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TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS TO PRE-REFERRAL STUDENTS  
TO DECREASE FULL CHILD STUDY TEAM REFERRALS

by

Karen E. Garnett

A Thesis Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in Learning Disabilities  
in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan College  
1996

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved May 6, 1996

ABSTRACT

Karen E. Garnett

TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS TO PRE-REFERRAL STUDENTS  
TO DECREASE FULL CHILD STUDY TEAM REFERRALS

May 1996

Dr. Stanley Urban

Seminar in Learning Disabilities, in the  
Graduate Division of Rowan College

This study investigated the teaching of listening skills as a way to possibly decrease full referrals to the Child Study Team. The subjects were regular first grade students in four different classrooms. The procedure consisted of teachers using specific interventions to maintain focus, increase concentration, decrease distractibility and improve academic achievement. A comparison was made between pre and post test scores on checklists, a comprehension passage, repeating and performing two and three-step directions, and anecdotal records. Conclusions can be drawn from the results, that students who are taught effective listening skills will demonstrate positive growth in focus, concentration and academic achievement; but need additional, specific skills to handle distractibility.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the teaching of listening skills as a way to possibly decrease full referrals to the Child Study Team. Comparisons were made between pre and post test scores. Positive growth was demonstrated by the subjects in the study. Further development of skills is imperative. Considerations of prior learning, attendance patterns and maturity must be made.

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CHAPTER I  
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Within the first several weeks of the new school term, the classroom teacher automatically begins to observe and categorize behaviors exhibited by the students that are either conducive to learning or negatively effect the learning environment. The teacher mentally notes those who remain attentive, sit still, recall information, follow directions, ask questions or answer questions during the instructional period. Also noted are students who are inattentive, easily distracted, restless, fail to establish eye contact and fail to repeat verbatim or follow two-step or three-step directions. Frequently, these students are unable to recall information or ask or answer questions of a speaker. If the negative behaviors are accompanied by incorrect and generally low academic performance, the next step would be to determine if a learning disability is the cause for this perplexing behavior.

The concerned teacher would seek the assistance of the guidance counselor, the Child Study Team and/or a pupil assistance committee (PAC) for those students, in an effort to determine the possibility of some disorder or impairment- such as attention deficit, hyperactivity, emotional disturbance or perceptual impairment.

Prior to a formal evaluation, a Pre-Referral Checklist is given to the teacher to help focus on areas of concern. The Pre-Referral Checklist provides specific behaviors which have already been placed under separate headings (i.e., Listening). The teacher completes the checklist, confers with the guidance counselor and uses the Pre-Referral Intervention Manual to match specific strategies and intervention procedures to the identified behaviors which may have been prioritized. They establish a timeline for the trial of the strategies and their effectiveness before conferring again about the student(s).

#### Statement of the Problem

In an effort to decrease the number of referrals to special education and improve services to students with school-related problems, many authorities believe that more efforts need to be directed at the prereferral stage (Mercer, 1992). The purpose of this prereferral intervention stage is two-fold: first, many students who experience minor or transitory learning and behavior problems can be helped to succeed by relatively simple adaptations of the standard curriculum, instructional procedures or behavior management programs within the regular classroom; and, second, when prereferral strategies are not effective in improving the student's performance, the data gathered during this stage can provide direction for the special education team in its decisions about eligibility, intervention strategies and placement options (McLoughlin

and Lewis, 1990).

The area of concern for this study is listening skills. Speaking and listening are the two most commonly used communication processes and are frequently taken for granted in the classroom. The student who cannot or will not listen with comprehension is at an enormous disadvantage in mastering new material (Hammill and Bartel, 1990).

Among many teachers there is a general consensus that children "just do not listen", "are not paying attention" and are becoming marginal listeners with the ability to have their attention placed on another matter while "hearing" what is being said--without paying attention to the same. It would seem that their lack of attention was the cause for less than desired academic achievement when in fact, they have not been taught to listen.

#### Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Will a child who has been taught to listen effectively show enough improvement in the prereferral period to avoid a full Child Study Team assessment and recommendation for placement in special education services?
2. Can a child be taught to concentrate and focus attention on a speaker?
3. Can a child develop strategies to handle distractions

and remain on task?

4. Can a child use specific listening skills in other learning situations and environments successfully?

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to determine if the teaching of listening skills will increase attentiveness, decrease distractibility and reduce the numbers of students referred for full Child Study Team assessment for eligibility in a special education program.

#### Need for this Study

The need for this study becomes apparent when classroom teachers become cognizant of the relationship between listening and learning. They need strategies, teaching methods and materials to develop effective listeners. The successful outcome of applied strategies will enable teachers to improve their effectiveness and overall student academic productivity.

#### Value of this Study

This study has implications for skills to be taught to teachers in training; and, provide the classroom teacher with a readily accessible method to incorporate within the classroom routine. Since "instruction in listening that is natural and unobtrusive as possible has been found to be most effective", it should be carefully incorporated into the entire learning program of the students. The students should learn to use

these skills functionally to ensure their use and their reinforcement as they are integrated into other subject areas (Hammill and Bartel, 1990).

The skill will be used to enhance and improve the student's entire academic experience, directly improve the student's listening skills, result in greater time on task with reduced referrals to the Child Study Team.

#### Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to the research which come primarily from these areas: 1) the size and composition of the sample; 2) uncontrolled variables related to the children in the sample; 3) the developmental levels of the children in the sample; and, 4) the effects of the direct instruction program.

The sample size will depend on the number of children who would be referred to the Child Study Team.

