

Promoting a Pedagogy for Listening Instruction: Primary Grade Teachers Perceptions of
Teaching Listening Through Interactive Read Alouds

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

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October 25, 2016

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: (Listening, Literacy, Teacher Perceptions, Teaching Strategies, Motivation)

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions about instructing listening in second-grade classrooms. Children's literature that included specific listening content was used to explore how the teachers' perceptions influenced planning read alouds for explicitly teaching listening skills. Investigations included: (1) What were teachers' perceptions about teaching listening, and how did these perceptions influence the planning of read alouds, (2) and how did engaging in professional development impact teachers' practices with listening instruction. A formative and design experiment (Reinking & Bradley, 2008) aligned with a constructivist methodology (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Burlison, 2011; Creswell, 2014) was used to allow teachers to participate in authentic professional development sessions to inform theory. Analysis of teacher responses was completed through a constant-comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data analysis was triangulated using: (a) questionnaires, (b) teacher reflective journals, (c) researcher observations, and (d) methodological files. Analysis led to a better understanding of teachers' listening perceptions including how: (a) those perceptions are shaped by their expectations for student listening in the classroom, (b) teachers' engagement in professional development when teaching an unfamiliar construct, (c) the impact of an already crowded curricula, and (d) motivating teachers to recognize their role as the best model for students in listening instruction is a critical component. Teacher buy-in requires professional development

that includes using motivational methods like the MUSIC[®] Model of Motivation (Jones, 2009) when learning new literacy constructs. This study gives insight into the need to improve instructional practices for teaching listening in educational settings (Lundsteen, 1979; Vandergrift, 2004). Finally, this study raised the awareness for the need to provide further research opportunities on listening instructional practices in primary schools that promote improving listening skill instruction to create a more balanced literacy structure for students (Duker, 1982; Field, 1998; Funk & Funk, 1989; Gee, 2015; Imhof, 2008; Jalongo, 2008; Nichols, 1957; Wolvin, 2013).

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General Audience Abstract

This study was used in four primary grade classrooms to explore teachers' perceptions about teaching listening. The following questions were investigated with the teachers: (1) What were teachers' perceptions about teaching listening, and how did these perceptions influence the planning of read alouds, (2) and how did engaging in professional development impact teachers' practices with listening instruction. Teachers participated in professional development sessions to learn about planning and teaching lessons for improving their students listening practices. The study was conducted in the authentic environment of the teachers' classrooms and they implemented the interventions. Teacher discussions and feedback were used to identify instructional suggestions for the lessons. The data collected suggested that teacher perceptions were shaped by their previous expectations for student listening in the classroom. Other factors from the data that impacted the teachers' perceptions for including listening instruction were an already crowded curricula, the challenge of learning to teach an unfamiliar topic, and recognizing that their teacher role was the model students practiced for listening. This study provides a beginning foundation for the need to include listening instruction in primary grade classrooms so that the students can engage in more balanced literacy instruction with foundational components of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Dedication

To my family past and present
I have lost my way countless times
On this crooked road of life.
Through it all my family was there
Anchoring me to the shore
Letting me drift and find my way.
And occasionally tugging me gently back
Always nudging and encouraging me
Thank you.
My hope for each of you is to always...
Dream big and carry a *torch* with you.

Acknowledgements

My desire to question everything began long before ‘google’ was a search engine. I devoured all manner of written text in pursuit of answers to my questions. My educational journey will never end because I always have one more question. I have been blessed to share this journey with others who also thirst for more understanding, and for that I will be perpetually grateful. Aaron, Lisa, and Miranda who provided me with sounding boards and listening ears. Paige, whose prolific propensity for words both spoken and written consistently leave me in awe. Mary, who stepped into my path at the beginning of this journey and provided me with the most important learning strategy of all—conversation—that enabled us to learn from each other.

Thank you to my committee: my chair, Mary Alice Barksdale, for your unwavering assurance, persistent encouragement, friendship, and dedication to all learning. Amy Azano and Brett Jones, you both have consistently challenged me to embrace my ideas, review APA just one more time, and to always look for the missed opportunities. Tammy Wallace, for your wisdom, your patience, and for teaching me how to be a better listener by listening, and showing me the benefits of knowing when to be silent.

I am so grateful to my parents for their willingness to accept the child who often neglected chores as I immersed myself in *just one* more chapter of a book that needed to be finished. I am thankful for my sisters, Lynn and Renee, my sounding boards—my eternal cheerleaders. Thank you to my children and grandchildren who have consistently been my cheering section and bear witness that sometimes I have succeeded beyond my own expectations. Finally, my husband Jeff, who has always listened to me in a way that I could only hope to achieve. I will come trying. I have been *fortunate* to share my life with people who have always believed in me and for that I am blessed beyond measure.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Schools are social environments in which students are engaged in a variety of learning contexts (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004). Teaching students to listen is a necessary step for learning to occur. There is a need for listening instruction that allows children to listen *better* rather than *more* (Winn, 1988). Specific instruction in listening is usually overlooked by teachers due to the myth that children automatically know how to listen (Manning & Boals, 1991; Schultz, 2003). This is also compounded by a lack of teacher preparation coursework for explicit teaching in listening (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). Studies about listening in educational settings provide implications that listening instruction can improve students' academic abilities (Cohen & Wolvin, 2011). "Learning is the end; teaching is the means to the end" (Finkel, 2000, p.8).

