this point the south wall curves out into the bay window area. Located in this section is a book cart holding nonfiction books appropriate for the younger readers.

A large wooden computer shelving unit fits in front of one of the blocked windows in the bay window. This unit holds an iMac plus an older Macintosh computer. Both have Internet capability, but the students are limited to using the iMac. Library files are kept on the Macintosh computer. On top of this computer cabinet is a 25-inch television with a VCR. The television is networked to the computer. Under the center window is a noisy radiator unit. Above that window is a pull down projection screen, which is used frequently with the overhead projector. The next former window unit is blocked with white boards, which can be used to display posters of books and various illustrators' work. The fifth window faces west, and underneath it are two new tables with three brand new iMac computers and a printer. These are used for student Internet research. The space within the bay window area is the only open floor space large enough for an entire class to sit comfortably and listen to a story.

Extending out from the bay wall is a large, freestanding, wooden bookcase. The east side of the case holds biographies, and the west side contains the beginning of the easy-to-read section. Between this wooden bookcase and the built-in shelves is a window and radiator unit that faces the front of the building. In front of this unit is a book cart with shelves of paperback books for the younger readers. A magazine rack in the corner holds periodicals for various reading levels.

In the middle of the room are six rectangular wooden library tables, each with six blue adult-sized chairs. To house the expanding book collection, three double-sided rows of bookcases, built by former PTO members, are adjacent to the library tables. Beyond these bookcases is an enormous wooden desk used for checking out the library books. A smaller version of a student table stands beside the desk and is used as a return table for incoming books. Next to that table is a book truck for books that need to be shelved and the other side of the truck holds fiction paperbacks for older readers.

Along the 12 foot ceiling of the library are two rows of fluorescent lights. Unfortunately, when the newly installed air-conditioner runs, the lights vibrate, making an obnoxious noise. Also, the lights do not extend far enough to provide adequate lighting for the east end of the library. This makes finding nonfiction books on the bottom shelf extremely difficult, especially on cloudy days.

On the north wall over the easy reading section, high school art students created an original mural depicting characters from popular fairy tales. The library also has artwork depicting scenes from the *Bears Bike Lesson*, by Stan Bernstein, *Charlotte's Web*, by E.B. White, and *Bridge to Teribithia*, by Katherine Patterson. These paintings from age appropriate literature add color, life, and charm to this unique setting.

The library has been through many changes. One of the first major changes was the addition of carpeting. This was a tremendous help with the noise level. The most important improvement has been the updating of the book collection. Through the efforts of the school PTO, major funds were allocated to purchase library books. Our collection now has 2,716 easy books, 410 biography books, 3,672 nonfiction books, and 2,671 fiction books. This gives us a total of 9,469 books. Our district has recently been the recipient of a technology grant, which has placed three new computers and a printer in each elementary library. These are available for student research, as well as a way to access the collection when automation is completed.

All 2nd through 5th grade classes meet in this room, each for a 45-minute period. During this time younger students listen to a story read orally by the librarian. This is followed by a discussion and an explanation of the elements of different genre, including both traditional and newly published literature. Upper grade students work on retrieval and reference skills. Before the end of the class, the students have time to select two library books, at their appropriate reading level, to borrow.

District

The adopted mission statement of the district is: "As a partnership of students, staff, and community, we will focus our resources on creating a caring environment which empowers all students to develop their fullest potential and become productive, socially responsible, life-long learners" (Five Year District Improvement Plan, 1995).

The district is made up of one high school, two middle schools, and seven elementary schools. In addition, two sites within the district provide education for the non-traditional student. Also, there is a program for at-risk preschool children. The total student enrollment in the district is 4,810. The graduation rate for the district is 81.1%. Factors that affect the

graduation rate in the district relate to attendance, 98.3%, low-income rate, 42.2%, mobility rate, 19.1%, high school dropout rate 8.1%, chronic truancy rate, 3.0%, and limited-English proficiency rate, 0.4% (School Report Card 2001).

The pupil/teacher ratio is 15.5 to 1, which is well below the state average of 20.0 to 1. The average teacher's experience in the classroom is 16.3 years. The percentage of teachers holding a bachelors degree is 66.7%, while 33.3% hold a masters degree or above. The district employs a total of 322 teachers, 71.6% female and 28.4% male. The average teacher's salary is $41,392, and the average administrator's salary is $73,663. The superintendent's total salary, including benefits, is $120,789 annually. The district's operating expenditure per pupil is $6,078. The district's instructional expenditure per pupil is $3,897, as compared with the state's average of $4,425 (School Report Card 2001).

There are numerous opportunities for communication between the school and the community. For example, monthly newsletters and school report cards are sent out, and local newspapers, radio, and student and staff publications offer information. Also, two to four times a year, there are formal parent-teacher conferences at the elementary and middle school level. This provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to meet and voice any concerns or comments regarding the student's progress. Due to four-block scheduling at the high school level, conferences are held there at the end of each term.

The State Board of Education requires that all students in 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade be tested for reading, mathematics, and writing. Fourth and 7th graders are tested in science and social science. The results show that the district scored higher than the state by 3% in the meets or exceeds categories on standardized tests (School Report Card 2001).

Surrounding Community

This midwestern community is located an hour east by car of the Mississippi River. It is primarily an urban area in the midst of farming communities. Located on an interstate and two U.S. highways, this community has a population of 33,706 and is a division point of a national railroad. The average winter temperature is 23 degrees and the average summer temperature is 73 degrees. The rich soil and moderate temperatures make it a productive farming area.

This community was founded on the premise of higher education. The founding fathers settled here to establish a college over a century and a half ago. Several Victorian homes line the brick streets leading to the historical downtown area, where there are numerous cultural opportunities. These include a symphonic orchestra, children's museum, public library, technology center, and many specialty shops. A renovated, historical theater is home to many music and drama events.

Diverse socio-economic neighborhoods comprise the city's single and multi-family dwellings. These include several recent housing additions targeted at low to moderate-income families. An age-restricted retirement community includes condominiums, apartments, and a nursing home. In addition, new homes are steadily being built in the community.

The average unemployment rate is 3.2%. Several new "welfare to work" programs have been implemented to offer more opportunities for growth in the workforce. This concept was established through efforts made possible by area businesses and educational institutions. The county median household income in 2001 was $32,716 (Area Chamber of Commerce, 2001).

Within the community there are 45 Protestant churches, 3 Catholic churches, and 1 Jewish synagogue. There are two modern hospital facilities with a total of 345 beds, employing 931 people. In addition, there are ten nursing homes in the community that provide nursing care.

A two-year community college is attended by 3,224 students and 1,029 students are enrolled at the four-year college. One Catholic elementary school has 358 students. A private Christian school, with kindergarten through 12th grade, has 162 students. In addition, the community has one daily newspaper and two weekly papers. There are six radio stations: three AM and three FM stations (State Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, 2001).

Recreational and social opportunities within the community include 18 city parks, which total 952 acres. The city operates two public swimming pools, a water park, softball and baseball fields, a golf course, tennis courts, an indoor roller hockey rink, as well as a public lake and campground. Other recreational activities include a bowling alley, a racquetball and health club, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and a variety of year round athletic and academic youth camps and leagues (State Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, 2001).

National Context of the Problem

"Listening is probably the most powerful simple activity we can place into any environment! It can be transformational in families, marriages, workplace, and in the classroom" (Cart, 1999, p. 1). Infants acquire listening as the first step in communication. It is the beginning of their formal awareness of the world, and it will become the primary means of interacting personally with other people. Listening is indisputably the most important element of daily life.

Researchers suggest the ability to speak, read, write and reason are influenced by the ability or inability to listen. Studies show teaching listening strategies is too important to be ignored (Hoag, 1996). Recent studies indicate that listening is an integral part of school learning and is the primary means of personal interaction, yet it remains the least studied of the language

arts. A student spends an estimated 50 to 75 percent of the school day listening to teachers, classmates, or audio media (Myers, 2001). Students are expected to be able to listen actively when they enter school on the first day. Nevertheless, the opposite of this is often apparent. Listening does not always come naturally, and listening skills need to be developed and enriched as a means to expand learning. "Listening is rarely taught in schools because educators (along with almost everyone else) assume listening is tantamount to breathing – automatic. But effective listening is a skill" (Schilling, 1999, p. 1).

One of the state goals addresses listening. Educators realize the importance of good listening skills in the process of communication with others. The state emphasizes the importance of teaching specific listening techniques, which will enable the children to receive and understand messages and clarify what they hear. The state goal reads "Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations" (State Board of Education, 1997).

Dr. Alfred Tomatis defines listening as being separate from hearing. It is an active, voluntary, and complex process. It is through listening that a person decides which information to retain and which to filter out in every situation (Sacarin, 1997). The ability to listen critically is the key to success in school and throughout life.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The ability to listen is the most essential skill to ensure a child's success in school. In order to document the extent of lack of student listening skills, teacher researchers used teacher observations, anecdotal records, and student checklists in Classrooms A, B, and C. Parents and faculty completed listening skills surveys in August, 2002, the first week of school, to determine the need for intervention. An explanation of the intervention, permission forms, and parent surveys were sent home with the students and returned to the teacher researchers within the week (Appendix A). Teacher surveys were explained at a faculty meeting and distributed to each certified staff member (Appendix C). They were completed and returned anonymously. The teacher researchers interviewed the students in Classrooms A and B, whereas the students in Classroom C completed a listening skills survey independently (Appendix B). The survey results provided the teacher researchers with information about how parents, faculty, and students perceived listening skills.

With the surveys completed and returned, the teacher researchers compiled results. The parent survey consisted of eight questions, which were answered with *almost always, fairly often, once in a while*, and *almost never* responses. The responses to parent survey questions one

through three appear in Figure 1, and questions four through seven can be found in Figure 2. The results of question eight appear in Table 1. The ninth question was an open-ended question, which required a written response. The parents were asked to define and list the qualities of a good listener. These results are found in Figure 4. The teacher researchers' intent was to gather information from the surveys to see if the parent's awareness of children's listening skills was parallel to that of the teachers.

The students' survey, questions one through eight, was answered with *yes* or *no* responses. These responses can be found in Figure 5. Question nine was an open-ended question, which can be found in Figure 3. The teacher researchers placed this figure among the parent surveys due to the nature of the information collected. The results to another open-ended student survey question appear in Figure 6.

The teachers' survey, questions one through six, was also answered with *almost always*, *fairly often, once in a while*, and *almost never* responses. These responses can be found in Figure 7. Question seven results are found in Figure 8. The answers to the open-ended question eight can be found in Figure 9.

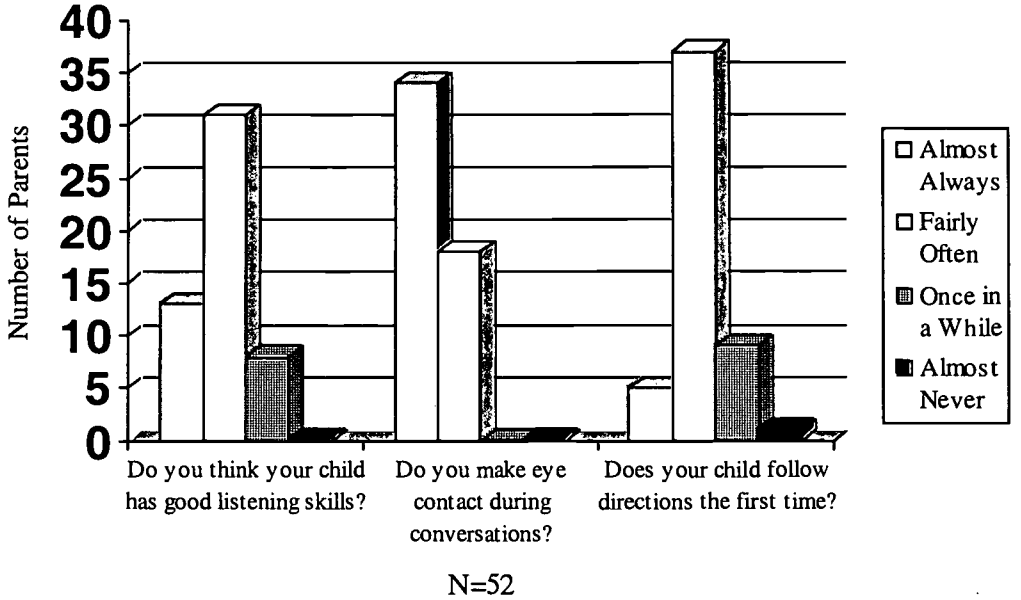


Figure 1: Parent survey, Questions 1-3, August 2002

The responses to the parent survey were similar to what the teacher researchers predicted. Thirty-one of the 52 parents replied their children have good listening skills *fairly often.* Thirty-seven of the 52 parents responded that their children follow directions the first time *fairly often.* The teacher researchers expected these scores to be escalated in the family unit when a child is receiving directions in a one child to one adult situation.