One of the most serious limitations would be the dynamics of the class population. The class is subject to sudden changes in size due to transfers. Children transfer in and out continually; and, sometimes even re-enter after having been "transferred out" prior to a holiday or vacation.

Children in the class range from those with no prior schooling, limited prior schooling-including preschool/daycare, one-half day or whole day kindergarten, mainstreamed from a bilingual class and retainees. The academic levels range

from readiness through pre-primer/primer. Instructional methods include a combination of whole language and direct instruction.

Direct instruction will be used for reading, math and language with this sample of children when they are with Teacher G., however, other techniques will be used by the teachers of special area subjects (music, art, physical education and conversational Spanish). The direct instruction commands and signals demand a precise type of behavior and response that may demonstrate favorable results in those students who possess the aptitude to profit from that technique.

#### Definition of Terms

Pre-Referral Checklist - instrument used by the classroom teacher to identify specific problem behaviors demonstrated by the student.

Pre-Referral Intervention Manual - the compilation of the interventions (strategies) specifically matched to the behaviors identified in the Checklist.

Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC)-(Intervention and Referral Services for General Education Pupils: 6:26-2.1) establishes procedures for the delivery of services to pupils 'experiencing difficulties in their classes and who have not been determined to be in need of special education programs'.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Listening is the primary learning modality throughout most of our lives. It is the input channel by which we gain language-based information, understandings and concepts. For efficient learning to occur, several information processing skills must be intact. Among the most important is the ability to listen to large amounts of information, to sort out what is important, and to connect what is important with what is already known, so that it can later be retrieved and expressed (Hammill and Bartel, 1990).

#### Definition of Listening

What is listening? A simple definition, completely acceptable to all, has yet to emerge, but it was "Lundsteen who concluded that listening is the process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind" (Devine, 1978). Listening is the interrelationship of a speaker and a listener in the communication process. In this two-way relationship, the child must recognize that the listener takes meanings from the speaker who, in turn, becomes the listener (Jacobs, 1991). The act of listening involves receiving, attention (focused perception), hearing (the physical aspect), assigning meaning (interpretation), and, remembering (information stored for recall in meaningful communication (Wolvin and Coakley, 1979).

## Components of Listening Skills

What kind of listening behavior should be developed? In an early study, Rankin, in 1930, found that the average American spends 30 percent of waking hours speaking, 45 percent listening, 16 percent reading and 9 percent writing. Although more data have not been reported, it is fair to estimate that with the increase in the use of radio, television, and audio recordings, the percentage of listening time has increased in recent years (Hammill and Bartel, 1990)—including an environment filled with video games, noises and personal listening devices (Blank, 1983).

Teachers should be influenced by the findings of Rankin and others that children and adults do spend more time listening than reading, speaking and writing (Devine, 1978). Listening has a significant and major role in classroom instruction; however, listening instruction in most schools has been neglected and listening skills are the least taught of the most common language arts skills (Devine, 1982). Throughout the school years, children need to keep developing those skills and abilities that contribute to making them sophisticated, critical listeners (Jacobs, 1991).

Hundreds of studies have been done on listening in past decades concluding that 1) listening skills can be taught; 2) direct instruction in listening comprehension could



improve reading comprehension (Choate and Rakes, 1987); and, 3) structured lessons spaced over a period of time and using reasonable, interesting examples, will work (Devine, 1982). Critical listening skills require training.

Although this study involves first graders in a regular education classroom setting, learning disabled children have special needs for instruction in this area of listening to address comprehension skill deficiencies. Teachers of children with special needs can promote listening development by modeling good listening and give the students procedures to use when they do not understand, get confused or fail to practice good listening skills (Healy, 1990).

Listening must be consciously taught within the many contexts of the school setting. Listening skills can be taught and improved through planned instruction with a goal of improving a student's ability to listen critically, courteously, attentively and appreciatively; and, to improve children's ability to analyze and apply ideas as they listen (Devine, 1982). Although technology simplifies tuning out the world at will, the skills of attending to and interpreting oral communication remain essential ones for teachers to teach and students to learn (Blank, 1983).

#### Types of Listening Skill Development Programs

Teachers should devote time to investigating the extensive resources available concerning programs that offer strategies

and programs to establish listening skills programs. Teachers must assemble lists of suggestions that will be convenient and functional for themselves and the students with whom the program will be utilized. A listening program is an active process that helps children develop an awareness of the importance of good listening and then systematically provides activities through which they can increase their expertise in a variety of aspects of listening.

Students should be taught listening that is appreciative (to enjoy or gain a sensory impression); discriminative (distinguishing for auditory or visual stimulus); comprehensive (for a purpose or understanding a message); therapeutic/emphatic (comprehension to provide only necessary feedback); and, critical (evaluate a message to determine acceptance or rejection) in addition to emphasizing meaningful communication (Wolvin and Coakley, 1979).

The teacher should emphasize good listening habits, prepare students to listen, let students know you are serious about having them learn to listen; check frequently for understanding; and, create a climate for conversation—being careful to make questions count by encouraging higher level thinking (Healy, 1990). Slammer (1981) describes the process as MAPPING—teachers use modeling, assessment, preparation and practice to improve listening skills.

Wolvin and Coakley (1979) submit that we can improve

listening skills and develop effective listeners through motivation and setting goals with students who will assume an active role; concentrate their attention and provide appropriate feedback.