Elementary teacher education programs provide pre-service teachers with interdisciplinary teaching methods for the traditionally taught content areas. Guidelines and accountability for these programs are monitored by a multitude of educational organizations (including, but not limited to ACEI, CAEP, NCATE, INTASC¹). Furthermore, effective teachers must adapt classroom practices in response to the demands of changing educational developments and policies. Best practices for teaching include curricular modifications for instruction that reflect grade level content focused on student learning needs. Research shows that listening instruction is a best practice for improving student academics (Imhof, 2008, Jalongo, 2008, Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004, Winn, 1988) but the limited research requires further

¹ ACEI: Association for Childhood Education International; CAEP: Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation; NCATE: National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education; INTASC: Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium

investigation. It is necessary to provide more research opportunities with practicing teachers to facilitate higher awareness of the need for teachers to understand listening instruction to transform listening pedagogies (Graham & Santos, 2015).

In the past few decades, educational reforms such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983), *No Child Left Behind*, (NCLB, 2002), and *Race to the Top* (2009) have led to expectations related to accountability that are mainly demonstrated by student test scores (Vallie & Buese, 2007). These educational reforms were designed to improve student achievement. According to researchers, however, the active primary effects of these educational reforms have instead been increased teacher workloads; with limited evidence of improved student achievement (Stronge, et al, 2008; Vallie & Buese, 2007).

Listening Literacy

There are a multitude of definitions for the word listening which in general depend on the expectations of the speaker. Because of that, I felt there was a need to explain what and how listening would be interpreted in this study. The term listening will be defined as *a literacy skill that actively engages students in hearing, interpreting, and constructing meaning that is not limited to the spoken word: for the purpose of effectively participating in academics* (adapted from Clark, 2005; Jalongo, 2010). Students are required to engage in listening to the verbal message—as well as the behavioral message—a teacher transmits in the classroom (Brownell, 2006). This definition includes both oral and behavioral aspects within the academic environment to provide a more authentic explanation of the requirements necessary for school listening.

Listening is the first of the literacy skills that students develop even before they come to school (Jalongo; 2008, 2010). Language development begins with listening, followed by a

transition to speaking, with reading and writing coming much later. Brownell (2006) shares an example of how parents use a baby book to record each of the ‘firsts’ a child exhibits as they grow. She makes the point that even though events such as ‘first’ words are recorded, there is no mention of when children ‘first’ learned to listen because the beginnings of listening literacy happens (for students without any hearing disabilities) naturally in children. Noted author, Mem Fox (2008) further suggests that listening literacy is critical because most children learn to speak through their ability to listen. This natural phenomenon occurs through interactions with others. However, to learn to actively listen in a school environment—as with other literacy skills—listening needs specific instruction for improvement.

Some researchers (Manning & Boals, 1991; Imhof, 2008; Nichols, 1957; Rankin, 1928) consider listening to be the most significant and foundational component of literacy. Becoming literate is an ongoing learning process in which we use listening, speaking, reading, writing, analyzing, and visualizing to communicate and construct meaning within our own worlds (Ball, 2014). Because listening facilitates how we interact with others and our environment, it is a strong predictor of students’ overall success (Wolvin, 2012). “Listening is one of the primary methods by which children acquire the beliefs, norms, and knowledge bases of their society” (McDevitt, 1990, p. 571). In effect, teaching students to *learn to listen* allows students to *listen to learn* (Jalongo, 2008; Vandergrift, 2004).

Personal Significance

Teachers use reminder phrases like “Listen up! This is really important,” countless times each day in classrooms across the nation. For most primary grade teachers, consistent reminders about listening are the norm. Comparable listening phrases are spoken by teachers throughout every school day to bring students’ attention to important content information. In my classroom,

when students rolled around on the floor or stared off into space, I attributed this to an obvious lack of listening skills or to the students' inattention. I never considered it might be because they didn't know how to listen. I never thought to *teach* my own students *how* to listen. Teaching reading, writing, and other content areas was my focus. My assumption was, like many teachers, that students already knew how to listen.

