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# LISTENING PRECEDES CREATIVENESS!

By Mary Loretta Champine

Amidst the bustling activity of sound and commotion in the world today, we often hear the lament of the anxious and eager teacher exclaiming, "They just don't listen!" Time and time again, it seems that the endless repetition of a direction, a much needed reading skill, or even the routine of an orderly dismissal appears to disintegrate.

Analyzing the verbal exchanges that were the forerunners of an activity may bring forth a variety of contributing factors. Although no two given situations are identical, the perceptive teacher will be able to grasp in retrospect that which will help to clarify the actions of the children.

Indeed the element of awareness of the previous transactions will reveal the tone of the atmosphere of the classroom. Before one should expect that children will react in a positive manner, it is necessary that their undivided attention be given to the person dispensing the direction.

As an adult, we all can recall the teachers of our own childhood that held the classes spellbound with a subject that many would consider dull, uninteresting or turbid. Yet there seemed to be an air of mystery, that coercing force, that has been instilled in us by these wonderful educators, that drove us to learning and achievement. It is this same quest of excellence in our profession today that this same anxious and eager teacher is searching to attain.

Numerous techniques are available and enjoyable for all concerned! Using

the entire class or just a small group of children in strictly a "word-thinking" and "word-listening" activity reaps a large educational harvest. Always begin with an object that is very familiar to the children.

All objects to be used in this activity should be housed in a box; perhaps a shoe box, if the objects for that particular day are able to be contained adequately. If larger objects are to be used in this thinking-listening process, perhaps a box from the local super-market may be used for this service.

The box will serve as an "attention-getter". Much like the tantalizing, brightly arrayed packages at Christmas or the inexplicable birthday presents, no one can subdue their curiosity as to its content. Volunteers to be the first to reach in the box, will be many. A blindfold in place and the chosen volunteer is now ready to delve his hand into the box and extricate one object.

A few moments of absolute silence is rendered necessary so that the retriever may contain his thoughts and search his mind for clues to the identification of the object that is now fingered so carefully. Then he is ready to give his conjecture. If he is not able to arrive at the nature of the object, each child in turn will offer him a one word clue, affording him the option to guess after each informant word. This continues until the object no longer is a mystery!

The uncomplicated nature of the above activity holds many educational

lessons for all the participants. The blind-folded youngster must rely on his sense of touch and upon his sense of hearing. All the participants must listen to the clues so that none will be repeated; while the unseeing leader must more keenly develop the art of listening. Using what he has heard and blending that with the knowledge known presents him the opportunity to bring his imagination into focus. Developing the skill of interpreting all of these details, he is now able to come to some conclusions.

As this language arts lesson continues, the children become more deeply involved in the thinking skills. The exchange of the oral language and the stimulation of the thought processes is teaching and encouraging the child to move from the unknown to the known.

Creativity in thinking is escalating as this lesson becomes a regular event in the classroom. The stimulation of the youngsters to bring in objects to be placed in the container gives them the true feeling of involvement. It is most interesting to be thinking of one word clues that are well suited to the object, without being too explicit. This intellectual engagement encourages the development of a broader vocabulary. Hearing synonyms and descriptive words the children become entangled in the, hearing-thinking-interpretation-and drawing conclusions, process.

Once the skill of the order of the

program has been established, the children will wish to perform these functions on a more sophisticated level. Teams may be established, wherein scores are achieved for the winning cluster by the lower number of clues used to arrive at the correct answer.

Similarly, depending on the age group, the box of objects may be extirpated, and nouns written on cardboard may be kept in a smaller container. This will allow more time for the actual activity when the children are familiar with the total rules of the "game."

Although the activities and lessons in a modern classroom are varied, it is most necessary to give the children the opportunities to use the knowledge that they have. It should be expressed in a positive manner so that it is shared with their peer group.

Through the many channels from which today's child is receiving information, such as: television, radio, news reports and traveling, he has a wealth of knowledge. It is as though this learning is in storage, just waiting for the right time and place to be released. Perhaps the preceding activities may be just the opportunity for this.

The teacher who is striving to instill in her youthful charges the art of listening may well achieve this and much, much more. As her children become "better listeners," they also are becoming "better learners."

(Mary Champine is an elementary teacher at the Albert Ives School in Detroit.)