Choate and Rakes (1987) demonstrated success in the Structured Learning Activity (SLA) model which included five steps. These steps were sequenced and based upon support from a number of investigations: 1) concept building, 2) listening purpose, 3) reading aloud, 4) questioning; and, 5) recitation. Although research is needed to validate its effectiveness, this SLA model offers classroom teachers a way to use listening activities to improve student comprehension. The process seemed very successful with a group of children in grades kindergarten through three.

Programs designed to "assist the elementary-age, skill-deficient child in achieving skill competency" (McGinnis and Goldstein, 1984) should have goals, objectives, strategies and materials that can be incorporated into the classroom routine. There should be the following features: a) content validity-it should teach what it sets out to teach; b) transfer potential-materials provide the opportunity to practice more effective ways to listen; c) amount of reinforcement-focuses on one aspect of listening; then practice; d) quality of directions and instructions-language that is not unnecessarily complex or unfamiliar vocabulary

or has lengthy, detailed descriptions of a task; and,  
e) adaptability and flexibility-listening materials can be used across a wide range of ages and reading levels; are cost-effective and require little teacher preparation, in that activities can be used when the opportunity arises (Spiegel, 1990). Learning activities should be interesting.

#### General Methods of Improving Listening Skills

Teachers should increase their eye contact with students to help improve attention during listening lessons. They should learn to modulate their voice tones to get a reaction from their inattentive listeners. They should use more audio and audio-visual materials such as tape recorders, sound filmstrips and videos. They should be prepared to establish a listening purpose by asking questions before the presentation or lesson.

A teacher can assist pupils in improving their abilities in following directions by instructing them to 1) listen to all of the directions before beginning to follow them; 2) make a mental picture of what is to be done; 3) repeat the directions; and, 4) use good judgement (Bracken, 1972).

Materials and programs selected for teaching listening skills should offer a variety of experiences through an array of culturally diverse games, songs, reading passages, literary selections and pictures. There should be movement activities as well as those designed for higher levels of thinking.

Appreciative listeners can be developed through activities in which students listen to recordings, then draw pictures; read poems or stories with "sensory images" and recall the descriptions; or, close their eyes and then identify objects from that description. Attentive listeners can close their eyes for short periods of time, then recall instruments used in a musical selection, animals heard or voices spoken. Analytical listeners can hear the same story from two different authors, then identify the similarities and the differences; or hear two articles read on the same subject and identify the disposition of each.

Teachers should be aware of time and spatial restraints when planning the listening skills program. If a listening center is to be established, scheduling for minimum distractions and various interruptions must be flexible. The teacher must constantly monitor the center to maximize productivity and maintain practice.

#### Assessment of Listening Skills

After determining the program, performance goals and objectives, teacher strategies and schedule, some form of assessment should be used. The teacher who uses a packaged program will probably use the assessment materials that are specifically designed for that program. Some teachers may choose to give teacher-made pretests, checklists, surveys or questionnaires or interviews to determine the needs of the

class in the area of listening skills, that will solicit interests as well as academic or personal deficiencies. Informal teacher-made tests can identify strengths and weaknesses in factual recall, following directions, following story sequence and even auditory discrimination problems (Bracken, 1972).

Enough evidence exists to lead one to say that listening skills seem to be measurable. Standardized tests, such as the Brown-Carlson Listening Comprehension Test (grades 9-12) and the Sequential Test of Educational Progress (grades 3-12) are mentioned several times throughout the research literature, however, most popular standardized tests are related to general mental ability more than listening. Properly selected, administered and interpreted tests can avoid labeling learning disabled students incorrectly.

Assessment instruments should a) require students to demonstrate skill as a speaker or listener; b) clearly distinguish speaking and listening from reading and writing; c) not discriminate or show bias for race, gender, religion or origin; d) confirm the presence or absence of skills without diagnosing; e) emphasize the application of speaking and listening skills in familiar situations; f) allow for optional communication settings rather than limit them to one setting; g) use skills that correspond closely to the speaking and listening skills identified, h) use standardized

procedures; i) use procedures that are free from negative outcomes; and, j) use suitable, practical and cost-effective materials (Backlund et al, 1986).

Listening tests typically resemble reading comprehension tests, except that the student listens to a passage instead of reading it. The student then answers multiple-choice questions that address various levels of literal and inferential questions. The important elements in all listening tests are the listening stimuli, the questions used and the test environment. Some further considerations are: 1) the test should represent typical language; 2) the multiple-choice items should focus on the most important aspects of the passage-not trivial details and the answers should not rely on the student's prior knowledge; and 3) the environment should be free of external distractions with material presented clearly with the appropriate volume and rate of speaking (Mead and Rubin, 1985).

Teachers must also use random, verbal, direct assessment. Just putting everything out of one's hands and putting everything off one's desk is no assurance that listening is taking place. Daydreaming could be going on, or a person could be hearing, but not listening to the spoken word (Devine, 1982). Excessive individual testing should be avoided in order to facilitate a pleasant, productive listening atmosphere in the classroom.

### Determining Significant Learning Problems

The teacher who wants to identify students who are in need of systematic evaluations of their listening abilities, should be guided by a consideration of the following questions: Does the student appear to be paying attention? Is the student easily distracted? Does the student show evidence of failing to understand directions? Can the student recall the sequence of events given orally? Does the student show an inability to comprehend factual or inferential knowledge from a lecture, audiotape or other source of auditory information?

It is clear that test developers have given much more attention to tests that measure speaking than to tests that measure listening. Those tests that do measure listening tend to measure student listening ability at the passive or factual level (Hammill and Bartel, 1990). In order to be valid, the test must match the skills taught or the results will not show positive gains or positive effects of instruction.