Listening permeates all facets of the school day to such a degree that we often discount its importance. After extensive research, I believe along with other listening researchers that listening plays an integral role in educating students (Jalongo, 2008; Nichols, 1957; Wolvin, 2010). Engaging students in listening to stories as I read aloud in my own classroom enabled me to not only share my love of reading with my class, but also provide instruction in other content areas. Read alouds were routinely used with the ongoing expectation that my students would listen *to* learn. Unfortunately, what I didn't understand was that hearing was the launching pad for listening; it was only the beginning of the process (Jalongo, 2008). My students weren't prepared to actively listen in the classroom setting and I never thought to teach them how to listen. The context of the classroom environment required specific instructional listening literacies that I omitted; not for lack of being an ineffective teacher, but from my own lack of understanding about listening instruction.

Why Listening?

Effective classroom listening necessitates that a student both hears and comprehends a message. Listening is influenced by the student's language skills, personal and cultural experiences, motivation, and emotional status (Brownell, 2006; Imhof, 2003). It is also impacted by teacher delivery or the lack of preparedness by teachers to teach students to listen. The debate regarding whether teachers should or are capable of teaching listening continues (Jalongo, 2008;

Manning & Boals, 1991; Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004). This disconnect has created a lack of awareness by classroom teachers for understanding the difference between teaching listening and their own listening expectations. Teachers are often unaware of the issue or may feel that they do not know how to teach children to listen, or they do not understand the need to teach it (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004; Jalongo, 2008; Wolvin, 1984). Data from multiple studies (Funk & Funk, 1989; Rankin, 1928, Nichols, 1957; Jalongo, 2008) provide strong evidence that instructional practices in listening are necessary. Teachers can provide benefits to their practices by providing students with the necessary listening skills needed for learning (Ediger, 2012).

Over 40 years ago, Duker (1971) asked what types of listeners' educators wanted to develop, and what they would need to accomplish these goals. One need, as suggested by Smith (1986), was for more active and less passive listening in elementary classrooms. Students have been primarily exposed to passive listening where they have been considered; "a mere receptacle...waiting for some message" (Duffy, 1971, p. 251). Schools need to implement a shift to active listening where students are expected to move toward attending to and processing information within listening situations (Duffy, 1971). Teachers want students to listen more effectively—but due to most teachers' lack of understanding and experience with teaching listening, they do not specifically connect listening to other constructs like reading or writing that they visualize as teachable. More importantly, they have not been exposed to methods or strategies for teaching it (Duffy, 1971; Jalongo, 2006, 2008; Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004).

Instructional decisions for listening must be based on the various situational listening expectations teachers create in their classrooms. Graham and Santos (2015) specifically address the idea that students should not have to anticipate the teachers' expectations for listening. Teachers should use specific instructional practices that helps students to understand the different

listening requirements (McNaughton, et al., 2007). They further posit these demands will vary based on: “whether we engage in bi-directional listening (where listeners are expected to respond to what they hear, as in a conversation) or uni-directional listening (where no systematic response is expected), such as listening to television or the radio (Graham and Santos, 2015, p.20). More research on listening practices are needed for improved instructional procedures by teachers for students to understand different listening expectations (Cross & Vandergrift, 2015). Helping teachers understand that hearing is an inborn skill whereas listening is a learned behavior is one of the beginning steps for listening research (Machado, 1990).

Professional Development

Teacher awareness of students’ instructional needs requires pedagogical consciousness about educational content and self-awareness of teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Stronge, et al, 2008; Zepeda, 2015). The dynamic domain of education requires that teachers consistently engage in ongoing professional development opportunities. This type of professional development for teachers enables acquisition, implementation, and better teaching practices for reaching all learners. Teachers must ‘buy-in’ to the learning concept and become genuinely engaged in professional development (Ashton, 2010; Zepeda, 2015). Evidence indicates that effective professional development for teachers requires collaboration with peers, specific learning goals, and authentic practice with the new pedagogy (Fisher, 2005). Zepeda (2015) suggests that professional development for teachers should be a job-embedded learning opportunity in which teachers implement new practices in their classrooms to develop understandings and acceptance of new curricula or strategies (Bowers, 2015).

Cunningham and Carlsen (2014) recommend a constructivist model of professional development with learning experiences for teachers. By using previous content knowledge to construct and reflect on theories of effective teaching, adjustments to teacher practices can occur (Bowers, 2015). Coordinating professional development with a constructivist ideology and job-embedded learning allows teachers to become their own agents of change in the classroom. Job-embedded professional development (JEPD) allows teachers to engage in experiences with new constructs that are more likely to transform current teaching practices (Zepeda, 2015). This alignment between constructivism and professional development permits teachers to actively participate in practical applications that are more likely to facilitate teacher change (Fisher, 2005).

Why Read Alouds?

By using a familiar activity (read aloud) to incorporate listening instruction, strategies, and practice, it is more likely teachers will accept the new curricula idea and facilitate a change in not only their teaching practice, but their perceptions of how to teach listening (Vygotsky, 1978; Zepeda, 2015). Students are expected to actively listen during read alouds in the classroom. The consistent use of teacher read alouds is one of the most used literacy practices for improving student vocabulary and comprehension (McKeown, et al., 2009) and is suggested to play a pivotal role in listening instruction as well (Hennings, 1992; Kraemer, et al, 2012; Levesque, 1989; Manning & Boals, 1991; McKeown, et al., 2009).

