

Being a Good Listener

- OBJECTIVES:**
- To understand the traits of a good listener
 - To practice listening
 - To understand that good listening is a complex behavior

NOTE

- Listening behaviors are influenced by culture, family style, and learning style. It's important to be respectful of the fact that listening may look different at home or for individual students. The school listening look refers to expectations for listening at school.*

REVIEW

Ask how many students found two classmates that they did not know very well and spent time with them during lunch or recess. Did they find out more about each person? Invite several students to share their findings and experiences. Compliment students on getting to know their classmates better and finding out what they have in common.

INTRODUCE

Ask students to take a moment and think of a friend or an adult who really listens to them. Imagine that they were upset about something and they were telling the other person what happened. Ask them what that person would be doing when he/she is listening. (*Making eye contact, being quiet, not interrupting, not moving around, not doing something else at same time, asking relevant questions, etc.*) What does it mean when someone really listens to you? How does it feel when someone listens to you in that way?

PRACTICE

Ask two students to volunteer for a role play. One should tell a story about being disappointed about a low grade on a test when he felt he had studied hard. The other should role-play good listening.

Ask the group what they observed the good listener doing. Ask the student who was talking how it felt to be listened to.

Ask for two other students to role-play poor listening. Have one student make up a story about having an argument with a good friend. The other student should role-play a poor listener. Again ask the group what they observed. What were the behaviors of the poor listener? Ask the student who was talking how she felt in the role play.

Point out that good listening means more than just being quiet and waiting for the other person to finish talking. A good listener often makes comments or asks questions that show interest, concern, or understanding about what the other person has said.

(Point out instances of this that might have occurred in the students' role play.)
Sometimes this is called **feedback**.

APPLY

Ask for some volunteers to demonstrate good listening skills as they role-play some situations. You will be noticing what comments or questions the listener asks.

- A student is telling a friend about her home run in an important game.
- A student is telling a friend about losing his homework on the way to school.
- A student is telling a new student about the classroom rules.
- A student is telling another student about what she learned in Open Circle meetings.
- A student is telling a friend about having a hard time finishing a science paper.

In each case ask students what they observed. Ask which listening behaviors they observed in the person who was listening. Ask what feedback they heard from the person who was listening. Ask students if they listened for the emotion behind the words.

Ask students what they think good listening looks like in school. You might summarize their ideas by explaining that a **school listening look** means that their bodies are still, they are sitting up, they are looking at the speaker, and they are focusing on what is being said. Ask if one should give feedback when listening in school. When is this appropriate? How is it different to give feedback in a classroom discussion? a small group? a conversation with a friend?

Tell students that you will be watching for a school listening look during the day and will comment when you see it. If you do not see it, you will ask, "Is this good listening?" Note improved listening of students during the day and comment on it.

HOMEWORK/EXTEND

Ask students to try to notice an experience during the next few days when they feel someone is really listening well to them and to be prepared to talk about it in the next Open Circle. They should also make an attempt to be a good listener and be prepared to share their experiences.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Katz and Tush*. Dell Dragonfly Books, 1992.

Larnel and his mother enrich the life of Mrs. Katz by caring about her and listening to her stories.

Discussion Prompts: What are some of Larnel's actions that make him such a good friend to Mrs. Katz? How does Mrs. Katz know that Larnel is really listening to her? Find an illustration that shows an example of Larnel's good listening skills.

School Listening Look

- ✓ Sit up and sit still.
- ✓ Look at the person who is speaking.
- ✓ Pay attention.
- ✓ Ask questions, make comments,
give feedback.

Open Circle Update #3

Dear Family:

In Open Circle, we have been getting to know each other better. In order for students to work together cooperatively and become friends, it is important for them to learn what they have **in common** with each other and how they differ. We played the “Stand Up” game to find out what we have in common, such as who plays a musical instrument, likes to play sports, speaks more than one language, or has gone to this school since kindergarten. We talked about the advantages of having a variety of friends and how people do not need to be exactly alike in order to be friends. Ask your child to tell you what he/she learned about what the students in the class have in common and what he/she has in common with other students. You might encourage your child to try to get to know someone in the class he/she does not know very well during recess or lunchtime and find out what they have in common.