### Summary

This chapter explored the definition, components, developmental programs and assessment of listening skills, which incorporate both hearing spoken language and assigning meaning and are the most used and least taught of the basic communication skills.

Teachers who are concerned about certain students who



display deficiencies in following directions, factual recall and information interpretation should have their listening ability assessed. Informal measures or standardized tests should be utilized to obtain specific needs and interests; and, also assist in the development of appropriate strategies, outcome goals and objectives.

A variety of programs and strategies can be used that include modeling, practice, feedback and activities designed to assist the student in using the skills learned in formal training in other listening situations.

Students, who are taught listening skills, can improve in comprehension, move from being passive and factual listeners to higher levels of interpretive, evaluative and metacognitive listeners; and, effectively transfer these newly-learned skills.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine if students who are deficient in the area of listening skills and have low academic performance, will improve their ability to pay attention, avoid distractions, recall facts, follow directions and answer questions when taught correct skills.

The study will also examine the possibility of children with these deficiencies developing sufficient skills during the prereferral period to avoid formal referral to the full Child Study Team.

#### Subjects of the Study

The subjects include regular first grade students in the H. H. Davis Elementary School, Camden, New Jersey, from four different classrooms, whose deficiencies have been observed by their teachers during the first marking period—September through November, 1995.

#### Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Would a child who has been taught to listen effectively show enough improvement in the prereferral period to avoid a full Child Study Team assessment and recommendation for placement in special education services?

2. Can a child be taught to concentrate and focus attention on a speaker?
3. Can a child develop strategies to handle distractions and remain on task?
4. Can a child use specific listening skills in other listening situations and environments successfully?

#### Description of Measures

The first grade teachers will identify those students performing below grade level for the first marking period. They will then complete the Listening Checklist (Hammill and Bartel, 1990) which has been adapted for the purposes of this study; and, complete a detailed inventory of behaviors from the Pre-Referral Checklist (McCarney, 1988) in the area of Listening.

The students identified will receive an individually administered: 1) interview to obtain the student's assessment of his/her own strengths and/or deficiencies; 2) primer story from the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) read aloud, with ten comprehension questions adapted to elicit only factual recall; and, 3) the Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills (Brigance, 1983) two-step and three-step directions to repeat verbatim and perform accurately.

#### Procedures

This study will take place during the second marking period, covering November, 1995 through March, 1996.

Children in one classroom will be given direct instruction in listening skills, with particular attention being paid to the instructional environment. They will be given signals, rewards, role playing opportunities, modeling and opportunities to give their own feedback. They will be constantly given time to formulate questions and strategies to use if they do not understand the information being given verbally.

The teachers of the students identified in the other first grade classes, will be given only one prompt to use. They will call the name of the child(ren) before reading a story, giving directions or explaining seatwork. They will be asked to keep anecdotal records on the child(ren) in order to document participation, improvement and responsiveness to the strategy.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if students who demonstrate problems with listening skills, focusing attention and have low academic achievement can be effectively taught listening skills during the prereferral period to avoid formal referral to the Child Study Team.

It is the stated position of this study that students who experience direct teaching of listening skills will improve their ability to attend to oral presentations and show improvement in their academic performance. This improvement will be noted in anecdotal records, weekly and quarterly grades, in addition to being shown in the ability to maintain focus, a decrease in distractibility, ability to answer comprehension questions and repeat and follow two and three-step directions.

Procedures used to obtain this data were teacher checklists, an inventory of directions and an informal reading inventory passage. Teachers who volunteered were asked to complete a Listening Observations Checklist in narrative form (Brigance, 1983) to record anecdotal information; excerpts from the Listening Checklist (Hammill and Bartel, 1990); and a modified Pre-Referral Checklist (McCarney, 1988) which rated the child's listening behavior in the categories as occurring "sometimes",

'always' or 'never'. In addition to the teachers' input, each child was given a pre-test. This test was a primer level selected passage from the Basic Reading Inventory ( Johns, 1994) read aloud to the child, who was asked to first , retell the story; then, answer ten comprehension questions, which had been modified to elicit only factual information. This eliminated the need for prior knowledge, evaluative or inferential responses. Finally, each child was given the two-step and three-step directions (Brigance, 1983) to repeat verbatim, then perform. Pre-testing was conducted in November, 1995; post-testing was completed during March, 1998.

The sample for the study consisted of two children from Teacher C; one child from Teacher H; one child from Teacher P and ten children from Teacher G-who conducted the study. The children in Teacher G's class were included or excluded by their performance while listening to a story read aloud; then a story on a phonograph record. All of the children who listened attentively and were able to respond to the questions following the story(ies) were eliminated. Ten children were included in the study as recipients of intense directed instruction of listening skills, although the entire class was involved.

After assembline the checklist and pre-test score information, the three volunteer teachers were instructed

to use one prompt before they made any oral presentations. They were asked to call the name of the child prior to the story, lesson or giving instructions or directions; then note the effect on the child's ability to attend, maintain focus and listen along with the effect on academic performance. All three teachers use direct instruction for reading, math and language—Reading Mastery, Connecting Math Concepts and Reasoning to Writing (Science Research Associates, 1991) respectively.

### Results

Research Question 1: Will a child who has been taught to listen effectively show enough improvement in the pre-referral period to avoid a full Child Study Team assessment and recommendation for placement in special services?