The Big Picture

On average, people spend nearly 70% of each day communicating; either receiving or constructing meaning from oral messages (Jalongo, 2008), yet very little formal training has been provided to improve instruction on listening skills (Timm & Schroeder, 2000). In educational

settings, listening is the most used language skill for students (Smith, 2003; Wolvin, 2010) and is crucial to not only academic success, but to their professional success as well (Wolvin & Coakley, 1979; Wolvin, 1984). Teachers expect students to listen when they come to school, yet most teachers don't have the empirical tools to teach or measure listening in their classrooms (Tompkins, 2005).

Vandergrift (2004) suggests educators who value listening need to begin “expanding from a focus on the product of listening (listening to learn) to include a focus on the process (learning to listen)” (p. 3). To facilitate a change from the product to the process, teachers need supports that allow them to view listening as a teachable strategy. Teachers do not have time to add additional activities into an already rich curriculum. By allowing teachers to use a current practice like read alouds to plan lessons for explicit listening instruction, they will have the opportunity to practice JEPD that could help raise their awareness about the need to teach listening while influencing their teaching practices.

Statement of the Problem

Many listening researchers (Imhof, 2008; Nichols, 1957; Wolvin, 2010), suggest that there is a need for teaching explicit listening skills in the classrooms. Through their research, they show that teaching listening *can* improve students' comprehension, which in turn can improve overall achievement (Jalongo, 2008; Smith, 2003; Wolvin & Coakley, 1979). Although 100 years of research reflects how listening saturates educational settings (Jalongo, 2008; Nichols, 1957; Rankin, 1928; Wolvin, 1984; 2010); most practicing teachers are unaware of the relationship between the research about listening instruction and its correlation to student success, or the need to teach students how to listen in the school environment. Becoming more aware of teachers' perceptions about their listening instructional practices provides an

introduction to creating a bridge to improving the educational practices of listening instruction in schools. Reviewing teachers' conceptions about listening instruction provides a gateway into raising awareness for instructional methods with listening. Teachers want their students to listen more effectively in the classroom yet they have not been prepared for this task.

Study Rationale and Purpose

Educators are taught that children learn to listen, speak, read, and then write in that order (Lundsteen, 1979). Reading, writing, and speaking are skills that improve with practice, and teachers have experience with providing instruction in those areas. Rhodes, Watson, and Barker (1990) interpret listening as something that can also be improved with explicit instruction and continued practice. To be successful, listeners need to understand how to listen and how to apply listening skills in a variety of settings. This requires specific instruction. Teachers can model the use of effective listening by creating an environment to encourage listening (Ediger, 2012). Teachers can provide this by actively listening to all students and encouraging purposeful educational discourse within the classroom. It is important for teachers to create numerous opportunities for students to practice their listening (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004). Manning and Boals (1991) overview of the limited research with younger children reflects a need for more active listening environments where students are immersed in children's literature with opportunities to engage in conversational experiences that promote the development and practice of active listening skills.

Design of the Study

The proposed ten-week study was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of how and when teachers engage students in listening instructional practices within their classrooms. Teachers completed questionnaires that were about their current read aloud practices and their perceptions

about listening as well as listening instruction in their classrooms. After the initial data gathering, teachers were asked to participate in a Listening Study Group (every other week for 60 minutes, for a total of 5 meetings) to discuss their reflections and ideas for implementing the read alouds that focused on specific listening skill instruction and plan for the next read alouds. Data reported by the teachers included how they taught listening prior to the study and their reflections of their engagement in the process of improving listening practices in their classrooms. These Listening Study Group (LSG) meetings were used for reflective discussions in combination with the collaborative instructional planning of the read alouds that were used to teach listening in their classrooms. Suggested activities for LSG meetings included articles about listening (to inform), children's literature (with a listening focus), reflective conversations, and collaborative planning with the researcher to create active listening lessons for the read alouds.

A three-step process recommended by Funk and Funk (1989) was implemented with the teachers. The first step of this process was to set a purpose for listening. The next step required teachers to prepare the students to listen. The final stage was one of the most critical components for students and allowed for authentic engagement in conversations to practice listening to each other. These conversations allowed the students the necessary follow up experiences to engage in authentic discourse and practice their listening skills. Teachers were asked to use the students practice to informally assess student listening.

Data collected included: pre-and post-questionnaires (teachers current read aloud practices and their perceptions of classroom listening), teacher weekly journal entries (teacher reflections after facilitating a listening read aloud), two researcher observations of each participants read alouds, and researcher notes from the bi-weekly collaborative planning of read alouds. The research notes from the LSG meetings in conjunction with the journal entries

provided data to inform the ongoing development of strategies to teach listening. Additionally, the pre-and post-questionnaires provided data on how teachers' perceptions concerning the implementation of listening skills in their classrooms changed or developed over the course of the research project.