We also talked in Open Circle about the traits of a **good listener** and practiced being a good listener. We generated a list of what a good listener in school looks like. A good listener sits still, sits up, looks at the person who is speaking, pays attention, asks questions, makes comments, and gives feedback to the speaker.

It is important to everyone in the class — students, teachers, and visitors — to be listened to when they speak. Ask your child to practice good listening while you speak. Then you practice good listening while your child speaks. Good listening is a very important lifelong skill, not only for children to develop but also for adults to learn and practice. You might want to encourage all members of your family to become good listeners. Be sure to compliment good listening at home when you observe it.

Yours truly,

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

Here are some books that relate to the topics we discussed in Open Circle. You might want to check out one or two at the library and read with your child:

Choi, Sook Nyul. *Halmoni and the Picnic*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Yunmi is worried that her friends won't like the Korean food her grandmother brings to the class picnic.

Miller, William. *The Piano*. Lee & Low Books, 2000.

A young girl and an elderly woman share the love of music. Their common interest helps them become unlikely friends.

Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Katz and Tush*. Bantam Books, 1992.

Larnel and his mother enrich the life of Mrs. Katz by caring about her and listening to her stories.

Noticias del Círculo Abierto #3

Estimados padres:

En el Círculo Abierto hemos estado conociéndonos mejor los unos a los otros. Para que los estudiantes trabajen juntos cooperativamente y se hagan amigos, es importante que sepan lo que tienen **en común** con los demás, y en lo que difieren. Jugamos “Levántese/Siéntese” para averiguar lo que tenemos en común. Por ejemplo, cuántos tocan un instrumento musical, a cuántos les gusta practicar deportes, cuántos hablan más de un idioma o han asistido a esta escuela desde el “kindergarten”. Hablamos sobre las ventajas de tener una variedad de amigos, y cómo las personas no necesitan ser exactamente iguales para ser amigas. Pídale a su hijo/a que le cuente lo que aprendió sobre lo que los estudiantes de la clase tienen en común y lo que él o ella tiene en común con otros estudiantes. Usted puede animar a su hijo/a a que trate de conocer a un compañero de la clase que no conoce muy bien, ya sea durante el recreo o la hora del almuerzo, y a reconocer lo que tienen en común.

También hablamos en el Círculo Abierto sobre las características que tiene un **buen oyente** y practicamos a ser buenos oyentes. Elaboramos una lista que describe las cosas que nos hacen reconocer a un buen oyente en la escuela. Un buen oyente se sienta quieto, se sienta recto, mira a la persona que está hablando, pone atención, hace preguntas, hace comentarios y da respuestas a la persona que habla.

Es muy importante para todos en la clase —estudiantes, maestros y visitantes— que se les escuche cuando hablan. Pídale a su hijo/a que practique a ser un buen oyente mientras usted habla. Después practique a ser usted un buen oyente mientras su hijo/a habla. Ser un buen oyente es una habilidad muy importante para toda la vida, no sólo para que los niños la desarrollen sino también para que los adultos la aprendan y la practiquen. Usted puede estimular a todos los miembros de su familia a convertirse en buenos oyentes. Cuando observe que se está prestando buena atención en una conversación en su casa, asegúrese de felicitar a los buenos oyentes.

Un cordial saludo,

CONEXIONES LITERARIAS

A continuación está la lista de algunos libros que se relacionan con el tema que tratamos en el Círculo Abierto. Usted puede sacar uno o dos de la biblioteca y leerlos con su hijo/a:

Choi, Sook Nyul. *Halmoni and the Picnic*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Miller, William. *The Piano*. Lee & Low Books, 2000.

Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Katz and Tush*. Bantam Books, 1992.