The importance of making direct eye contact was noted by 34 out of 52 parents who responded, *almost always*, to the question, "Do you make eye contact during conversation?" The teacher researchers noted the listening skills modeled at school are also being reinforced at home.

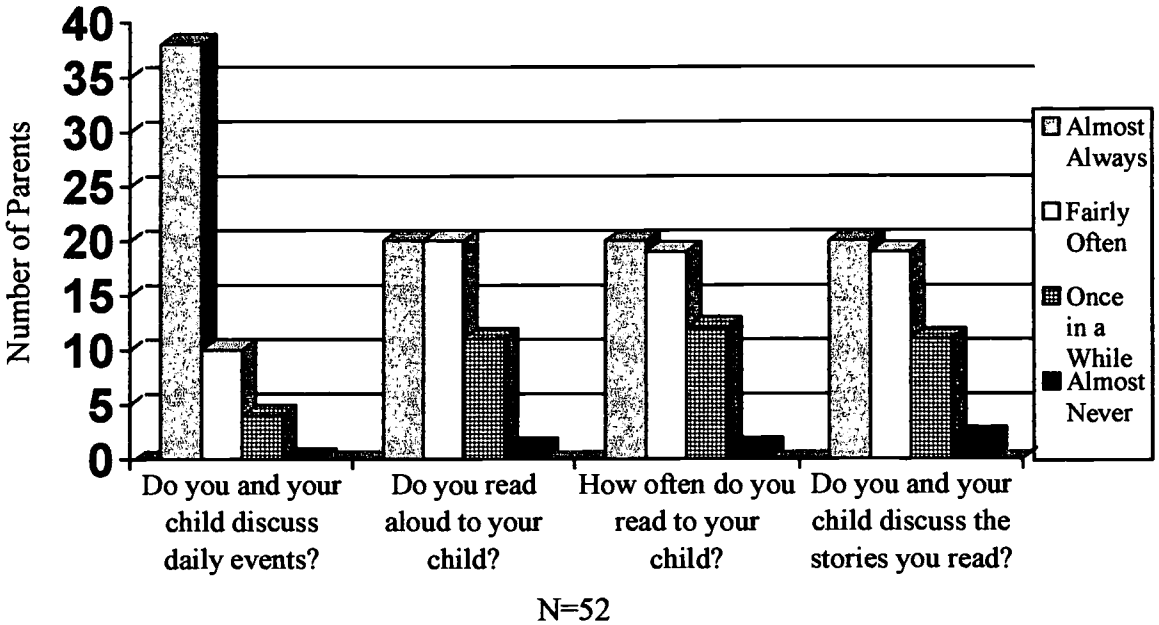


Figure 2: Parent Survey, Questions 4-7, August 2002

The surveys showed that 48 out of 52 parents discussed daily events with their children. Forty parents responded that they *almost always* or *fairly often* read aloud to their children. Data supports that literature is important to the families of this student population with 39 parents replying that they *almost always* or *fairly often* read to their children and discuss the stories they have read.

Table1

Parent Survey Question 8, August, 2002

Parent Survey Question 8	Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in A While	Almost Never
Do you finish your child's sentences?	**0**	**3**	**25**	**24**

N=52

Teacher researchers noted that 49 of the 52 parents surveyed finish their child's sentences. This may give those children the feeling they are not being allowed to express themselves fully, and that their thoughts are not valued by their parents. When parents interrupt

their children they model poor listening skills. Children come to the classroom with these learned behaviors.

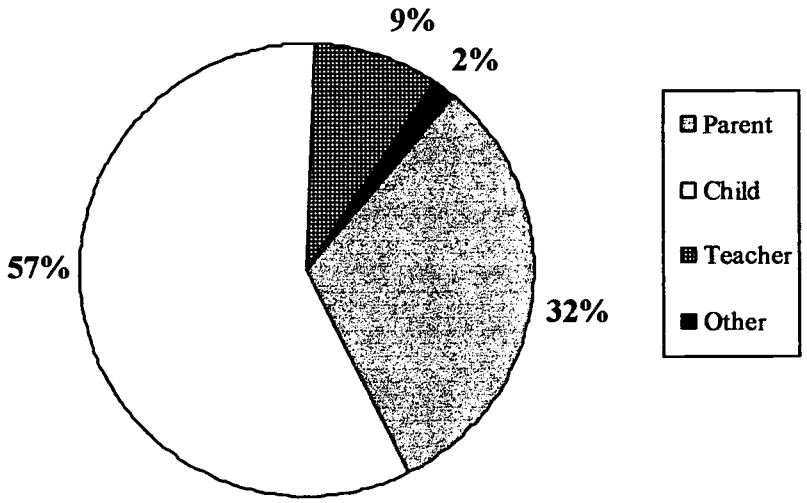


Figure 3: Student Survey Question 9, "Who listens to you the best?" August 2002

In table 1, teacher researchers saw evidence that the majority of the parents were, at some time, finishing their children's sentences. This would help explain the results in Figure 3 where 57% of the students responded from the student survey that it was another child who listened to them the best instead of their parents or teachers. This could suggest that adults do not always give children the time to complete their thoughts. Perhaps this is a reflection of our busy lifestyles. Two percent of the students responding even said a pet was the best listener.

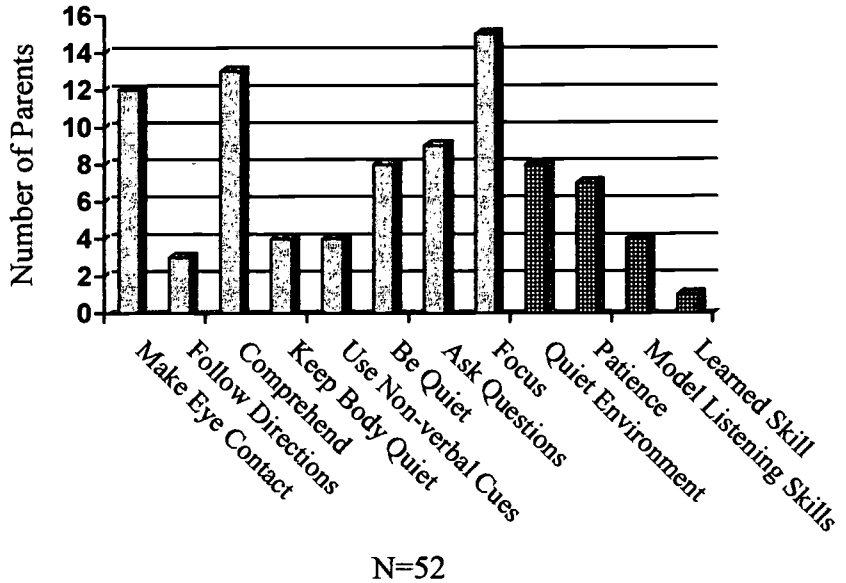


Figure 4: Parent Survey Question 9, "What makes a good listener?" August 2002

Of the 52 parents surveyed, the teacher researchers received a variety of responses from the open-ended question, "What makes a good listener?" Most parents had multiple responses to the question. The teacher researchers discovered the question was interpreted two different ways. Some parents' answers dealt with what good listening skills look like, while other parents' interpretation of the question addressed how to encourage good listening.

When tabulating results of the survey, teacher researchers found that parent responses could be charted onto the same graph, which designates the two different interpretations. The light colored towers represent what good listening looks like and the dark towers represent how to encourage good listening.

The 52 parents surveyed responded to the question, "What makes a good listener?" Fifteen parents wrote focusing on what the speaker is saying, 13 responded comprehending what is being said, and 12 replied making eye contact were the key characteristics of a good listener.

Nine parents deemed other qualities necessary for a good listener were asking appropriate questions; eight parents stated being quiet, four mentioned using non-verbal cues and keeping a quiet body, and three parents answered with following directions.

The teacher researchers believed that some parents interpreted the question to mean how to encourage a good listener. Eight of those parents responded providing a quiet environment, seven mentioned demonstrating patience, and four indicated modeling good listening habits as ways to make a good listener. One parent even suggested that listening is a learned skill, which should be taught.

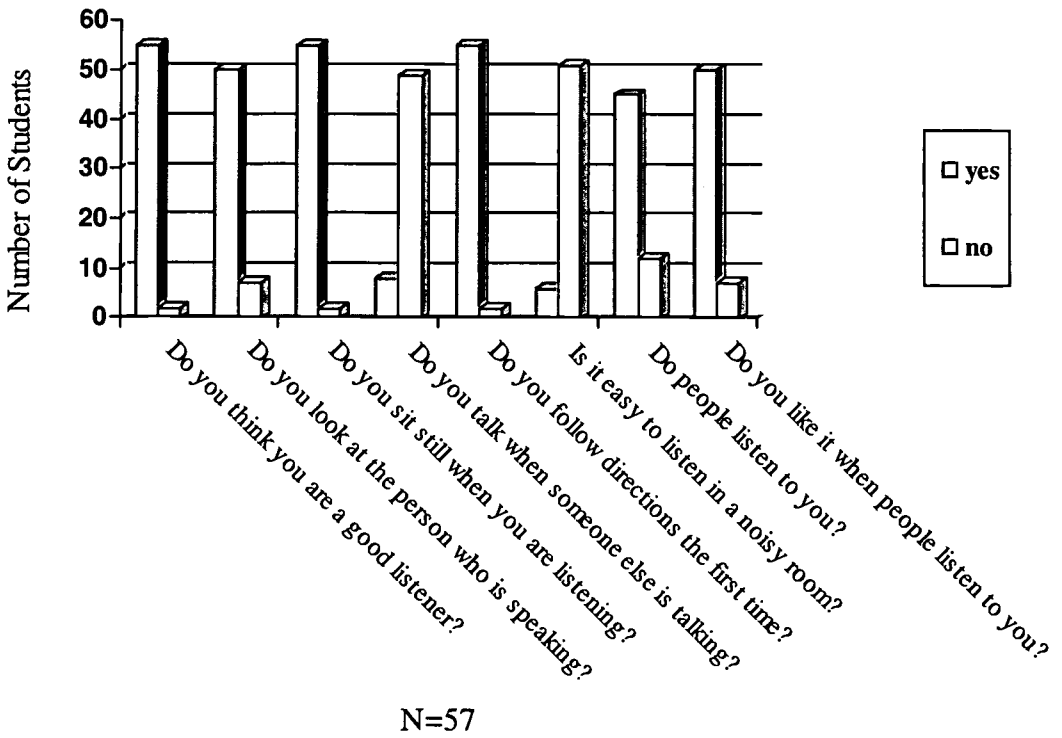


Figure 5: Student Survey Questions 1-8, August 2002

The responses on this graph show the students as perfect listeners. Out of the 57 students, only two responded they were not good listeners, they do not sit still when listening, and they do not follow directions the first time. The remaining students indicated that they always demonstrated appropriate listening skills. Fifty students replied that they looked at the person who was speaking and 49 responded they did not talk when someone was speaking. Through observations, the teacher researchers have noticed that this is not a true picture of the subjects in the three classrooms surveyed. The kindergarten students were interviewed individually, while the second grade students completed their surveys independently and turned them in directly to the teacher researcher. Perhaps this was the reason for such a high percentage of faultless listeners. The children possibly were not being honest with their answers, but were saying what they thought the teacher researchers wanted to hear.