I implemented a formative and design experiment methodology (Reinking & Bradley, 2008) that was used to create a platform for a collaborative partnership with participants. This provided the setting for the job-embedded professional development (JEPD) with the four second-grade teachers to use in the authentic environment of their own classrooms. The meetings held every other week were designed to be collaborative and provided opportunities for teachers to reflect on their instructional practices (both previous ideology regarding listening and new constructs created through the collaboration within their group) to inform pedagogical practices for teaching listening in their classrooms (Reinking & Bradley, 2008).

The theoretical framework of constructivism was used because it relates to how people construct understanding and knowledge through interactions with the world and this approach also provided teachers with opportunities to reflect on their experiences and perceptions about listening (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Creswell, 2014). "The goal of the research was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). This social constructivist view referenced by Creswell explains how the teachers' participation, reflective ideas, and suggestions are critical to the research process.

Classrooms require a variety of listening situations that necessitate understanding the reciprocity of the communicative behavior between the teacher and the students. Teachers present a variety of listening situations for their students daily, and expect students to listen. Effective listening skills require more than just sitting quietly at a desk; they require active

engagement with the speaker which includes looking, nodding, and affirming for the listener that they are attentive. A school is a social environment in which students are involved in learning content and social skills. They should interpret what is orally stated as well as what is behaviorally transmitted to them (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004).

Burleson (2011) explains that when using a constructivist approach to research listening, listening must be conceptualized “as the process of interpreting the communicative behavior of others in the effort to understand the meaning and implications of that behavior” (Burleson, 2011, p. 42). The focus of this study was to facilitate ways for teachers to increase their own awareness regarding how they can teach listening. Opportunities were presented for allowing teachers to collaboratively discuss and practice methods of incorporating tactics for students to engage in active listening strategies in the classroom both aurally and behaviorally.

Research Questions

I chose to use a job-embedded professional collaboration with primary grade teachers to answer the following research questions:

1. What were teacher perceptions about teaching listening, and how did these perceptions influence the planning of read alouds in second-grade?
2. How did engagement in professional development impact teachers’ practices with listening instruction?

This study provided teachers with children’s literature that focused on listening. The teachers were asked to engage students in discussions about listening in combination with their providing a specific focus for instructional practice with listening skills in a read aloud once a week.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review of the literature about listening instruction will provide a summary of the following ideas: (a) what is the research on teaching listening skills in elementary classrooms; (b) what current methods are suggested for using as resources to teach listening skills to elementary students; (c) what are teachers beliefs or perceptions about teaching listening to elementary students; and (d) what role can professional development help to improve teachers practices with listening instruction? To provide a framework for this study, this literature review was organized into sections. The first section is an overview of listening in education including challenges and barriers for implementing listening practices along with descriptions of different types of listening. The second section addresses current practices of read-alouds in elementary classrooms, with attention paid to the use of interactive read alouds; which include interactive conversations between teacher and students. Next, an overview of reading and listening comprehension is provided. Then, the next section addresses the goals of the study for implementing opportunities for practicing listening skills. The final section of this literature review provides a historical perspective of noted listening researchers since 1926.

Five of the most highly cited researchers in listening were chosen because their general focus implicated the need for listening literacy in educational settings. This organizational structure of the review of the literature was meant to create a context that provides an impetus to conduct listening instruction in schools. The content included provides a framework for how listening instruction might be developed through explicit instructional practices within the context of using interactive read alouds in classrooms.

Listening

Listening skills are an essential part of communication. Most humans listen to learn, develop relationships, and be productive citizens. Although research in listening as a field of study is approximately 90 years old, (Rankin, 1928) listening researchers continue to disagree about which constructs represent the phenomenon of listening (McKenzie & Clark, 2012). This disagreement among researchers continues to hamper the creation of authentic listening assessments, definitions of listening, and curriculum development. The lack of specific constructs for listening per McKenzie and Clark (2012) revolves around the fact that “listening research is still focused on the process of identifying constructs that make up the phenomenon” (p. 31). Listening when studied as a cognitive process is connected to memory and information processing, but some researchers consider listening as a hypothetical construct because of the lack of observable and measurable behaviors (Fitch-Hauser, 1987). Creating authentic listening assessments continues to be hindered by this lack of consensus—and this lack of assessments allows listening to be perceived as not teachable.

