

Build Listening Skills

Help students become aware of their sound environment, or soundscape.

- Have them listen silently for 30 seconds, then write down all the sounds they heard. Make a list of the sounds, and categorize them by those that are pleasing and those that are not. In the music room, categorize them as high or low, loud or soft, fast or slow, long or short, smooth or scratchy, or pleasant or unpleasant.
- Create imitations of the sounds using mouth sounds, body percussion, found sounds, or instruments. Plan and create sequences of sounds.
- Discuss the sounds they make with their voices during school time, and practice saying their names in speaking, whispering, singing, and calling voices. Discuss which voices they might use to make the sound environment of the school pleasing. (probably more gentle speaking, whispering, and singing; less calling and loud speaking)
- Discuss the types of voices they would like their teachers to use.
- Listen to the poem "Ears, Far and Near" (see below), or read it from a chart. Identify the parts that are the same (every other verse), and walk away from their spot for 8 beats and back for 8 beats while saying the words. Have pairs or small groups dramatize the alternating verses, showing the meaning in action and sound. Perform the whole poem.
- Using "Ears, Far and Near" as a model, use one of the two verses at the bottom of this page as poem starters. The first one is for older elementary students. Change the location (setting) each day that you use it, and write about what the students would see and hear there. The animal one is for intermediate students, who should act out their chosen animal and make the sound. The alphabet one is for emergent and early readers, to review letter sounds and names. Have them trace their letter in the air or on a floor pathway, and brainstorm words beginning with that sound to make a word wall or card ring for their letter. Draw pictures to represent each sound chosen. Once you have movements, sounds, and images; on another day combine and recombine them in different sequences, being sure to use repetition and contrast. Now you are tracking left to right and top to bottom.

Ears, Far and Near

By Sue Snyder and Margaret Campbelle-Holman

Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

First I hear a sound through the leaves of a tree.
I started to answer and a bluebird sang to me.

Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

Second, there was tapping and a-rapping on a pole,
Funny little woodpecker carving out a hole.

Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

Three girls' feet meet down the street,
Sending Double-Dutch messages with flying feet.

Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

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'Round the corner 'bout four blocks over,
Water-skipping stones are chased by Rover.

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Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

Up the alley and across the yard,
Five kites wrestle with a wind so hard.

-
Walk far away, and then come near,
Listen for a sound, then tell me what you hear.

Poem starter #1:

*Walk through the [forest] on a very fine day.
Tell me the sounds you hear along the way!*

Poem starter #2:

*If you were an animal, what would you be?
What would we hear, and what would we see?*

Poem starter #3:

*If you were in the alphabet what letter would you be?
What would we hear, what word would we see?*