The survey indicated that six students found it was easy to listen in a noisy room; however 51 students stated it was difficult to listen in a noisy room. Twelve students stated that people do not listen to them. The teacher researchers were surprised when seven responded they do not really like it when people listen to them.

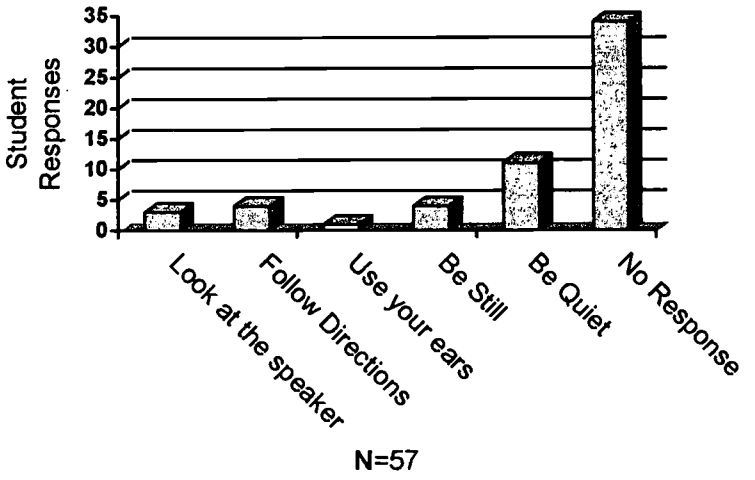


Figure 6: Student Survey, Question 10, "What is a good listener?" August 2002

Question 10 on the student survey was an open-ended question designed to stimulate thinking about listening skills. One student's response to the question was to use your ears. Three students replied that a good listener looks at the speaker. Four students cited following directions and being still were the important elements of good listening. Eleven children answered that being quiet was essential. An overwhelming majority, 34 out of 57 students, was unable to describe any specific characteristics of a good listener. This confirmed the need for direct instruction of listening skills.

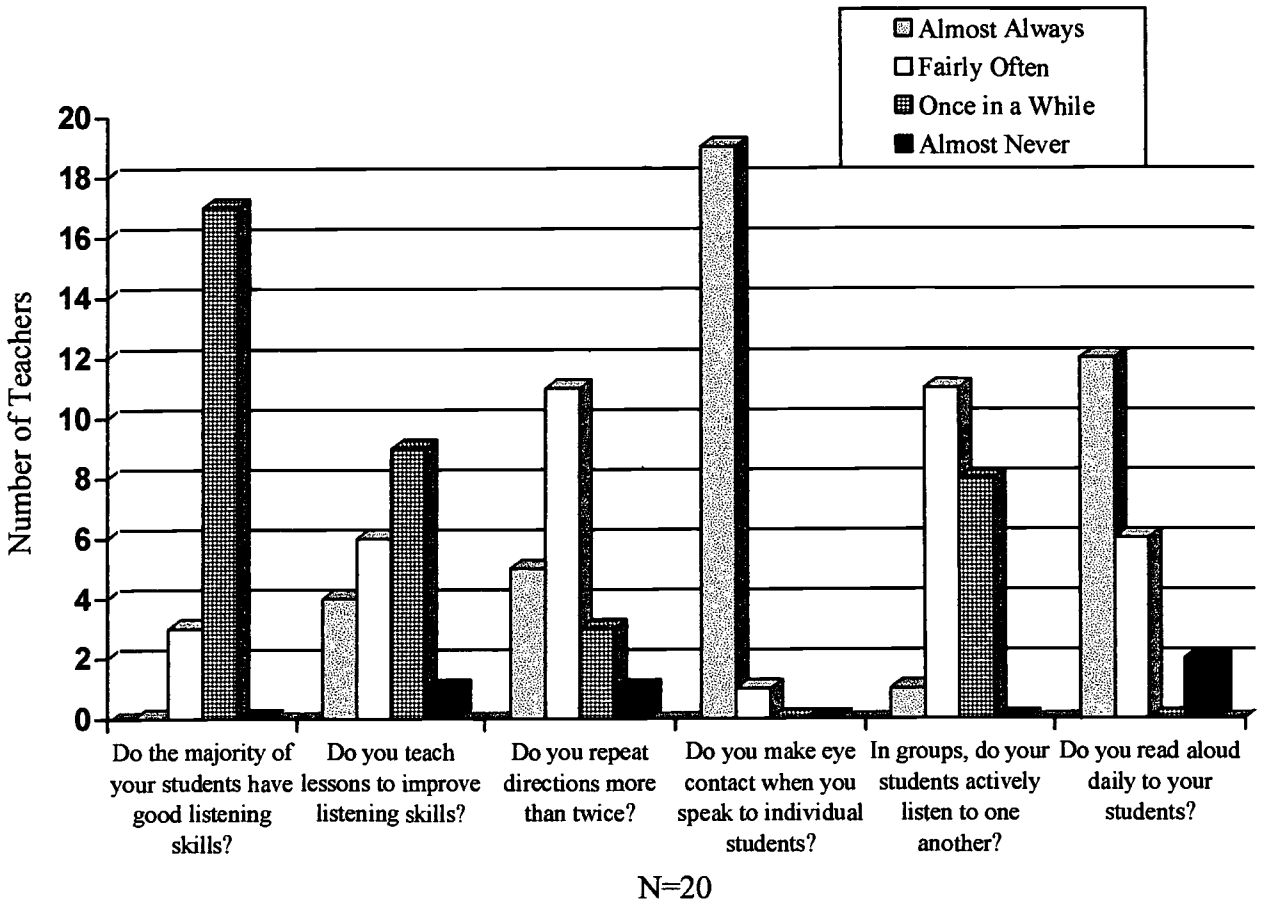


Figure 7: Teacher Survey, Questions 1-6, August 2002

Information obtained from the teacher survey determined that 17 out of 20 teachers stated the majority of students do not have good listening skills. The survey also indicated that 10 out of 20 teachers are not teaching listening strategies. Hoag (1996) states that listening skills would improve through direct instruction. Sixteen out of 20 teachers responded that it was necessary to repeat directions more then twice. The need to repeat directions multiple times takes away from learning opportunities, as students may not feel the need to be responsible for listening the first time when they know the directions will be repeated.

The survey showed 11 out of 20 teachers believed that students listened actively to each other fairly often. Eight teachers responded that students actively listened to one another once in a while. Only one teacher felt students almost always listen to other students. These responses seemed to show that the majority of students could benefit from direct instruction of listening strategies.

The survey indicated the teachers understood the importance of making eye contact when speaking to individual students. Nineteen out of 20 stated that they almost always make eye contact. It is important to model this listening behavior, as stated by Smith (1998) and Jalongo (1995), to encourage good listening habits.

Eighteen teachers out of the 20 who responded to the survey stated they read aloud to their students daily. Two teachers did not read aloud and responded NA (Not Applicable). The teacher researchers determined the subject matter of these two teachers did not lend itself to reading aloud.

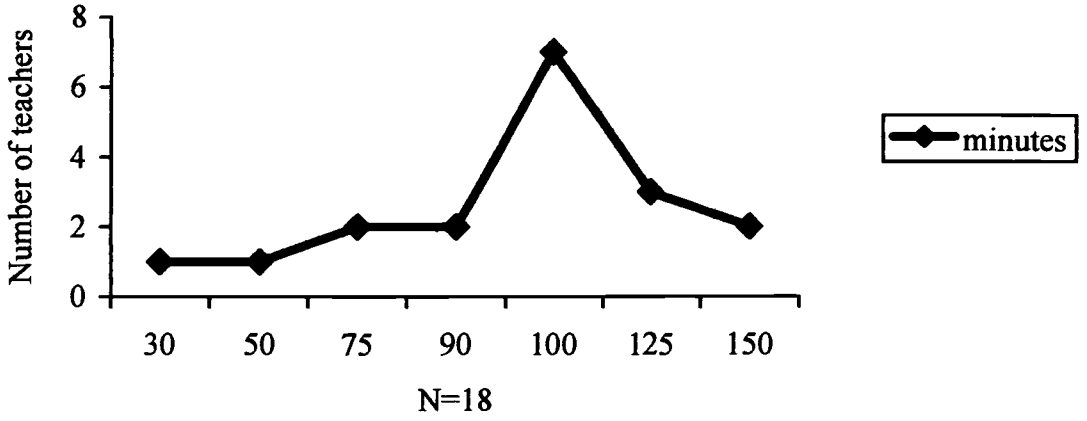


Figure 8: Teacher Survey, Question 7, "How many minutes do you read aloud to your students weekly?" August 2002

Of the teachers that read aloud to their students on a weekly basis, 12 of the 18 read over 100 minutes per week. Reading aloud is an enjoyable, non-threatening way of teaching children to listen, concentrate, and follow a story sequence. Reading aloud is essential for the improvement of children's listening skills (Fox, 2001; Trelease, 1990).

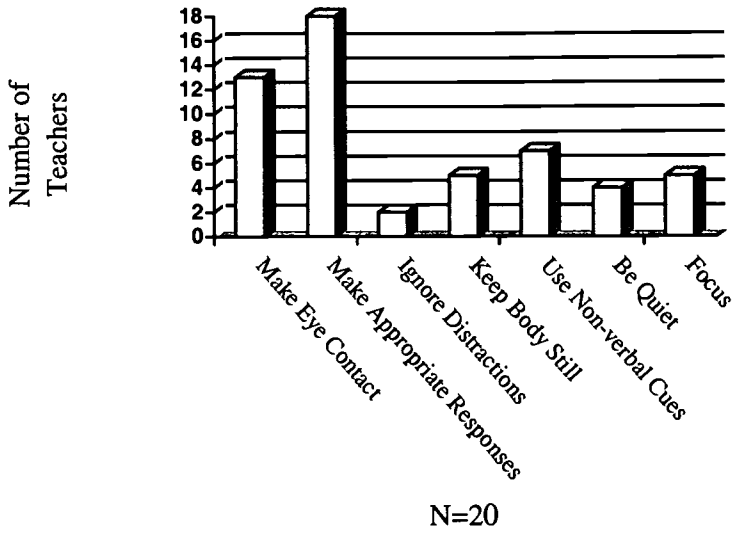


Figure 9: Teacher Survey, Question 8, "In your mind, what makes a good listener?" August 2002

The responses from the teacher survey for the open-ended question about characteristics of a good listener were divided into seven listening behaviors. Eighteen teachers indicated that making appropriate responses and 13 cited that maintaining eye contact were two essential components of good listening. Seven teachers noted other behaviors, which demonstrated good listening skills, included using non-verbal cues such as leaning forward, nodding the head, and using appropriate facial expressions. Five teachers responded that keeping the body still and focusing on what is being said were essential to good listening. Four teachers mentioned being quiet, and two cited ignoring distractions as other good listening qualities.

Probable Causes

Listening is not simply following directions or gathering information, but it is the ability to listen critically. Critical listeners develop an awareness of their own thoughts, ideas, and values. A student's inability to understand class material is often thought to be the result of

learning problems. Nevertheless, inadequate listening skills are frequently to blame (Myers, 2001).

The literature suggests that the most significant cause of poor listening skills in students is the lack of direct instruction. Students spend between 50 and 75% of the school day listening (Miles, 2002; Myers, 2001; Smith, 1998). In 1951, the "Father of Listening," Ralph Nichols (as cited in Hoag, 1996), found that our educational training was upside down. He reported that educators spend the majority of time teaching reading and writing, while the skills used the most, which are listening and speaking, get very little instruction. Madelyn Burley-Allen, author of *Listening: the Forgotten Skill*, and a prominent member of the International Listening Association, discovered that students have 12 years of direct instruction in writing, an average of 7 years in reading, up to 2 years in speaking, and less than ½ year in listening (1995).

There is a misconception that listening is the same as hearing. This leads people to believe active listening is instinctive. As a result, educators make little effort to develop listening skills and unknowingly neglect the most fundamental component of communication, thereby denying students educational development and increased self-awareness (Burley-Allen, 1995). From preschool to graduate school, students are expected to listen more, without learning how to listen. No one expects a child to come to school knowing how to read, yet students are expected to understand what to do when the teacher tells them to listen. They do not truly know when to listen and how to focus on important information.