During the pre-test, the responses were generally incorrect or inconsistent with the facts when retelling the story. The answers indicated some prior knowledge of the subject, but poor ability to recall factual information. Children used the incorrect gender for the main character (he or his instead of she or her); the incorrect sound heard and the incorrect story ending. Given the two-step directions, the children were able to repeat verbatim and follow each command. However, given the three-step directions, the children consistently made additions, omissions, substitutions and even transpositions, but usually successfully performed

most of the tasks.

During the posttesting, Group c could repeat with more accuracy, but both still transposed some of the three-step directions. Group H had transferred out of Davis School. Group P was inconsistent: correct with the two-step, but reticent with the three-step directions, indicating minimal progress. Group G showed improvement in focusing attention during the reading of a story along with an increased number of facts when retelling the story and answering questions. Group G showed significant improvement in both repeating verbatim the directions and performing them. The size of Group G had been reduced to six children due to transfers out to a non-participating classroom or another school. The pre-test and posttest data is summarized in Tables I, II and III.

After examination of the data, the statement can be made that a child who receives organized, consistent instruction in listening skills can develop and show enough improvement to be able to avoid being referred for a full Child Study Team assessment for placement in special education services. Other services, such as basic skills/remedial assistance or even retention may be needed in order to maintain and enhance



the level of performance gained by the acquisition of affective listening skills, if the entire academic performance is not on grade level.

In addition to improved listening skills, there was an overall reporting of academic achievement in math; but a low, although improved, performance in reading and in language.

Research Question 2: Can a child be taught to concentrate and focus attention on a speaker?

Reports from the teachers indicate that Group C did consistently attend to oral presentations with increased duration. Group H focused, then concentrated for a longer time. Group P focused, but needed reminders after losing concentration. Group G. maintained attention and did concentrate on oral presentations longer and better as the study continued.

Group G was given additional instruction in order to obtain higher levels of performance. First, they were told to "Stop, Look and Listen" while focusing on the teacher's hand (palm) move from left to right until "all eyes were ready". Next, they were told the number of times the directions would be given; reminded to pay attention and listen. Finally, they were given verbal praise for being 'ready' while maintaining direct eye contact. ("Good having your eyes on the speaker." "\_\_\_\_\_ is a good listener.") Following each presentation, the pupils were asked to:

1) repeat the directions verbatim; 2) indicate any need for additional instructions or explanations; 3) recite the sequence of assignments or directions; and, 4) answer 'yes' or 'no' when the teacher would repeat the same information correctly or incorrectly -again receiving a verbal praise for listening well.

After examining the data, the statement can be made that a child can be taught to focus attention and concentrate on a speaker.

Research Question 3: Can a child develop strategies to handle distractions and remain on task?

Written and verbal anecdotal reports by the teachers indicate that children in Groups C, H and P exhibit less difficulty remaining on task, but continue to have problems returning quickly to tasks after distractions, without being reminded several times. Group C also demonstrated an increase in time-on-task, but had the same need to be prompted to return to a task or activity.

Data presented does not support the affirmative. The children in the study would attend and maintain focus for longer periods of time, but needed constant, periodical reminders to return to the task or activity. It has not been clearly shown that the child can develop strategies

effectively without extensive, direct practice in remaining on or returning to tasks after having been distracted.

Research Question 4: Can a child use specific listening skills in other learning situations and environments successfully?

Groups C, H, P and G all participate in Special Area subjects of Music, Art and Physical Education in forty-five (45) minute periods during the week, taught by a different teacher. Groups C,H and P have a scheduled Library period; Group has a Conversational Spanish class. The Groups are taken to an Art Room, Gymnasium or Library by their teacher. Group had music in the classroom and in the Music room with two different teachers. The observations by the teachers in the study and the Special Area teachers show a consistent use of good listening skills, with a minimum of distractions or disruptions during those class periods of instruction. It should be further noted that the Conversational Spanish teacher routinely used individual turns to elicit correct responses, in addition to choral responses, to establish the correct responses and pronunciations.

Data presented consistently showed that a child can use specific listening skills in other learning situations, other environments, with other teachers successfully.

TABLE I  
LISTENING COMPREHENSION

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>STUDENT</u> (N=9)	<u>RETELLING</u>		<u>QUESTIONS</u>	
		<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>	<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>
C	LC	1	3	30	40
C	WJ	4	6	30	60
H	KH	2	T	30	T
P	LS	3	6	50	70
G	SC	1	2	20	30
G	KD	5	5	50	50
G	JHe	3	T	40	T
G	JHi	1	3	20	50
G	SJ	4	T	40	T
G	LN	1	4	30	60
G	CP	1	T	20	T
G	CR	1	3	10	20
G	MR	2	3	0	40
G	MT	3	T	30	T

RETELLING: "In a retelling strategy, the teacher invites the student to tell everything about the passage that has just been read."

Retelling scores measured the total number of ideas recalled.

Question scores measured the percent of questions correct.  
Ten (10) questions equal 100%.

See Appendix C for a copy of the story and questions used in this study.

TABLE II

## TWO-STEP DIRECTIONS

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>STUDENT</u>	<u>REPEATING</u>		<u>PERFORMING</u>	
		<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>	<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>
C	LC	67	100	100	100
C	WJ	83	100	100	100
H	KH	83	T	100	T
P	LS	92	92	100	100
G	SC	50	50	75	100
G	KD	42	100	50	100
G	JHe	75	T	100	T
G	JHi	83	83	100	100
G	SJ	67	T	92	T
G	LN	67	100	92	100
G	CP	50	T	92	T
G	CR	58	83	92	100
G	MR	75	83	100	100
G	MT	75	T	83	T

REPEATING: The child repeats the directions verbatim, without omissions, substitutions or reversals.

