

### Learning Guide - Supporting Collaboration Through Active Listening



Alberta **Regional** Consortia

This learning guide is designed for use by Professional Learning Communities, instructional/learning coaches, teacher-leaders or as a self-paced study to enhance and support instruction, conversation and critical reflection about creating inclusive learning environments after viewing the video clip entitled Active Listening on this website.

#### General Synopsis

[Active listening](#) is a skill that teachers use to help establish meaningful relationships with parents. Strong collaborative relationships are important so that teachers and parents can work effectively together to ensure students are supported and successful learners. In this video, several different interactions between parents, teachers, administrators and educational assistants are portrayed to demonstrate formal and informal opportunities for active listening that support building relationships.

#### Key Understandings

- Children benefit when their parents and teachers respect each other, communicate openly, and share common goals for the learning and development of the child.
- Regular and ongoing communication between parents and teachers is helpful in discovering strengths about the child, and maintaining high expectations for the child's learning success. Active listening promotes a strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust. It helps establish the shared purpose that is necessary for a productive parent-teacher relationship.
- Active listening helps the teacher to develop a clear understanding of the parent's concern, and communicates to the parent that the teacher is interested in the message.
- Listening actively can help a teacher to:
  - understand parents' perceptions of their child,
  - understand parents' expectations for the educational program, and
  - build a working relationship with the parents that will support strong collaboration between the home and the school program.

For further information on this topic, please see *Support for Implementation Tip Sheet: Active Listening*.

## Continuing the Conversation: Questions for Discussion



In the video Active Listening is summarized to be:

- a. Rooted in attitudes
  - b. Building positive working relationships
  - c. Supporting strong collaboration between the school program and home
  - d. Creating mutual respect and trust
  - e. Listening for feelings
  - f. Listening for meaning
  - g. Asking open ended questions
  - h. Focusing on the Issues
1. Discuss examples of Active Listening you saw in the video? What did you like/not like? Why?
  2. Discuss examples of Active Listening that you presently use/see in your school?
  3. Identify areas of strength and areas for growth in your present Active Listening?
  4. What do you or your school do to help parents feel like they are being listened to and are valued for their contributions?
  5. From the discussion, or from your own thinking about active listening, what are the implications for your interactions with parents? Students? Educational Assistants?

Here are some activities you may find helpful in practicing/reflecting on the skill of active listening.

### Practice Active Listening

**Intent:** The ability to listen actively increases communication and builds relationships and trust.

**Objective:** Practice active listening skills through accurate paraphrasing, empathy and appropriate nonverbal cues.

- There are four steps in active listening:
  - Listen, empathize and communicate respect
  - Ask questions and ask permission to take notes

- Focus on the issue
- Find a first step

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Techniques / Equipment:** Personal experience. Observer feedback grids (below).

**Process:** In triads:

- Split into groups of 3 with a speaker, a listener and an observer.
- Choose a “real” situation that involves Active Listening *{for instance: a strong personal experience, a position on a controversy, etc.}*.
- The speaker will explain the “situation” for three minutes.
- The listener will practice active listening using paraphrasing, empathy and nonverbal cues.
- The observer will take notes on the skills that the listener is practicing.
- The observer will give constructive feedback and share their notes with the speaker and the listener.

Complete the cycle twice (six speakers).

**Group Success:** Everyone in the group has participated actively.

**Debrief:** How did the feedback affect your ability to listen actively?

**Active Listening Observer Feedback Grid**

Name	First Time Listening	Second Time Listening
<b>Appropriate Tone of Voice</b>		
<b>Accurate Paraphrasing</b>		
<b>Empathy</b>		
<b>Nonverbal cues</b>		
<b>Encouraging Words</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

## Paraphrasing

**Intent:** Active listening helps to assure others that they are being heard and ensures that what is heard is understood.

**Objective:** Practise paraphrasing with active listening.

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Techniques / Equipment:** Personal experience.

**Process:** In the whole group:

- Brainstorm a list of a dozen topics to use in practicing active listening. The topics would be those that have an interest to the participants/that are pertinent to their work.
- Form triads:

**Active Listening.** Rotate speaker, active listener and observer.

Speaker

- Choose a personal experience to share with your listener.
- Spend four minutes communicating your thoughts and feelings about the experience.

Listener

- Spend four minutes actively listening to your partner.
- Use only paraphrasing and empathy.
- Add no new content
- No questions, no advice, no opinions!

Observer

- Focus on paraphrasing and empathy skills of listener.
- Attend to body language of listener and speaker.
- Keep track of time.
- Debrief your observations for three minutes.
- Sandwich your feedback (positive, negative, positive).

(Activities from Cooperative Learning Group Activities for College Courses A Guide for Instructors prepared by Alice Macpherson Coordinator, The Centre for Academic Growth, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and used under terms of Creative Commons License)



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