Educators agree it is necessary to teach the foundation skill of listening. Nevertheless, there are few training experiences, which focus on listening strategies. It is estimated that fewer than two percent of teachers have had formal instruction with listening concepts (Jalongo, 1995). Without proper tools or clear goals, teachers are uncertain how to teach listening. Reading,

math, science and social studies have had extensive, ongoing curriculum development. Nevertheless, no widely accepted model for listening has been developed to use in the classroom in the last 15-20 years (Hyslop & Tone, 1988). "When the foundation skills are ignored or taken for granted, all subsequent learning is affected" (Hoag, 1996, p. 3).

Without listening there is no communication. Busy lives and intrusions such as television, video games, and computers diminish the time that should be spent listening (Schilling, 2002; Fox, 2001; Hoag, 1996; Trelease, 1995). Electronic media takes priority over conversation, dialogue and active listening. The average child entering school has already seen nearly 6,000 hours of television (Trelease, 1995). Television is a passive listening experience, requiring little or no thinking (Jalongo, 1996). It discourages creativity, visual imagery, and the development of responsive listening habits. The eight-minute segments between commercials foster a short attention span (Trelease, 1995). This makes it more difficult for children to focus for extended periods of time and makes it harder for teachers to teach without a "song and dance."

According to Brent & Anderson (1994), active listening occurs when students understand what they hear and act upon the message. Children need to be given more exposure to activities such as music, conversation, family stories, poetry, and rhymes, all of which encourage active listening. Without these verbal activities, children's imaginations suffer through lack of use. Children will be less likely to ask relevant questions, form ideas, and generate feedback.

Reading aloud to children makes them active participants when they are able to create pictures in their minds and engage in discussion of the material. When listening, children need to visualize what they are hearing (Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992). "As children listen to the

words they have to use their brains actively to create their own pictures, thereby developing the all important imagination" (Fox, 2001, p.135).

A wide variety of listening barriers prohibit the students from enhancing their listening skills. In the classroom, educators do not provide enough opportunities for children to listen to other children (Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1995; Paley, 1990). Appreciative listening will not be easily mastered until children are given the opportunity to share thoughts and messages with their peers and children of other grades or abilities.

Many people have the mistaken belief that listening skills will develop without interventions such as modeling and direct instruction. Good listening behaviors such as eye contact, body posture, and giving total attention to the speaker are not routinely practiced in the classroom. Adults do not always know when to listen rather than talk, how to recognize non-verbal cues, and to listen to what is not being said. Students, then, do not always feel their message is important if adults do not model good listening skills (Jalongo, 1996). These students can become so preoccupied with getting a turn to speak that they sometimes quit listening altogether.

Other barriers that limit an effective listening environment are physical, psychological, emotional and external conditions (Matson, 2000; Schilling, 1999; Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1996). Physical distractions include bathroom needs, fatigue, hunger, hearing impairment, or illness. Psychological conditions consist of an inability to focus, short attention span, lack of interest, and differing intellectual ability. Emotional barriers include worry, anger, grief, depression, fear, prejudice, and individual bias. External distractions consist of excessive noise, poor lighting, improper room temperature or ventilation, and interruptions. Speakers with language differences

such as regional dialect, culture, rate of speech, and volume can also create another barrier to effective listening.

Research indicates that students need a purpose for listening (Zaremba, 2001; Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1995; Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992; Galvin, 1988). When teachers do not point out in advance what is important, students do not always focus on the content of what is stated. "Children are more motivated to listen when they know that they will be expected to perform a specific, interesting task" (Jalongo, 1995, p.15). Purposes for listening include getting information, making decisions, developing thinking skills, forming attitudes, recognizing danger, and enjoyment (Hoag, 1996).

Listening involves a complicated mental process, which is more developed than hearing. It requires discipline and energy. Listening is a skill, which needs to be taught. The development of effective listening skills directly influences the student's ability to read, write, speak, and reason. Therefore, teaching listening strategies must not be disregarded in the education of children. Unfortunately, to the majority of educators, the teaching of listening strategies is superfluous when compared to the importance of teaching reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. Until educators find the time, see the importance, and have the tools necessary to teach listening strategies, all curricular subjects will suffer because students miss critical elements of what is being presented. Improving listening skills and teaching listening strategies should be priorities in the education of every child.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Listening is twice as hard as speaking. Perhaps that is why humans have two ears and only one mouth. The ability to listen is the first language skill to develop in children. They listen before speaking, reading, or writing. In a significant 1926 study about the analysis of daily communication use by P. T. Rankin of the University of Michigan (as cited in Hoag, 1996) people spent 70% of their day listening and speaking. Nearly three-quarters of a century later, students continue to spend between 50 and 75% of the school day listening (Miles, 2002; Myers, 2001; Smith, 1998).

Learning to listen and listening to learn are vital to lifelong success and should be directly taught. Many educators assume the skill of listening comes naturally, whereas research indicates that direct instruction of listening strategies will improve children's listening abilities and will promote confidence in their communication skills. The development of these skills is imperative for students to become successful in school and life (Fulk, 1999; Smith, 1998; Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1995; Hyslop & Tone, 1988). "The best way to improve the listening skills of children is through strategies and activities that provide success and enjoyment" (Hoag, 1996, p.53).

Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty (1992) believe developing listening skills is extremely important. These educators feel students must have many opportunities to develop their listening

awareness and discover the importance of focusing on what they hear. Once students become critical listeners they will be more apt to correctly interpret the messages they receive and analyze the information. This will lead to a greater understanding of the role listening plays in the thinking process. Student listening is always affected by numerous components such as prior experiences, personal interests and emotions, and individual value systems. "Listening then becomes a strong metacognitive process because students recognize that listening enables them to effectively organize data and create informational connections" (Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992, p.244).

Educators realize the importance of good listening skills in the process of communication with others. The state emphasizes the importance of teaching specific listening techniques, which will enable the children to receive and understand messages and clarify what they hear. The State Board of Education's learning standard, which addresses listening states, "Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations" (1997, p.10). Benchmarks for this goal address students in early elementary through late high school. Areas of concentration at all levels include an understanding of the listening process, paraphrasing what is said, interpreting verbal and non-verbal messages, and following oral instructions.

Studies by Myers (2001), Hoag (1996), Costa, Bellanca, & Fogarty (1992), Bellanca & Fogarty (1991) indicate a definite need to teach listening strategies through direct instruction techniques and provide a variety of interventions. These interventions may be incorporated into all curriculums, regardless of age, ability level, or subject area. It is important to teach appropriate listening behaviors directly, such as keep eyes on the speaker, speak at appropriate times, demonstrate correct body language, concentrate on what is being said, and tune out distractions. In the classroom, visual aides such as listening posters, bulletin boards, and T-

charts serve as reminders for appropriate listening behaviors. Bellanca & Fogarty (1991) suggest constructing with the students an "Attentive Listening T-Chart," to clarify appropriate listening skills. The T-chart consists of two columns, one for what attentive listening "sounds like," and one for what attentive listening "looks like" (p.80).

The instructor must model appropriate listening behaviors. Adults can teach children how to listen by being good listeners themselves and by demonstrating good listening strategies (Smith, 1998; Jalongo, 1995; Brent & Anderson, 1994; Bredekamp, 1987). These strategies include making eye contact with the speaker, leaning toward the speaker, listening patiently, and paraphrasing. Maintaining eye contact and leaning toward the speaker show the child that the listener is involved in the conversation and not preoccupied. When patient listening is modeled, young children, with limited vocabulary and experience in talking, are allowed time to express themselves. Children who are given time to finish their thoughts feel respected and encouraged to communicate. Paraphrasing what a child has said validates his thoughts, feelings, and opinions. "Kids don't care how much we know until they know how much we care" (Jalongo, 1995, p.14).

Visualization, the ability to create pictures in the mind, is an often-overlooked listening strategy. As children are listening, they should be encouraged to create mental images of what they hear (Hoag, 1996; Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992; Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991; Galvin, 1988). This skill should be practiced daily through commercial and teacher-made activities and integrated into the curriculum. An example of enhancing visualization is the "Draw This" activity (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p. 82). Pairs of students work together, sitting back-to-back. The first partner describes in detail an assigned geometric figure. The other partner will demonstrate good listening strategies by drawing the figure without seeing it or asking questions.

Roles are reversed with a new geometric figure. Visualization can be an effective tool, especially with children who experience difficulty in learning.

Reading to children on a daily basis prepares them for success in school better than any other activity (Hall & Williams, 2000). Findings indicate that the use of children's books and stories encourages students to create visual images in their minds. These images allow the child to remember the characters, sequence, and the events of the story with greater accuracy (Miles, 2002; Hall & Williams, 2000; Stull, 1997; Hoag, 1996; Trelease, 1996; Raines & Isbell, 1989; Aiex, 1988;). "Using literature will help students develop an awareness of the beauty in the rhythm and sound of language, and how to visualize characters, settings, moods and situations while listening" (Hoag, 1996, p.53). Reading aloud to children enhances learning and improves listening skills. By using expression, intonation, different dialects, body language, and eye contact, the reader involves the listener in the story. Students enjoy hearing literature, which is beyond their independent reading level. This activity will foster increased receptive and expressive vocabulary, nurture a sense of humor, develop cultural awareness, and provide common experiences. Reading aloud is an enjoyable, non-threatening way of teaching children to listen, concentrate, and follow a story sequence. Jim Trelease, motivational speaker and well-known advocate of children's literature, states, "Reading aloud is not a frill, it's an essential" (1996, p.56).

Storytelling is another use of children's literature, which will develop children's listening skills. The teacher can model the retelling of favorite stories or invent an original story for the students. When given an opportunity, students will, in turn, tell stories to classmates; thus allowing children an opportunity to listen to each other. Children should spend as much time listening to one another as to the teacher (Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1995; Paley, 1990).

Research indicates a variety of storytelling strategies to improve listening skills. One strategy for storytelling is to make a chain story (Hoag, 1996, p. 82). For this activity a student begins a story by telling the setting, time and characters. Other students will need to listen critically as they will each take a turn to extend the story. A "book talk" is another approach to storytelling. After reading a book, students choose three to five favorite passages to share orally with classmates, without giving away the ending of the story. "Buddy reading" is a strategy in which two students share a book. One student reads while another listens. When the first reader finishes reading a passage, roles are reversed. They discuss the sequence, characters and main events of the story. Using a cooperative learning activity called "tell/retell" also involves a pair of students. One student will tell a personal experience while the other student listens closely and summarizes what was said (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991, p. 78). Other opportunities for students to listen and share with each other can be found through puppet shows, taped stories, dramatic play, and creative drama (Myers, 2002).

Children become better listeners when they have a purpose for listening. Having a specific reason for listening increases the student's ability to understand the message, make pertinent comments, and ask relevant questions (Zaremba, 2001; Hoag, 1996; Jalongo, 1995; Costa, Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992; Galvin, 1988). Students should be given directions on how to listen for key points such as who, what, when, where, why, and how. This is important when listening to directions, presentations, or stories. To encourage the proper sequence of events when listening, students should be taught to listen for "clue words" such as "first," "second," "next," "then," "before," "after," and "finally." These words signal that important information will be coming next (Zaremba, 2001).

The commercially produced videocassette recording by D. Zaremba (2001) entitled *The Sharp Wits in the Mind Boggling Mystery of Listening with Your Mind* can be used with second through fifth grade students. The student characters in this fictionalized tape need to listen to oral directions to hear the ingredients for a cookie recipe. The children's inability to listen correctly the first time produces a poor product. After reviewing the skills of listening for clue words, focusing, taking notes, and summarizing the directions, the students were successful. This video shows students the reason for purposeful listening.

An example of a listening activity to show purpose could be a listening walk. Children walk silently through the classroom, building, or outside to listen for specific sounds. All students will be actively involved in the listening walk and will share the common experience. When students return, they will reflect on what they heard and together write a class experience story (Stull, 1997, p.155). By having a purpose to listen, students become active listeners and develop into more engaged learners.

Another teaching strategy to promote good listening skills is to teach relevant questioning. M. R. Jalongo (1995, p.14) suggests a "Show and Ask" period, in which a child shares an object with the class, and the other students asks questions to find out more about it. After modeling and guided practice with the teacher, the children will ultimately learn the difference between a question and a comment.