According to previous listening research (Devine, 1978; Imhof, 1998; Nichols & Stevens, 1983; Wolvin & Coakley, 1994; Wolvin, et al., 1995) listening is the most significantly used communication skill. Listening proficiency was essential for not only instructional environments but also for social situations and in the workforce. Borisoff and Purdy (1991) explored listening in various professional fields and their research indicated effective listening skills are a strong predictor for success in transitioning to the role of an adult. Listening research suggests listening skills can be taught with daily practice of specific strategies yet specific listening skill instructional practices in the public school educational curriculum are notably absent (Brownell, 2006; Imhof, 1998; Nichols, 1948,1980; Rankin, 1928). More companies continue to invest

money into new employees who need training in listening because even after successfully completing their education they are not prepared for the listening requirements in workplaces (Wolvin, 1984).

Literacy Organizations

The NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) and the IRA (International Reading Association) created a set of standards in 1996 as a supplement to support state curricula standards. Generally, literacy skills include: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Although this document of standards specifically mentions reading, writing, and speaking, the word ‘listening’ was notably absent. Although the word ‘communicate’ was acknowledged in three of the Standards for Language Arts², the word ‘listening’ was never mentioned.

The NEA (National Education Association) supports listening as a valuable skill for students, along with stressing the importance for students to pay attention when listening—which is information teachers are aware of already. This overview of listening for practicing educators provides information *telling* teachers of the importance of student listening, but does not address the specific role teachers can play in improving listening habits of students. This brief overview of effective listening skills for teachers to consider when asking a student to listen also provides suggestions for representations of good listening vs poor listening. “Now Hear This! Building Better Listening Skills”³, written for practicing teachers, was a guide for considering concepts to help students improve listening but did not include strategies that teachers could use to actually do this.

² From NCTE, last updated 2012, <http://www.ncte.org/standards/ncte-ira>

³ From NEA, last updated 2012, <http://www.nea.org/tools/16113.htm>

Barriers for Listening Instruction

One factor inhibiting listening instruction relates to the inability on the part of researchers to come to a consensus when defining listening. Creating one definition for listening continues to be troublesome due to ongoing disputes between researchers' perceptions' regarding what listening means and how it is utilized (in diverse situations). School listening, peer listening, relationship listening, and work listening (for example) all require communication where one person delivers a message and the receiver is expected to comprehend the message receptively by listening—which goes beyond just 'hearing' something. Wolvin (2010) explains that a listener must attend to both the aural and visual factors to actively listen. Bostrom (1990) suggests the listener must be motivated to engage in the listening and know *how* to engage in listening to become actively engaged in the listening process.

Previous experiences with various topics can lead a listener to empathize and connect to the speaker or can cause the listener to tune out the speaker when the message is not consistent with the listeners' own personal schema. Since 1926, the problematic task of defining listening has led to over 50 definitions from various research scholars (Brownell, 2006; Nichols, 1957; Rankin, 1928; Wolvin: 1984). Although all have similarities, they are all unique to the perspective of the researchers' personal attitude and beliefs about listening.

The International Listening Association (ILA) which was created in 1979 to help further research and provide awareness about the components of listening has struggled with a specific definition for listening. This consortium of researchers is networked throughout all aspects of business, education, and professional avenues to work together to improve listening. This organization continues to support the need for ongoing research about listening pedagogies in all facets of life.

The task of providing a clear definition is impacted by the ongoing debate about the processes included during listening. Many recent definitions (Bostrom, 1990; ILA, 2007; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996) assign listening as a type of information processing in the role of a primarily cognitive skill, which includes the attributes of “interpretation, storage, and recall of information” (Bodie, et al., 2008, p. 106). This linear model was effective when describing lecture type situations in education for informational recall, but was ineffective in measuring listening comprehension, student inferences, or the students’ ability to make meaning of the instructional content. Listening fluctuates and is contingent on the context of the communication requirements (Wolvin, 2013). Because of this ongoing debate, an academic definition of listening was provided to define the expectations for listening in this study.

Hearing and Listening

A common misconception regarding listening involves hearing. Many people confuse listening and hearing as equivalent skills. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) propose a synonymous relationship between hearing and listening, but clarifies that there are differences. The first step in the listening process is contingent upon acuity in hearing, “if one does not hear the aural message, one cannot engage in the complete process of listening, which includes two other acts—attending to and assigning meaning to the aural stimuli” (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 25). Hearing is an involuntary, passive ability. If there is not a hearing loss, individuals hear all the sounds in their environment. Hearing requires very little effort; however, listening requires the use of filters to help understand the messages being communicated from the sounds (Brownell, 2006; Wolvin, 2010). Individuals passively hear sounds in the environment, but listening filters enable the listener to make meaning of the sounds and transfer the hearing experience into

listening. Hearing transitions to listening when the listener specifically identifies, focuses, and attends to specific sounds to make meaning (Wolvin, 2010).

The process of listening requires hearing a message, then consciously attending to that message, and finally to make meaning of that message, the listener should actively work to filter out other noise (Brownell, 2006; Wolvin, 2010). Listening filters comprise many components, which include: background knowledge, culture, age, relevance, vocabulary, attitudes, and beliefs (Brownell, 2006). Listening requires conscious, voluntary, and active participation with the use of inferences based on the listener's ability to interpret the behavior of the speaker and individual motivation to understand the message (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). For teachers' this means intentionally creating opportunities that transcend from simply telling students to listen to explicitly teaching listening strategies.