PERFORMING: The child performs the directions accurately, without omissions, substitutions or reversals.

Scores are reported in whole percents (number correct/total number of directions = N/12).

See Appendix D for a copy of the directions used in this study.

TABLE III  
THREE-STEP DIRECTIONS

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>STUDENT</u>	<u>REPEATING</u>		<u>PERFORMING</u>	
		<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>	<u>PRE</u>	<u>POST</u>
C	LC	61	83	94	100
C	WJ	61	89	78	94
H	KH	55	T	72	T
P	LS	61	72	78	94
G	SC	67	78	89	94
G	KD	61	78	94	100
G	JHe	61	T	78	T
G	JHi	78	89	94	100
G	SJ	61	T	100	T
G	LN	61	83	72	94
G	CP	55	T	44	T
G	CR	61	78	55	78
G	MR	50	61	55	83
G	MT	78	T	94	T

REPEATING: The child repeats the directions verbatim, without omissions, substitutions or reversals.

PERFORMING: The child performs the directions accurately, without omissions, substitutions or reversals.

Scores are reported in whole percents (number correct/total number of directions = N/18).

See Appendix D for a copy of the directions used in this study.

T - Student transferred before the end of the study.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The hypothesis of this study was that the numbers of referrals to the Child Study Team can be reduced for students with problems listening, focusing attention, following directions and manifesting low academic achievement when effective listening skills are taught during the prereferral period.

The subjects of the study were students in four different regular first grade classes in the same school building. They were considered for a Child Study Team evaluation by their teachers based on their listening, attention and academic deficits in the period September to November, 1995, which constituted the first marking period.

The instruments used were informal with adaptations to elicit specific responses for recording pre-test and posttest data. Anecdotal records and checklists from the teachers who assisted in this study helped establish whether the resulting data supported or refuted the hypothesis.

Instruction, which began in November, 1995 ended in March, 1996 with nine of the original fourteen students remaining in the study. One student transferred to a non-participating classroom in Davis School, one student transferred to Puerto Rico and three transferred to other District Schools.

## Conclusion

The first research question asked if a child could be taught to listen effectively and show enough improvement in the prereferral period to avoid a full Child Study Team evaluation. Eight of the nine remaining subjects will not be referred to the Child Study Team after the teachers noted improvement during the study. The student who transferred from Group H would have been referred, due to her severe truancy and minimal improvement in academic skills. The student in Group P will be referred to the Child Study Team. Although improvement was shown, her records do not confirm any school attendance prior to the first grade, in addition to academic achievement that is currently below grade level. Transfers and truancy contribute quite heavily to the progress or lack of progress academically. The establishment of effective listening skills can be confirmed when students attend regularly and utilize the skills taught on a daily basis.

The second research question asked if a child could be taught to concentrate and focus on a speaker. Children who have their names called prior to an oral presentation were able to focus better and concentrate better and longer. In order to continue producing positive responses, children need rewards in the form of praise for good listening and being



used as the example of a good listener. Children who are taught to establish and maintain eye contact, look directly at the speaker and set any distractions aside before the oral presentation begins, also establish a proper mental set by being given specific listening tasks or expectations.

The third research question asked if a child could develop strategies to handle distractions and remain on task. The study demonstrated that staying on task could be enhanced by calling the student's name, having them repeat directions and even by giving praise; however, the students showed that a specific set of strategies must be taught in order for them to handle distractions. They must be taught exactly what to do when distracted and exactly how to return to a task or an activity without numerous reminders from the teacher.

The fourth research question asked if a child can use specific listening skills in other learning situations and environments successfully. The students were able to adjust well to the several different teaching methods utilized by their special area teachers, within their classrooms or in another room. They followed directions, answered questions and performed assigned tasks with a minimum of reminders because they were able to focus on the teacher and also concentrate on the oral presentation longer.

### Discussion

Although the study was limited by its small sample size.

it is evident that teachers should teach their children to listen effectively in order to 1) enhance the acquisition of information necessary for greater academic performance; and, 2) avoid behaviors that may prove detrimental to academic performance.

The expected growth was shown most in focusing and maintaining attention, repeating and performing two-step directions, performing three-step directions and math skills. The student's improvement in listening skills and math may have been further assisted by the use of direct instruction techniques in reading, mathematics and language; with a prescribed vocabulary, regulated responses and signals. This system, with requirements for the production of correct, verbatim responses allows extensive repetitions in order to achieve mastery of a skill.

The expected growth was shown least in handling distractions, repeating three-step directions verbatim and only moderately in factual recall.

From the results of the comprehension passage, which was read aloud in the pre-test/posttest sessions, it can be concluded that a child should be given a purpose before the passage is read. In addition, performance expectations should be given concerning "retelling" a story, "answering questions", "repeating directions" or even "asking questions" following an oral presentation. It is evident from the

consistent correct responses, incorrect responses and the differences in vocabulary used, that the children in the study are combining what is being said with their own experiences instead of merely listening to a story and answering questions. This behavior was also shown in the results of the two-step and three-step directions. Students could repeat verbatim and accurately perform two-step directions, but they would use their own vocabulary words, change the position or simply omit directions because they were busily interpreting the words instead of directly listening. This proved to be a most effective method of obtaining information about their ability to listen, because it further demonstrates the pupils' behaviors when listening that causes them to be unable to recall facts or repeat directions

Two of the most significant changes brought about by this study were: 1) the teachers involved now feel the urgency to teach listening skills as a means of helping their students' performance; and, 2) the teachers involved are more inclined to list reasons such as poor listening skills, immaturity, excessive absenteeism, poor skill development prior to the first grade, hearing or vision problems as reasons for low academic achievement, before rushing to refer a student for evaluation by the Child Study Team. In addition, the students respond to signals for attention and have shown that even

moderate attention to listening skills yields favorable, positive outcomes.