Improvement of listening skills occurs when students are given direct instruction and observe well-modeled listening techniques. Through the use of visualization and children's literature, students find a purpose for listening. It is imperative that these strategies be practiced over and over until they become automatic (Myers, 2001; Buck, 1999). Children who actively listen will have good communication skills. They will develop an awareness of their own

thoughts, ideas, and values. An active listener feels involved and motivated in the learning process and, through that, gains self-confidence. "When teachers build children's listening skills, they are making an important contribution that will serve the child well, not only during early childhood but also throughout life" (Jalongo, 1996, p.26).

Project Objective and Processes

As a result of these targeted strategies, during August 2002 to December 2002, the selected kindergarten and second grade students will increase their listening skills, as measured by surveys, student checklists, anecdotal records, student portfolios, and teacher observations. In order to accomplish the objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Listening skills will be taught through direct instruction.
2. Proper listening skills will be modeled in daily instruction.
3. Materials to improve student imagery will be developed.
4. Students will improve their ability to summarize what they hear.
5. Specific questions will be utilized to help students focus and find the purpose for listening.
6. Curricular units will be developed incorporating children's literature to improve listening comprehension.

Action Plan

Week 1-16

- Model appropriate listening skills
- Reinforce the purpose for listening
- Weekly teacher journal entries/anecdotal records (Appendix D)
- "Ready to Listen" checklist (Appendix E)
- Use children's literature to foster listening skills (Appendix H)
- Kindergarten Surprise Box

  One child brings an item from home hidden in the surprise box. Through questioning techniques and listening to responses the other children determine what is inside.

Week 1

- Meet with faculty and explain listening survey
- Parent listening survey sent home
- Interview each student using student interview survey
- Kindergartners will listen and be able to recite the words to "The Rules for Listening" song by Mr. Al (Rasso & Fite, 1996).
- Second graders will be introduced to the rules for listening, using the "Give Me Five" poster as a visual reinforcement (Appendix G).

Week 2

- Collect data from teacher, parent, student surveys

- Introduce basic listening strategies with researchers' skit

  Strategies include eyes on speaker, voices off, hands still, feet quiet, ears listening.

- Read literature piece *Even That Moose Won't Listen to Me* to reinforce the purpose for listening (Alexander, 1988).

- "Picture This" Activity 1 (Appendix F)

  Researcher reads a five-part description of a person, place, or thing. Students draw a visual image after listening to description. Second grade students will hear description once; kindergarten children will hear description twice. These drawings will be scored with a rubric and stored in students' portfolios.

Week 3

- Kindergarten students take a walk to listen to sounds going on around them. Results will be written on sentence strips and bound into a classroom book, which the students will illustrate.

- Second grade students will view the video "The Mind Boggling Mystery of Listening with Your Mind" (Zaremba, 2001).

Week 4

- "Picture This" Activity 2

- Kindergarten will hear story *Nobody Listens to Andrew* (Guilfoile, 1957)

- Second graders begin recorded listening project

  Students will use descriptive language to tell the story from the wordless picture book, *Deep in the Forest* (Turkle, 1976). They will talk into a tape recorder, which will later be played for the kindergartners in listening centers.

- Kindergarten teachers model how to tell a story using the wordless picture book *Good Dog, Carl* (Day, 1989).
- Introduce the game "Ears to You."

  Once oral directions are given, the teacher says "Ears to you, (child's name)" Child must retell directions. This activity will continue daily through Week 16.

Week 5

- Second graders will complete recorded listening project
- Kindergartners play a ball toss game

  One person tells one thing about himself (favorite food, etc.) and tosses the ball to another player. That player must tell the first player's name and response, then add their own response, and then throw the ball to another player. The game continues until each person has a turn. This activity reinforces the "keep eyes on speaker" listening strategy and listening comprehension.

Week 6

- "Picture This" Activity 3
- Kindergartners will illustrate the second grade recorded story from Week 4 and 5.
- Second graders will ask 20 yes or no questions to guess the "Antique of the Week" and hear the story *The Halloween Pumpkin Smasher* (St.George, 1978).

Week 7

- Researchers perform skit "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" from *Aesop's Fables* (Untermeyer, 1965). This will allow students the opportunity to model good listening skills during a live performance.

- Buddy readings

  Second graders will share stories with a classmate. When one child finishes reading, partners will retell the story and what they like about the story.

- Guest speakers come to classroom – students will demonstrate good listening skills

Week 8

- "Picture This" Activity 4
- "Listen and Do" activity

  Kindergartners will follow oral taped directions to complete worksheets.

- Write an ending to a story

  Second grade students listen to a story with the idea that they will need to write (or draw) their own endings.

Week 9

- "Going on a Treasure Hunt" (Ties in with alphabet unit for X)

  Clues are hidden around the room or school. One person reads the clue to the group and the others determine where to go for the next clue. X marks the spot.

  Read story *Pirate School* (Dubowski, 1996)

Week 10

- Picture This" Activity 5
- Kindergartners practice telling a wordless picture story *Carl Goes to Daycare* (Day, 1993)

- Cut and fold story

  While the researcher is telling a story, she is cutting a paper. At the end of the story the paper is unfolded to reveal a picture, which would help the students remember the sequence of the story.

Week 11

- Kindergarten Teddy Bear Unit

  Stories about teddy bears will be used to enhance listening skills by retelling with puppets, dramatic play, illustrations, and manipulatives.

- Second grade book talks

  Students will demonstrate good listening skills while one classmate shares a favorite book. Each student will have a chance to share a favorite book.

Week 12

- "Picture This" Activity 6
- Cooperative learning activity – chain stories

  Researcher tells a story prompt. In small groups, students are assigned parts to build a story (character, setting, problem, ending, retelling). Students return to large group to share completed story.

Week 13

- Apron story

  The teacher uses an apron with pockets and story pieces. A student pulls an object from the pocket and uses it to retell the story or make up a new story.

- "Listen and Do" activity

Week 14

- "Picture This" Activity 7
- The Five Senses Unit listening activities

  Children listen to recorded sounds from everyday life (sneezing, baby crying, etc.) and match with corresponding pictures.

Week 15

- Researchers present skit from children's literature

  Students demonstrate improved listening and comprehension skills
- "Listen and Do" activity

Week 16

- "Picture This" Activity 8
- Student post surveys (Appendix B)

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, teacher observation, anecdotal records, and student checklists will be implemented. Interviews with the students will be held as part of the assessment process. Scoring rubrics will be developed to assess the "Picture This" activities and will be stored in student portfolios.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the targeted students' listening skills and to make students more aware of how to listen properly. A 16-week intervention was implemented to effect the desired changes. Listening skills were taught through direct instruction, proper listening skills were modeled daily, materials to improve student imagery were developed, strategies were developed to increase students' ability to summarize what they hear, specific questions were asked to help students focus and understand the purpose for listening, and children's literature was used to implement the intervention.

The same intervention plan was followed in three classrooms, with activities adapted to the different grade levels and time restraints. Classrooms A and B were kindergarten classes which met for a full day, five days a week. Classroom C was a second grade library fine arts class which met for a 45-minute period, one day a week.

Strategies for good listening skills were modeled and taught with songs, skits, and visual aides. The strategies included five cues: eyes on speaker, voices off, hands still, feet quiet, and ears listening. A poster entitled "Give Me Five" showed a hand with one listening cue on each finger and was placed in each classroom as a visual reminder. Other teaching methods included

apron stories, in which a story was built using clues drawn from a many-pocketed apron, and the use of items that could be pointed to or held in one's hands, called manipulatives. One special story-telling technique was a cut and fold story, in which a teacher told a story while folding and cutting a paper to correspond with the story sequence. The end result revealed a surprise, which helped to hold the students' attention and provided a focus for listening.

Proper listening skills were modeled by the teacher researchers on a daily basis. The children practiced these skills in the classroom, at assemblies, and with visiting classroom speakers. The teacher researchers were to record improvements in individual skills weekly with a "Ready to Listen" checklist. The checklist was difficult to implement due to time restraints and proved to be ineffective in providing useful data for the intervention. The teacher researchers determined that teacher observations and anecdotal records provided more accurate and specific information about students' listening skills.

"Picture This," an intervention used to improve student imagery, was developed by the teacher researchers. The activity was designed so that students would listen to a verbal description, form a visual image, and draw it on paper. The lesson was presented as a whole group experience in Classrooms A, B, and C once every two weeks in order to evaluate listening. A five-point rubric was designed to assess each student's listening skills through visual imagery. After the third "Picture This" activity, the teacher researchers determined the five-point rubric was not specific enough to measure all the details in the descriptions. A new, 10-point rubric was developed to measure more accurately the students' listening ability (Appendix F).

A strategy used to improve students' ability to summarize what they hear was called "Ears to You." When a verbal direction was given, the teacher researcher said, "Ears to you, (child's name)," and the child would restate what was said. This was also used with group

discussions to help children focus and apply good listening skills. Children's improvement was noted through teacher researcher observations. "Ears to You" was introduced in week four and continued daily through week 16. An "Ears to You" wand, created by the teacher researchers as a hook in week six, helped capture students' attention. The students in Classrooms A, B and C were also taught to summarize using wordless books. To further practice summarization skills, Classroom C taped a retelling of a wordless book, *Deep in the Forest* (Turkle, 1976), which was placed in the listening centers of Classrooms A and B.

Specific questions were utilized to help students focus and find the purpose for listening. In Classrooms A and B, before reading a selection, the teacher researchers taught the children to listen for the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" elements in the story. In Classroom C students were asked to listen for main character, setting, problem, and solution, which were age-appropriate terms. A cooperative learning activity of chain stories, where students build a story together, was also used in all three classrooms to promote the purpose for listening.

Other interventions used in Classrooms A and B to help students find the purpose for listening included a daily show-and-tell activity called "The Surprise Box." One child brought an item from home, hidden in the surprise box. Through questioning techniques and listening to responses, the other children determined what was inside. Another intervention was a "Listening Walk," where children listened for sounds around them and recorded them for a classroom book. A third intervention was a ball toss game, in which students were asked to listen to responses from other students, recall what was said, and give a new response. A fourth intervention, "Listen and Do," a commercially produced tape of directions with background noise, proved to be too confusing and frustrating for the kindergarten students and was discontinued after two attempts.

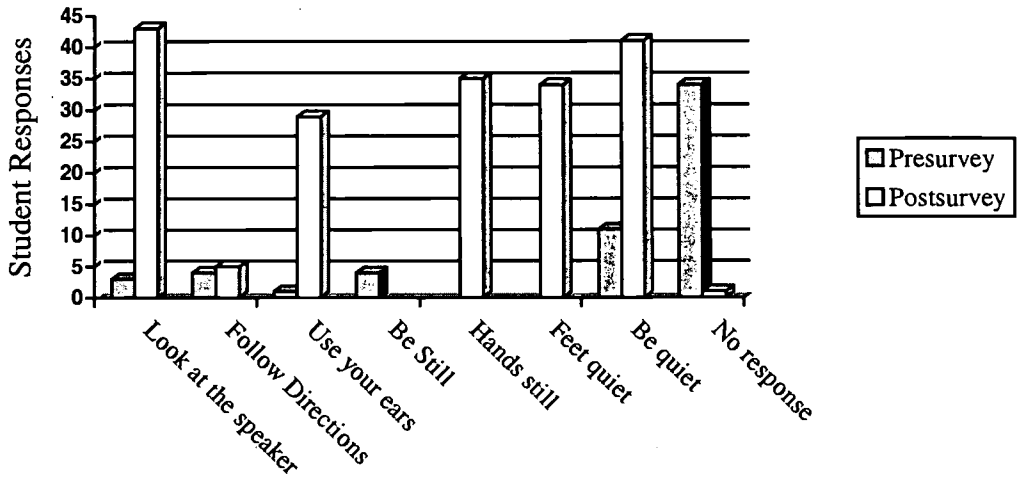
Classroom C had a question and listening activity called "Antique of the Week," which was introduced and implemented during the four-week study of historical fiction using *The Haloween Pumpkin Smasher (*St. George, 1978). Another intervention used to reinforce the purpose for listening was "Buddy Readings." Pairs of children read to each other and summarized the story to the class. In a third intervention in Classroom C, students listened to part of a story, *The Widow's Broom* (Van Allsburg, 1992), and wrote their own conclusions. A third intervention, "Book Talks," allowed children the opportunity to listen to other students give a description about a new book. The purpose for listening was also reinforced in the video "The Mind Boggling Mystery of Listening with Your Mind" (Zaremba, 2001).