Types of Listening

Various researchers have divided the types of listening into a range of categories with empathetic (therapeutic) listening and comprehensive listening considered to be two of the most prevalent and consistently used. Andrew Wolvin, who has notably one of the most exhaustive publications of current research on listening, will be used as a definitive expert to help define important criteria for the types of listening. He combined types of listening into the following five categories: discriminative, comprehensive, therapeutic, critical, and appreciative listening (Wolvin, 1984; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). Each will be further explained below.

Discriminative Listening

Discriminative listening is the first type of listening because it is the most basic and the precursor for all listening. It is the ability to aurally decode and understand the message. This is the first listening skill humans use as they begin to distinguish the various sounds of the

environment and it requires skillful discrimination or listening filters to determine level of importance (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). Perkins (1971) as cited by Wolvin and Coakley (1996, p. 160) states, “humans are able to understand what was shared around them before they themselves can talk.” This ability is auditory discrimination and is the basis for all the following listening types. It is the beginning of all the other listening practices.

Comprehensive Listening

Because comprehensive listening requires the focus to go beyond just discriminating the sounds and incorporates both the need to attend and make meaning of the message, it is the most testable and most researched. Listening comprehension is an essential component of this type of listening. Comprehensive listening requires making meaning without making conclusions, and has many variables which may impact the overall effectiveness of comprehension. Some variables that are related to comprehensive listening “include memory, concentration, size of vocabulary, age, intelligence, motivation, scholastic achievement, speaking ability, reading comprehension, verbal ability, language and study skills, rate of presentation, and cultural status” (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 253). In effect, the ability to engage in comprehensive listening is based on your own environmental experiences.

Therapeutic Listening

Sometimes referred to as empathetic listening, therapeutic listening requires the listener to understand the speaker with empathy. This type of listening incorporates both discriminative and comprehensive listening and includes an additional skillset whereby the listener should provide full attention while demonstrating specific attending behaviors. These attending behaviors include eye contact, affirmations (head nods), and brief responses without interruptions. The listener also should ensure a supportive environment in which attending behaviors are done with

empathy. This is the most difficult of all the listening types, because the ultimate-goal is to allow the speaker to achieve his or her own resolution to the problem. This means the listener must actively listen to the speaker, but engage as a minimal partner in the conversation (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996).

Critical Listening

Critical listening includes both discriminative and comprehensive listening. The comprehensive aspect of listening is an essential component in critical listening. According to Wolvin and Coakley (1996), “Critical listening is listening to comprehend and then evaluate the message” (p. 316). Listening to understand before evaluating a persuasive message is essential in this type of listening. Messages designed to alter ideas (i.e., political ads, commercials) require critical listening skills. Skills included in this type of listening include the following abilities: understanding the credibility of the messenger, the influence over the listener, identify arguments to determine truth and validity, being able to judge for accuracy and reliability, and to identify emotional associations of the listener (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). Critical listening requires specific attention and high levels of motivation and engagement.

Appreciative Listening

Appreciative listening is decidedly the most personal of the types of listening because it encompasses listening purely for personal gratification. This includes listening to music, stories, television, radio, nature, etc. The most emotional responses of all the listening skills are exhibited in this type of listening (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). The value of appreciative listening comes from the motivational aspect. This type of listening is related primarily to choosing what you want to listen to.

Communication

Communication consists of both speaking and listening, with speaking originally being considered the most important. The speaker is usually the one who receives the applause, and most courses in communication give explicit instruction on improving speaking ability (Purdy & Borisoff, 1997). Until researchers such as Rankin (1928) and Nichols (1957) began research on listening, it was considered a passive activity which didn't require specific skill instruction. Vandergrift (2004) suggests "listening instruction was expanding from a focus on the product of listening (listening to learn) to include a focus on the process (learning to listen)."

People listen differently because different listening situations require different levels of listening strategies and time commitments (Brownell, 2006). She further clarifies listening should be a priority and students have to choose to actively participate in this communication process. Teachers need to understand that speaking is not the beginning of communication; listening is where it begins: "Think of the listener as carrying 80 percent of the responsibility for effective communication" (Brownell, 2006, p. 7). In effect, 80 percent of the responsibility for listening in a classroom is then the occupation of the student. The question then becomes: how do teachers prepare students for this role?

Interpersonal communications between a speaker and a listener incorporate aspects which are cognitively and behaviorally interpreted by both participants. Janusik (2002) maintains most of our understandings about listening are perceived by the listener's behaviors. Speakers usually perceive listeners' abilities based on the behavioral aspect (how they respond, head nod, eyes on speaker, etc.) but research suggests (Bostrom, 1990; Wolvin, 2012) behavioral responses are not the only marker for judging effective listening. Listener's cognitive skills should also be a part of the process (Imhof, 2008). This juxtaposition between cognition and behavior is critical in the

elementary classroom, because teachers are the managers of classroom communication. The need to raise teacher awareness about listening is a significant component for improving effective classroom communication skills of elementary students.