### Recommendations

In order to become an effective listener, a child must be taught to adapt the learning environment to function in a productive manner. Listening skills must not be isolated into areas such as reading instruction or music, but rather reinforced in every area of learning. Teachers must become more aware of the importance of teaching listening skills as a means to enhancing productivity. They must become very resourceful in becoming prepared with methods and materials that are supportive of this effort. These methods and materials must be organized and used in daily practice throughout the curriculum. Good listening behaviors should be encouraged and rewarded with tangible items, special responsibilities and verbal praise.

Teachers can research the subject of teaching listening skills by taking advantage of the vast resources of places such as the Learning Resource Center in Sewell, New Jersey. They can also consult their guidance counselor and Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant for advice and direction in establishing a favorable listening environment within their classrooms.

Teachers should make every effort to give listening practice during the first weeks for the school year. They should become aware of behaviors, attitudes and responses that signal poor listening skills prior to formally beginning instruction. Children who are inattentive, restless and unproductive may have specific needs to be taught to listen effectively. Teachers should utilize a checklist to identify specific behaviors, then consult The Pre-Referral Intervention Manual (McCarney, 1988) or a similar manual in order to obtain a source of assistance that can be particularly designed to produce measurable results.

1. Make certain the student's hearing has been checked recently.
2. Seat the student close to the source of sound.
3. Make certain that competing sounds are silenced when directions are being given or oral presentations are being made.
4. Stand directly in front of the student when delivering information.
5. Call the student by name prior to speaking to the student.
6. Establish and maintain direct eye contact. Monitor the length of attention by looking directly at the student while delivering the oral presentation.

7. Give directions in a variety of ways in order to enhance the student's ability to attend. Modulate your voice, change the pitch and tone throughout certain presentations, or frequently dramatize words and/or actions for emphasis.
8. Stop at various points when delivering directions, reading stories, explaining assignments or answering questions; become completely silent, monitor listening behavior, make direct eye contact, then proceed.
9. Deliver directions one step at a time. Gradually increase the number of steps as the student demonstrates the ability to direct and maintain attention. As often as practical and possible, have the student repeat the directions verbatim. Take the time necessary to have the student master this skill.
10. Maintain consistency of the format in which auditory information in the immediate environment is delivered. If the teacher is not familiar with direct instruction procedures; the information can be written and delivered in a script format. The vocabulary will be consistent and the required responses can be anticipated. Answers to questions raised can be given in the same mode with minimal variation, for clarity and consistency.
11. Reduce distracting stimuli in the classroom. Make it quiet. Reduce the movement in and around the classroom.

12. Reinforce the student for listening based on the length of time the student can be successful. Gradually increase the length of time required for reinforcement as the student demonstrates success.

13. Have the student question any directions, explanations or instructions that are unclear. Deliver information to the student on a one-to-one basis; and, have the student repeat the information until it is clear.

14. Reinforce the skills in each lesson and activity. Ask questions, such as-"Are you ready to listen?" "Where are the good listeners?" "Are you listening correctly?" "Who can tell me the best way to listen?" "Who can tell me what I said?"

15. Give the student a listening purpose. Require the student to listen for a specific word, clue or item (sound); then have the student give the required information at the end of the listening activity. Praise and reward the successful event.

16. Demonstrate good listening by modeling good listening skills and poor listening skills. Ask the student to identify and model good listening skills. Continually include the good listening rules in posters and visual reminders in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Referral Checklist

Pre-Referral Checklist

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Yrs. Mos.

Gender: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Rating: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Has student ever received special education services: \_\_\_\_\_

Grades repeated: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Rated by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Student known to rater: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Time with this

Student Each Day: \_\_\_\_\_ How well is the student

known by the Rater (Indicate type of interactions): \_\_\_\_\_

---

COMMENTS:

---

Rate the following student: 1-Always; 2-Sometimes; 3-Never.

- \_\_\_ 1. Is disorganized.
- \_\_\_ 2. Needs oral questions and directions frequently repeated.
- \_\_\_ 3. Demonstrates difficulty with auditory memory.
- \_\_\_ 4. Has difficulty concentrating.
- \_\_\_ 5. Has difficulty retrieving, recalling or naming objects, persons, places, etc.
- \_\_\_ 6. Requires slow, sequential, substantially broken down presentation of concepts.
- \_\_\_ 7. Does not follow verbal directions.
- \_\_\_ 8. Does not hear all of what is said.
- \_\_\_ 9. Does not direct attention or fails to maintain attention to important sounds in the immediate environment.
- \_\_\_ 10. Is unsuccessful in activities requiring listening.
- \_\_\_ 11. Attends more successfully when close to the source of sound.

- 12. Requires eye contact in order to listen successfully.
- 13. Frequently asks that directions be repeated.
- 14. Answers questions irrelevantly too often.
- 15. Frequently misunderstands directions.
- 16. Demonstrates restlessness or unacceptable behavior.
- 17. Tends to fatigue easily while listening.
- 18. Shows an interest in what the speaker is saying.
- 19. Waits courteously for his or her turn to speak.
- 20. Complains of earaches or ear noises such as ringing.