Curricular units were developed incorporating children's literature to improve listening comprehension. Children's literature was used throughout the 16-week intervention to increase listening skills and provide a focus and purpose for listening. Classrooms A and B incorporated the curricular themes of pirates, teddy bears, and the five senses. Classroom C used an author study of Chris Van Allsburg's books (see annotated bibliography, Appendix H). Listening skills were assessed by student performance through retellings, dramatizations, illustrations, and creative writings.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the students' understanding of the characteristics of a good listener, a postsurvey was given at the end of the 16-week intervention (Appendix B). As in the presurvey, teacher researchers in Classroom A and B read the survey to the children individually and recorded the responses. The students in Classroom C read and completed the postsurvey independently. One student added his own response to question 7, "Do people listen to you?" with the answer, "They better." This appeared to the teacher researcher to be proof that he had

learned the importance of listening. The scores for questions one through nine did not change significantly and therefore were not graphed a second time. The responses for question 10 appear in Figure 10.



Presurvey N=57
Postsurvey N=56

Figure 10: Student Listening Survey, Question 10, "What is a good listener?" December 2002

The graph in Figure 10 shows a dramatic increase in the students' understanding of the characteristics of a good listener. During the intervention, the teacher researchers stressed the importance of keeping eyes on the speaker. In August, only three students were aware of this characteristic as compared to 43 students at the conclusion of the intervention. Other important traits that were stressed included using your ears, which increased from one student to 29 students, and being quiet, which improved from 11 students to 41 students. The teacher researchers noted that, in August, only four students responded that being still was important to being a good listener. In the postsurvey, the students had a more specific answer for being still. The children stated that being still meant keeping hands still and feet quiet with 35 students and

34 students, respectively. Prior to the intervention on listening strategies, 34 students had no knowledge of the characteristics of a good listener. The postsurvey indicated that only one student could not respond to the question. It appears from these increases that direct instruction and modeling of appropriate listening behaviors has had a positive effect upon the students in the three classrooms.

The kindergartners in Classrooms A and B learned the song, "The Rules for Listening" by Mr. Al (Rasso & Fite, 1996). The rhythm and repetition in this tune helped the children remember the important rules for listening. It was noted by the teacher researchers that all children participated, even those who were usually reluctant to sing.

The second graders in Classroom C had the "Give Me Five" poster with the rules for listening as a visual reminder. The phrase, "Give me five," spoken by the teacher researcher, was a verbal prompt for students to demonstrate good listening skills. Anecdotal records indicated that students responded to the phrase with immediate attention, even at the end of a long, hot day. Before administering the postsurvey, the "Give Me Five" poster was taken down. When asked to write the characteristics of good listening, several students looked to the blank wall and visualized the poster as they responded.

To increase students' ability to visualize what they hear, the intervention, "Picture This," was incorporated. Classrooms A and B completed eight "Picture This" activities. Classroom C, due to time restraints, completed six activities. The average scores for each classroom can be seen in Figure 11.

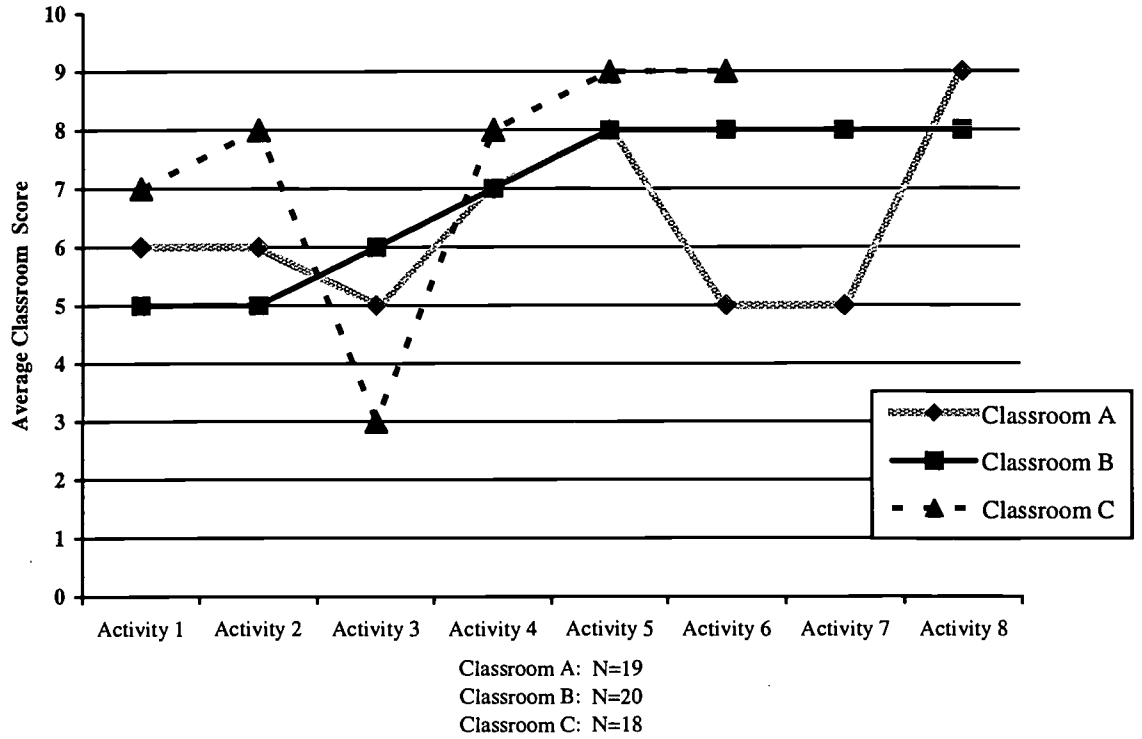


Figure 11: Average Scores from "Picture This"

The weekly average score for Classroom A ranged between five and nine in the "Picture This" activity. This lesson was always presented at the beginning of the day. Activity 6 and Activity 7 showed a decrease to five in student listening performance, which the teacher researcher attributed to the holiday distractions. By the third week in Classroom B, the teacher researcher also began implementing "Picture This" as the first activity in the morning instead of after lunch. The scores showed a consistent improvement from five to eight. In Classroom C, the students were doing this activity at the end of the day due to their schedule. One possible reason for Classroom C's significant decrease from eight to three in the score for Activity 3 was that it was administered by a substitute teacher. The graph shows that all classrooms improved students' average scores.

The teacher researchers observed that the children had an increased comfort level when performing "Picture This" tasks as the weeks progressed. In the first activity, one little kindergartner finished her entire picture before the directions were even given. Some had no idea of what to draw after the directions were repeated and turned in blank pieces of paper. As the weeks progressed, they became more aware of the sound of the teacher's voice, the vocabulary that was being used, and the expectations of the activity. The teacher researchers noted positive changes in students' behavior and performance. The students in Classroom B were also instructed, by Activity 3, to put their heads down and close their eyes while visualizing the description. This helped them concentrate and become more accurate in their drawings. It appeared to the teacher researcher that children could make the image in their minds more clearly with their eyes closed.

Teaching the children to ask specific questions helped students focus and find the purpose for listening in a variety of situations. Teacher researchers in Classrooms A and B observed the kindergartners asking specific questions about the "Surprise Box." Children learned to listen to other students' questions and responses in order to formulate their own questions. The students were able to transfer this strategy to other situations, such as when guest speakers visited the school. In former years, when young learners were asked if they had questions, their responses would often be long, personal stories. At the end of the intervention, more students were successfully asking appropriate questions.

Kindergartners in Classrooms A and B also participated in a listening walk to help focus on the purpose for listening. Students went on a walking tour of the school and grounds and were instructed to concentrate on the sounds they heard. Children concluded the walk by sitting in the school's butterfly garden with their eyes closed. Upon returning to the classroom, students

shared the sounds they had heard and wrote a class experience story. One kindergartner from Classroom B "heard" a green van with his eyes closed.

A strategy to reinforce "eyes on speaker" and listening comprehension in kindergarten was the ball toss game. In September, the teacher researcher in Classroom A had the students say their first names and the name of the person to whom they threw a ball, as a way of learning names and reinforcing "eyes on speaker." This was done in the gymnasium and proved to be noisy and not conducive to good listening. In Classroom B, the students were asked to give their name and a food that starts with the same letter when the ball was tossed. The children were to give their response and all previous responses. This was done in the classroom, and proved to be difficult for 20 students to focus, due to the length of the activity. The technique of putting the responses into a rhythm kept the children's attention and made it easier to remember each response. Nevertheless, this game was difficult for some students because their phonemic awareness was limited so early in the year.

All students were asked to summarize a story. Kindergartners summarized using wordless picture books, chain stories, and apron stories with manipulatives. Teacher researchers from Classrooms A and B noted that these use of manipulatives with the apron stories encouraged the students to follow the storyline when retelling. Without manipulatives, the students needed to be prompted by the teacher researchers with the terms "first, next, then, and last" when attempting to summarize a story. Once the children started using these terms, their retelling became much more detailed.

Students in Classroom C had a great deal of difficulty when attempting to retell a wordless picture book into a tape recorder. The teacher researcher observed that the second graders could not advance the storyline using only the illustrations. They were also very nervous

about being recorded, and this activity took much more time than originally anticipated. The teacher researcher found that the students required a great deal of prompting in order to expand their thoughts and include more details for the story. It was observed that students appeared to depend on the written text to advance the story and seemed more inhibited without words to guide them. Chain stories, however, proved to be a much more successful activity for retelling because students could make up their own stories and were not limited by the author/illustrator's perception of a story. This cooperative activity of adding on to a story that someone else had started provided wonderful opportunities for listening to each other.

The activity, "Ears to You," was extremely successful in all three classrooms. At the beginning of the intervention, the teacher researchers observed that the students were apprehensive about responding with a summarization of the directions. As the listening intervention continued, the students became more comfortable with the expectations of the activity. It was observed that the introduction of the "Ears to You" wand was a perfect hook to help the students focus on the directions. The students listened quietly for the directions to be completed in anticipation of being chosen to hold the wand while retelling the directions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The students of the targeted kindergarten and second grade classrooms showed an increase in listening skills. The teacher researchers think the intervention has provided the students with a greater awareness of the importance of good listening. The students have been taught the necessary strategies to apply specific listening behaviors, which provide a good foundation for learning. Analysis of the data showed improved student performance on listening activities. It was observed in all three classrooms that the amount of teaching time increased due to the increase in students' ability to listen, and less time was spent repeating the directions,

setting a better tone for the classroom. The teacher/ researchers observed that the students who had participated in the intervention were better able to focus on speakers at school assemblies when compared to the general population of the school.

There are some aspects of the intervention the teacher researchers would change. On the parent and teacher surveys, when asking the question, "What makes a good listener?" the teacher researchers were expecting responses that alluded to specific behaviors of a good listener. Instead, many parents misinterpreted the question and responded with hints to help a student become a better listener. Perhaps a better question would have been, "What characteristics does a good listener exhibit?" On the student survey, the question should have read, "What does a good listener do?" The student survey also had *yes* or *no* responses. The teacher researchers would change the choices to *always, sometimes*, and *never*, or leave it open-ended and allow students to fill in the blank. This would allow for honest answers and more informative data.

Another change the teacher researchers would implement would be one facet of the "Picture This" activity. As teachers, it was natural to increase the level of complexity with each new activity. Nevertheless, these activities should have been of equal difficulty to measure accurate growth over the 16-week intervention. Increasing the level of difficulty skewed the data results.

The teacher researcher in Classroom C determined that the children would have been more successful in recording the retelling of a wordless picture book with more specific instruction and modeling. The second graders had a great deal of difficulty with this activity due to their limited experiences with wordless books and their apprehension about the use of the tape recorder. The tape recorder should not have been introduced until the students were more comfortable with the story. Another challenge was the logistics of helping one child record

while monitoring the rest of the class. With the help of another adult, this activity would have been more easily completed.

The teacher researchers, after studying the subject of listening, have learned its vital importance. They agree that their teaching methods have expanded to include listening strategies on a regular basis as a fundamental part of their instructional methods. Direct instruction and the modeling of good listening skills were the most important features of the intervention. When students were aware of the characteristics of a good listener, they developed the habits of a good listener.

The importance of good listening skills cannot be stressed enough, and it should not be assumed that students know how to listen. Good listening strategies should be taught in every classroom. Success comes more easily to those who listen well, and teachers can provide this strategy as a legacy to their students. A student with strong listening skills is far better prepared to meet the challenges of life.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Documents

- Explanation of intervention
- Consent to participate cover letter
- Consent form
- Survey
- Tally sheet

Dear Parent(s), August 26, 2002

For the completion of our Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership from St. Xavier University we are required to do a survey to find out how you feel on our related topic. Please take a few moments to read through and fill out this survey. We are researching Improving Listening Skills through Children's Literature. We ask that you fill this out, keeping in mind the information will be used solely for our research. All information will be kept confidential. Circle the appropriate responses as it applies to your child. Please return to us by August 30. If you have any questions or would like further information about our project, feel free to contact us at school (phone number). We appreciate all your time. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nancy Sandall

Mrs. Kathy Schramm

Mrs. Ann Seibert

Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are currently enrolled in a master's degree program at Saint Xavier University. This program requires us to design and implement a project on an issue that directly affects our instruction. We have chosen to examine listening skills.

The purpose of this project is to actively model and teach appreciative listening skills to our students. It will help your child to become a better, more confident and capable listener.

We will be conducting our project from August 26 through December 16 of the 2002 - 2003 school year. The activities related to the project will take place during regular instructional delivery. The gathering of information for our project during these activities offers no risk of any kind to your child.

Your permission allows us to include your child in the reporting of information for our project. All information gathered will be kept completely confidential, and information included in the project report will be grouped so that no individual can be identified. The report will be used to share what we have learned as a result of this project with other professionals in the field of education.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate, information gathered about your child will not be included in the report.

If you have any questions or would like further information about our project, please contact any of us at (phone number.)

If you agree to have your child participate in the project, please sign the attached statement and return it to your child's teacher.

Sincerely,

Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

I, _____, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this project. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Name of minor:_____

_____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian Date

PLEASE RETURN THIS STATEMENT TO SCHOOL BY

AUGUST 30, 2002

Parent Listening Survey

Please circle your answers for questions one through eight. Write in your answer for question nine.

1. **Do you think your child has good listening skills**?

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

2. **Do you make eye contact during a conversation?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

3. **Does your child follow directions the first time?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

4. **Do you and your child discuss daily events?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

5. **Do you read aloud to your child?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

6. **How often to you read aloud to your child?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

7. **Do you and your child discuss the stories you read?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

8. **Do you finish your child's sentences?**

   Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

9. **What do you think makes a good listener?** _____

_____

_____

_____

Parent Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

1. Do you think your child has good listening skills?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
13	31	8	0

2. Do you make eye contact during a conversation?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
34	18	0	0

3. Does your child follow directions the first time?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
5	37	9	1

4. Do you and your child discuss daily events?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
38	10	4	0

5. Do you read aloud to your child?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
20	20	11	1

6. How often do you read aloud?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
20	19	12	1

7. Do you and your child discuss the stories you read?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
20	19	11	2

8. Do you finish your child's sentences?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
0	3	25	24

Parent Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

9. What makes a good listener?

Make eye contact	𝍸 𝍸 ||	(12)
Follow directions	|||	(3)
Comprehend	𝍸 𝍸 |||	(13)
Keep Body Quiet	||||	(4)
Use Non-verbal cues	||||	(4)
Be Quiet	𝍸 |||	(8)
Ask questions	𝍸 ||||	(9)
Focus	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	(15)
Quiet environment	𝍸 |||	(8)
Patience	𝍸 ||	(7)
Model listening skills	||||	(4)
Learned skill	|	(1)

Appendix B

Student Documents

- Student Pre and Post Listening Survey
- Tally sheets

Pre and Post Student Listening Survey

Please circle your answers for questions one through eight. Write in your answers for questions nine and ten.

1. **Do you think you are a good listener?** Yes No
2. **Do you look at the person who is speaking?** Yes No
3. **Do you sit still when you are listening?** Yes No
4. **Do you talk when someone else is talking?** Yes No
5. **Do you follow directions the first time?** Yes No
6. **Is it easy to listen in a noisy room?** Yes No
7. **Do people listen to you?** Yes No
8. **Do you like it when people listen to you?** Yes No
9. **Who listens to you the best?** _____
10. **What is a good listener?** _____

_____

_____

Student Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

	Yes	No
1. Do you think you are a good listener?	55	2
2. Do you look at the person who is speaking?	50	7
3. Do you sit still when you are listening?	55	2
4. Do you talk when someone else is talking?	8	49
5. Do you follow directions the first time?	55	2
6. Is it easy to listen in a noisy room?	6	51
7. Do people listen to you?	45	12
8. Do you like it when people listen to you?	60	7

Student Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

	Teacher	Parent	Child	Other
9. Who listens to you the best?	5	18	33	1

10. What is a good listener? (presurvey)

Look at speaker	3	Be still	4
Follow directions	4	Be quiet	11
Use your ears	1	No response	34

11. What is a good listener? (postsurvey)

Look at speaker	43	Hands still	35
Follow directions	5	Feet Quiet	34
Use your ears	29	Be quiet	41
		No response	1

Appendix C

Teacher Documents

- Explanation of intervention
- Teacher Listening Survey
- Tally sheets

Dear Teacher, August 26, 2002

For the completion of our Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership from St. Xavier University we are required to do a survey to find out how you feel on our related topic. Please take a few moments to read through and fill out this survey. We are researching Improving Listening Skills through Children's Literature. We ask that you fill this out, keeping in mind the information will be used solely for our research. All information will be kept confidential. Circle the appropriate responses as it applies to the children in your classroom. Please return to the large envelope hanging on the mailboxes by **Friday, August 30**. If you have any questions or would like further information about our project, feel free to contact us. We appreciate all your time. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nancy Sandall

Mrs. Kathy Schramm

Mrs. Ann Seibert

Teacher Listening Survey

Please circle your answers to the following questions one through six. Write in the answers for questions seven and eight.

1. **Do the majority of your students have good listening skills?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

2. **Do you teach lessons to improve listening skills?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

3. **Do you repeat directions more than twice?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

4. **Do you make eye contact when you speak to individual students?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

5. **In groups do your students actively listen to one another?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

6. **Do you read aloud daily to your students?**

Almost Always Fairly Often Once in a While Almost Never

7. **How many minutes do you read aloud to your students weekly?**

_____

8. **In your mind, what makes a good listener?** _____

_____

_____

_____

Teacher Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

1. Do the majority of your students have good listening skills?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
0	III (3)	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 II (17)	0

2. Do you teach lessons to improve listening skills?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
IIII (4)	𝍸 I (6)	𝍸 IIII (9)	I (1)

3. Do you repeat directions more than twice?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
𝍸 (5)	𝍸 𝍸 I (11)	III (3)	I (1)

4. Do you make eye contact when you speak to individual students?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 IIII (19)	I (1)	0	0

5. In groups, do your students actively listen to one another?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
I (1)	𝍸 𝍸 I (11)	𝍸 III (8)	0

6. Do you read aloud daily to your students?

Almost Always	Fairly Often	Once in a While	Almost Never
𝍸 𝍸 II (12)	𝍸 I (6)	0	II (2)

Teacher Listening Survey

Tally Sheet

7. How many minutes do you read aloud to your students weekly?

30	50	75	90	100	125	150
1	1	11	11	𝍸 11	111	11 (2)
(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(7)	(3)	

8. In your mind, what makes a good listener?

Eye contact 𝍸 𝍸 111 (13)

Make appropriate responses 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 111 (18)

Ignore distractions 11 (2)

Keep body still 𝍸 (5)

Use non-verbal cues 𝍸 11 (7)

Be quiet 1111 (4)

Focus 𝍸 (5)

Appendix D

Weekly Journal Entries

Week of _____

Reflection:

Pluses (+)	Minuses (-)	Interesting (?)

Comments and notes (continued on back as needed.)

Appendix E

Ready to Listen Checklist

Ready to Listen

Date: Students	Eyes on speaker	Quiet body	Voices off	Does not interrupt	Responds appropriately

Ready to Listen

Date: Students	Eyes on speaker	Quiet body	Voices off	Does not interrupt	Responds appropriately

Appendix F

"Picture This" Documents

- Activities
- Student worksheet
- Criteria for scoring rubric
- Individual student score sheet
- Classroom average score sheet
- Tally sheets

PICTURE THIS

Activity 1	Draw a circle in the middle of the page Draw brown hair on the top of the circle Draw one eye blue, and one eye green Make the face happy Add orange eyebrows	**FACE**
Activity 2	Draw a hat Put (five) blue polka dots on the hat Draw one red polka dot on the hat Draw a purple (pompom) ball on the top Draw a yellow flower sticking out of the (right) side	**CLOWN HAT**
Activity 3	Draw a fat brown tree trunk Draw a black (owl) hole on the trunk Draw three brown branches Draw a red bird on a branch Draw three leaves using three different colors.	**TREE**
Activity 4	Draw a square Draw five purple pepperonis Draw three yellow bits of cheese Draw a brown crust around the edge Draw eight pink gum drops	**PIZZA**
Activity 5	Draw a blue bowl Draw a brown circle on top of the bowl Draw a pink circle on top of the brown circle Draw a green cherry on the very top Draw (eight) purple sprinkles	**BOWL OF ICE CREAM**
Activity 6	Draw a black X in the middle of your paper Draw a large dead tree by (above) the X Draw a green lake (on the right side) at the bottom of the paper Draw a blue duck on the lake Draw a treasure chest beside the X	**PIRATE MAP**
Activity 7	Draw around your hand in the middle of the paper Make two finger nails green Make one (the pinkie finger) covered with polka dots Make the thumb striped using red, blue, and purple Draw rings on two fingers	**HAND**
Activity 8	Draw a big green sock Make the toe red Put purple, white and blue stripes on the top Make yellow polka dots in the middle Draw a hairy leg coming out the top	**STOCKING**

Name_____ Week_____ Date_____

Picture This

Criteria for Scoring

Picture This

Week One **FACE**

Draw a circle in the middle of the page
Draw brown hair on top of the circle
Draw one eye blue and one eye green
Make the face happy
Add orange eyebrows

1. Circle
2. Middle of page
3. Brown hair
4. Hair on top
5. Different colored eyes
6. Blue eye
7. Green eye
8. Happy face
9. Eyebrows
10. Orange eyebrows

Week Two **CLOWN HAT**

Draw a hat
Put (five) blue polka dots on the hat
Draw one red polka dot on the hat
Draw a purple (pompom) ball on the top
Draw a yellow flower sticking out of the (right) side

1. Hat
2. Polka dots (five)
3. Blue polka dots
4. One polka dot
5. Red polka dot
6. Ball on top (pompom)
7. Purple ball
8. Flower
9. Yellow flower
10. On (right) side

Week Three **TREE**

Draw a fat brown tree trunk
Draw a black (owl) hole on the trunk
Draw three brown branches
Draw a re bird on a branch
Draw three leaves using three different colors

1. Tree trunk
2. Brown tree trunk
3. Fat tree trunk
4. Black hole
5. Three branches
6. Brown branches
7. Bird on branch
8. Red bird
9. Three leaves
10. Three different colors

Week Four **PIZZA**
Draw a square
Draw five purple pepperonis
Draw three yellow bits of cheese
Draw a brown curst around the edge
Draw eight pink gumdrops

1. Square
2. Five pepperonis
3. Purple pepperonis
4. Three bits of cheese
5. Yellow bits of cheese
6. Crust around edge
7. Brown crust
8. Gumdrops
9. Eight gumdrops
10. Pink gumdrops