Would you recommend this child for assessment by the Child Study Team?       Yes       No

APPENDIX B  
Listening Checklist

Name (Teacher) \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Student) \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ yr. \_\_\_\_\_ mos.

Attended Kindergarten \_\_\_\_\_ Grade 1 (retention) \_\_\_\_\_ 1994-1995

Circle the correct letter for each response:

A-always gives the indicated response

R-rarely gives the indicated response

S-sometimes gives the indicated response

N-never gives the indicated response

1. Appears to be paying attention to others' speech A R S N
2. Responds appropriately when attention is directed toward spoken material. A R S N
3. Can repeat digits, words, phrases and sentences that are presented orally A R S N
4. Can recall the sequence of events in a spoken narrative. A R S N
5. Can remember the who, what, when, where and how of what has been heard. A R S N
6. Can follow directions given verbally A R S N
7. Can identify what part of spoken material he or she understands or doesn't understand A R S N

Excerpts From Table 2-9. Listening Checklist (Hammill and Bartel, 1990, page 57).

APPENDIX C

Listening Comprehension Test

### Jill's Egg

A white house was in the woods. Jill lived there. The sun made Jill happy. The air smelled clean. She took a walk. Jill found something along the road in the grass. It was round and white. "Oh!" said Jill. "What a nice egg. I'll take it home."

Mother was home. She said, "Jill, you must keep the egg warm." Jill filled a box with rags. She set the egg in it. She put it near the stove.

The next day, Jill heard a sound she did not know.

"Cheep." A baby bird was born. Jill had a new pet.

NAME OF STUDENT \_\_\_\_\_

PRE TEST \_\_\_\_\_ POST TEST \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SCORE: RETELLING \_\_\_\_\_ QUESTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_ What is the girl's name in the story?
2. \_\_\_ Where did Jill live?
3. \_\_\_ What made Jill happy?
4. \_\_\_ What happened to Jill when she took a walk?
5. \_\_\_ What did Jill say?
6. \_\_\_ Who was at home?
7. \_\_\_ What must Jill do with the egg?
8. \_\_\_ What did Jill do after she set the egg on the rags in the box?
9. \_\_\_ What was the sound Jill heard?
10. \_\_\_ How did Jill get a new pet?

The story was taken from the Basic Reading Inventory, Jerry L. Johns, 1994. This is the Primer (B) level passage. The questions were revised to elicit only factual recall.



APPENDIX D

BRIGANCE DIAGNOSTIC COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF BASIC SKILLS  
Albert H. Brigance  
Curriculum Associates, Inc.  
North Billerica, Massachusetts 01862-2589 1983

2 - Step Directions

1. Stand up and turn around.
  2. Raise your hand and stamp your foot.
  3. Walk to the chalkboard and draw a line.
  4. Walk around the desk and then sit down.
  5. Hop to the door and then knock on it.
  6. Put the pencil on the floor and clap your hands.
- 
1. Stand up, walk around the chair, then sit down.
  2. Go to the chalkboard, write your name on the board and then bring the chalk to me.
  3. Walk to the door, skip back to the chair, then sit down.
  4. Walk to the window, point outside and then hop back to your chair.
  5. Turn around, put your hands on your head and then lift one foot.
  6. Raise your hand, wave it, and then put both hands over your eyes.

APPENDIX E

BRIGANCE DIAGNOSTIC COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF BASIC SKILLS-1983

**LISTENING OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST** (continued)

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each item and check (✓) the column that best applies to the student's listening skills and behaviors.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

The Student usually hears well. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, begin with Item 1.

If No, use a check (✓) to signify observations that might suggest a hearing loss.

- \_\_\_\_\_ speaks in a monotone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ speaks excessively loud.
- \_\_\_\_\_ uses hands and gestures to make needs known.
- \_\_\_\_\_ appears to have difficulty hearing over background noises.
- \_\_\_\_\_ frequently seeks proximity to the source of sound.

- \_\_\_\_\_ needs to watch speaker's face closely in order to understand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ turns head to one side to favor one ear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ frequently asks that directions be repeated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ unable to recognize the source of sounds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ answers questions irrelevantly too often.
- \_\_\_\_\_ frequently misunderstands directions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrates restlessness or unacceptable behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ tends to fatigue easily while listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ complains of earaches or ear noises such as ringing.

(Explain any significant observations or concerns.) \_\_\_\_\_

	No	Yes	Not Observed
1. comprehends vocabulary words appropriate for grade level.	_____	_____	_____
2. appears to understand stories read aloud.	_____	_____	_____
3. follows oral directions in sequence given.	_____	_____	_____
4. waits to begin a task until all directions are given.	_____	_____	_____
5. waits until all the facts are given before making judgments or stating opinions.	_____	_____	_____
6. tunes out noises and other distractions.	_____	_____	_____

	No	Yes	Not Observed
7. avoids talking or playing while listening.	_____	_____	_____
8. maintains eye contact with the speaker.	_____	_____	_____
9. shows an interest in what the speaker is saying.	_____	_____	_____
10. waits courteously for his or her turn to speak.	_____	_____	_____
11. pushes away problems when trying to listen.	_____	_____	_____
12. shifts attention to different speakers in situations such as a small group discussion.	_____	_____	_____

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name: Karen E. Garnett

Date and Place  
of Birth: June 6, 1950  
Camden, New Jersey

College: Glassboro State College  
Glassboro, New Jersey 08028  
B. A. Elementary Education 1972

Present  
Occupation: Teacher - Grade 1  
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