Week Five **BOWL OF ICE CREAM**
Draw a blue bowl
Draw a brown circle on top of the bowl
Draw a pink circle on top of the brown circle
Draw a green cherry on the very top
Draw (eight) purple sprinkles

1. Bowl
2. Blue bowl
3. Circle on top
4. Brown circle
5. Another circle on top
6. Pink circle
7. Cherry on top
8. Green cherry
9. Purple sprinkles
10. Eight sprinkles

Week Six **PIRATE MAP**
Draw a black X in the middle of your paper
Draw a large dead tree by (above) the X
Draw a green lake (on the right side) at the bottom of the paper
Draw a blue duck on the lake
Draw a treasure chest beside the X

1. X in the middle of the paper
2. Black X
3. Dead tree
4. By (above) the X
5. Lake
6. Green lake
7. Lake at bottom (right side)
8. Duck on lake
9. Blue duck
10. Treasure chest

Week Seven **HAND**

Draw around your hand in the middle of the paper
Make two fingernails green
Make one (the pinkie finger) covered with polka dots
Make the thumb striped using red, blue and purple
Draw rings on two fingers

1. Hand
2. Fingernails
3. Two green fingernails
4. Polka dots
5. One (pinkie) in polka dots
6. Striped thumb
7. Different colored stripes
8. Red, blue, purple stripes
9. Rings
10. Two rings

Week Eight **STOCKING**

Draw a big green sock
Make the toe red
Put purple, white and blue stripes on the top
Make yellow polka dots in the middle
Draw a hairy leg coming out the top

1. Sock
2. Green sock
3. Red toe
4. Stripes on top
5. Different colored stripes
6. Purple, white and blue stripes
7. Polka dots
8. Yellow polka dots
9. Leg coming out the top
10. Hairy leg

Individual Scores

Student's Name_____

"Picture This" Rubric

Criteria	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
	Drawing contains all or most of the required elements	Drawing contains seven or eight of the required elements	Drawing contains five or six of the required elements	Drawing contains three or four of the required elements	Drawing contains one or two of the required elements	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements

"Picture This" Individual Scores

Week	Score	Comments
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Classroom Scores

"Picture This" Rubric

Criteria	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
	Drawing contains all or most of the required elements	Drawing contains seven or eight of the required elements	Drawing contains five or six of the required elements	Drawing contains three or four of the required elements	Drawing contains one or two of the required elements	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements

"Picture This" Classroom Scores

Week		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Average score
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														

Classroom A

Tally sheet

"Picture This" Rubric

Criteria	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
	Drawing contains all or most of the required elements	Drawing contains seven or eight of the required elements	Drawing contains five or six of the required elements	Drawing contains three or four of the required elements	Drawing contains one or two of the required elements	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements

"Picture This" Classroom Scores

Week	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
1	|	|	|	|	|||			|||| |	||	||	||	5.5 (6)
2			|		||	|||| |	|||| |	|||		|		5.6 (6)
3			|	|	|	||||	||	||||	||||			4.9 (5)
4			|		||	||		||	||||		|||| |	7.4 (7)
5						|		||	|||	|||| |||	||||		7.7 (8)
6			|||	||	||||	|	||	||||	||		|	5.2 (5)
7				|	||||	||||	||||	|	|	|		5.4 (5)
8						|		||	|||	|||| |	|||| ||	8.8 (9)

Classroom B

Tally Sheet

"Picture This" Rubric

Criteria	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
	Drawing contains all or most of the required elements	Drawing contains seven or eight of the required elements	Drawing contains five or six of the required elements	Drawing contains three or four of the required elements	Drawing contains one or two of the required elements	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements

"Picture This" Classroom Scores

Week	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
1		1	1	1	5	4	5	2				4.7 (5)
2	2		2	1	2	5	3	1		2	1	4.9 (5)
3	2	1	2		2	1	2	2		2	5	5.9 (6)
4	1			1	1	2	3	6	1	3	2	6.6 (7)
5		1			1		3	3	2	2	8	7.9 (8)
6							1	4	8	5	2	8.2 (8)
7				1			4	3	5	3	4	7.8 (8)
8				1	2		2	2	7	2	4	7.6 (8)

Classroom C

Tally Sheet

"Picture This" Rubric

Criteria	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
	Drawing contains all or most of the required elements	Drawing contains seven or eight of the required elements	Drawing contains five or six of the required elements	Drawing contains three or four of the required elements	Drawing contains one or two of the required elements	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements

"Picture This" Classroom Scores

Week	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average score
1					1	1	111	5 1	1111	1		6.9 (7)
2					1		1	111	5 1	4		8.3 (8)
3		111	5 1	5	111	1						2.6 (3)
4						11	11	1	11	111	5	8.1 (8)
5							1	111	11	111	5 11	8.8 (9)
6									1	5 111	5 111	9.4 (9)
7												
8												

Appendix G

Example of "Give Me Five" poster

Appendix H

Children's Literature
Annotated Bibliography

Alexander, M. (1988). *Even that moose won't listen to me.* New York: Dial Books
A little girl tries various means to get rid of a moose in her garden after she repeatedly warns her family and they refuse to listen to her.

Bishop, B. (1979*). No one noticed Ralph.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
A talkative parrot named Ralph flies out of the window and tries to make friends with people on the street. He struggles to have people listen to him. He is finally successful when he shows the purpose for listening and tells everyone of a dangerous fire.

Bunting, E. (1988). *How many days to America.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.
A modern day Mayflower story about refugees suffering hardships to come to America for a better life. Use this book as a parallel story with *On the Mayflower* by Kate Waters.

Cutler, J. (1993). *Darcy and Gran don't like babies.* New York: Scholastic.
Darcy is distraught about having a new baby brother and no one will listen to her concerns expect Gran. Gran helps Darcy accept her feelings after a fun day in the park.

Day, A. (1989). *Good dog, Carl.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
Carl, the Rottweiler dog, is left home to watch the baby while his owner goes out. His adventures are depicted in great detail in a wordless picture book.

Day, A. (1993). *Carl goes to daycare.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
A wordless picture book of the day Carl, the big dog, and his small owner visit daycare. The teacher gets locked out of the classroom and Carl takes over. The illustrations provide endless opportunities for conversation and storytelling.

Denim, S. (1994). *The dumb bunnies.* New York: Scholastic.
A family of bunnies makes hilarious mistakes throughout the story. The children must listen carefully to find the idiosyncrasies in the storyline. The humor is also noticed in the illustrations.

Dubowski, C. (1996). *Pirate school.* New York: Putnam & Grosset Group.
Pete learns to act like a pirate and fight it out. After finding the treasure with a friend they learn pirate rules are not as good as sharing and cooperating. The reader can use voice inflection for the different characters to increase the children's listening enjoyment.

Feifer, J. (1998). *I lost my bear.* New York: William Morrow.
The little girl lost her special teddy bear, Bearsie. She searches the house and asks her family for help. Everyone is too busy to help her. Finally when she gets into bed she discovers the answer to her mystery. The story may be used with the teddy bear unit and young children will identify with the main character's dilemma.

Fox, M. (1994). *Tough Boris.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.
The story has a repetitive and predictable text. Vibrant illustrations encourage imagination and imagery for the listener. The story deals with the pirates' emotions when Boris' parrot dies.

Freeman, D. (1968). *Corduory.* New York: Viking Press.
In the department store Lisa finds a stuffed bear she wants her mother to buy. Mother points out that he is missing a button therefore she says, no. Corduroy, the bear, has a great adventure looking for a new button. Lisa returns the next day with the money from her piggy bank and purchases him. They become best friends.

Freeman, D. (1978). *A pocket for Corduroy.* New York: Viking Press.
A toy bear wants a pocket for himself and searches for one in the laundromat. The story is a sequel to the story, *Corduroy.*

Guilfoile, E. (1957). *Nobody listens to Andrew.* Chicago: Follett Publishing.
Andrew finds a bear in his bed and attempts to alert his family and other adults. Everyone is too busy to listen to him until he begins shouting out the problem. The story may be used as a springboard for teaching the importance of making eye contact and listening to the speaker.

Gibbons, G. (1993). *Pirates robbers of the high seas.* Boston: Little, Brown.
The nonfiction text provides background information about pirate life, their ships, their treasures, as well as information on famous pirates.

Ho, M. (1996). *Hush. a Thai lullaby.* New York: Orchard Books.
The multicultural book is a lullaby which asks animals to be quiet and not disturb the sleeping baby. The text is repetitive and will promote listening awareness through audience interaction.

Kennedy, J. (1983). *The teddy bears' picnic.* San Diego, CA: Green Tiger Press.
Two small children dress in bear costumes where they meet hundreds of other bears in the woods for a special Teddy Bears' picnic. Children listening will delight in the antics of the bears.

Legge, D. (1994). *Bamboozled.* New York: Scholastic.
A young girl visiting her grandfather tries to discover what is different at his home. The children must listen closely and focus on the illustrations as the story is read aloud, in order to solve the mystery.

Marshall, J. (1988). *Goldilocks and the three bears.* New York: Dial Books.
This book is an updated version of the traditional story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears.*

Meddaugh, S. (1992). *Martha speaks.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.
Martha, the dog learns to speak after she eats alphabet soup. Many problems occur because of her continuous talking. The children will identify with Martha's frustrations when no one listens to her. In the end Martha's ability to speak does save the day.

Pulver, R. (1990). *Mrs. Toggle's zipper.* New York: Scholastic.
This is a hilarious story of an elementary teacher who gets stuck in her coat when her zipper doesn't work. The students and school personnel try to help her. This story can be easily turned into a play.

Rosales, M. (1999). *Leola and the Honeybears.* New York: Scholastic.
This story is an African-American retelling of Goldilocks and the Three Bears that stresses the importance of listening to adults.

St. George, J. (1978). *The halloween pumpkin smasher.* New York: G.P. Putnam.
The text is used as a read aloud to introduce historical fiction. The story takes place in the early 1900's. Nellie and her imaginary friends explore the neighborhood to determine the reason the jack-o-lanterns are being destroyed. The vocabulary words such as, root cellar, parlor, and belfry are springboards for discussions about the specific time period.

Slater, T. (1991). *Listening with Zachary.* New York: Simon & Schuster.
Zachary hears a noise and tries to identify the sound. The text uses a rhyming pattern and children can participate in predicting the next sound. The rhyming format gives young children a focus and purpose for listening.

Tolhurst, M. (1990). *Somebody and the three Blairs.* New York: Scholastic.
A humorous fractured fairy tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. A little bear visits the Blair family home, creating hysterical situations.

Turkle, B. (1976). *Deep in the forest.* New York: E.P. Dutton.
A wordless turnabout tale of a little bear cub entering a family's home with disastrous results. Children can take turns telling the story using the illustrations to move the story along.

Untermeyer, L. (1965). *Aesop's fables.* New York: Golden Press.
A collection of well known Aesop's fables including "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" and "The Lion and the Mouse."

Van Allsburg, C. (1995). *Bad day at Riverbend.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
A clever story within a story set in a coloring book. The children must listen carefully for clues about how the mysterious light is causing the problems.

Van Allsburg, C. (1981). *Jumanji.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.
Two bored children find and play a board game that comes to life. Students listen to compare and contrast the book written fifteen years before the movie.

Van Allsburg, C. (1993). *The sweetest fig.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Monsieur Bibot is given two magical figs. His plans of wealth are foiled by his long-suffering dog when the two trade places. Students must listen carefully for the trick ending.

Van Allsburg, C. (1992). *The widow's broom.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
A magical broom serves a lonely widow well, until her neighbors decide the broom is evil. This book can serve as an introduction to a discussion on prejudice.

Van Allsburg, C. (1983). *The wreck of the Zephyr.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
An old sailor tells a remarkable tale about a flying boat. Careful listening is needed for students to decipher who the old sailor is by the clues in the story.

VanLeeuwen, J. (1995). *Across the wide dark sea.* New York: Dial Press.
The story of a pilgrim family as they travel on the Mayflower. Used as a comparison with *Coming to America* by Eve Bunting.

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(Specific Document)

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