Listening Instructional Suggestions for Teachers

In 1971, Dukers' research specified some specific principles for teaching listening skills at the elementary level. He reported listening activities should be pleasurable (not intimidating)—and that teachers should be aware of the time students are required to listen. Teachers should also look at listening as a joint-collaboration with their students. Finally, he suggested that teachers should model good listening. Dukers' (1971) idea was that the goal of teaching was for students to understand the educational content, and for this to happen students needed a more active, collaborative environment in which they were not expected to be passive vessels for teacher instructional practices. The goal of teaching is to foster a student's ability to think, but to achieve this goal, students should be able to effectively listen so that they can make meaning of the instruction. This requires students to be active participants who are expected to listen to and collaborate alongside of the teacher as well as their peers. Rost (2007) further suggests "helpful interventions in teaching listening then are those that promote the listener's motivation by advancing the listener's goals for listening" (p. 104).

Jalonga (2010) posits teachers talk too much in the classroom and that elementary classrooms should reverberate with students' voices. She categorized her theory into three components which include providing students time for reflections, mutual respect between teacher and student where student's voices are valued, and the use of artifacts to lead discussions. Her research suggests that this switch would allow for more effective listening skill instruction to be embedded in elementary schools and provide more practice by students in listening.

Denton (2007) suggests that by listening to students, teachers can generate a more effective channel for communication and therefore more successfully understand student learning. Rather than expecting students to actively listen to passive listening exercises, teachers should incorporate more opportunities for students to engage in student to student conversations. These conversations showcase student learning so that teachers can plan for more effective instruction.

Brownell and Wolvin (2010) state effective listening should include active engagement by the student, and listening requires effort. Listening is an involved activity which necessitates ongoing motivation and instruction (Brownell & Wolvin, 2010). They further clarify that recognizing the importance of listening will help motivate students to listen more effectively and become capable of actively engaging in more authentic learning experiences.

Funk and Funk. According to Funk and Funk (1989), teachers cannot explain what makes a good listener because they don't know what good listening is—nor do they have the adequate background to explain how to create good listeners. Teachers can state their expectations for how they want students to listen, but cannot explain how to teach it. This is because teachers have not had instructional coursework or practice in teaching listening skills. In 1989, Funk and Funk also suggested a three-step process to enable students to become better listeners. These steps included the need for the teacher to set a purpose, set the stage for listening, and to provide follow up experiences for the students after listening.

They suggested setting a purpose for listening provides students with the opportunity to understand what to listen *for* rather than what to listen *to*. This stage for listening includes an attempt by the teacher to actively get the students ready for the listening activity which includes motivation. They suggested teachers make sure there are minimal distractions for the students.

After setting the purpose for listening teachers need to engage students in follow-up activities. Including these elements will create an environment conducive for effective student listening.

The final stage, the follow-up experience, was the most neglected yet most essential to the listening process (Funk & Funk, 1989). Teachers usually check for comprehension, clarify learning, and give purpose to the listening activity prior to student engagement in listening activation. However, due to time constraints, the follow up experience is often omitted. In this model, when the follow up activity is included, students are allowed the opportunity to specifically apply their new learning instantaneously through discussions with a partner (Funk & Funk, 1989). This gives teachers an informal assessment opportunity to audit students listening practices.

Because these suggestions align well with using read alouds, these criteria were utilized in this study for students to engage in listening practices. Other strategies considered and guided discussions and practices during the study, but the criteria suggested by Funk and Funk (1989) was the explicit instructional suggestion for the teachers to use in this study.

The Listening/Literacy Connection

Listening is essential for student participation in the highly aural educational setting of many of today's elementary classrooms. Since the main goal of reading is comprehension, according to the National Reading Panel (2000), instruction in reading should ultimately focus on improved comprehension strategies for students. Coyne (2009), et al., divided reading into "inside-out components" which include phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency—and "outside-in components" which consists of reading comprehension (p. 222). I would suggest including listening as one of the goals of literacy instruction. Research suggests that improving students listening comprehension is strongly related to improved reading comprehension (Hogan,

et al., 2014; Janusik, 2002; Lundsteen, 1979). Improving students listening skills will lead to improved listening comprehension (Brownell, 1996; Jalongo, 2005).

The Misconception: Reading and Listening are the Same Process

Although Ralph Nichols was one of the first to report that reading and listening involve the same processes (Nichols, 1957) further research has counterattacked this idea. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) addressed this misconception by explaining the similarities between reading and listening skills in which both involve the usage of decoding processes and receptive skills. They also reported both necessitate the elements of linguistics, comprehension, and motivation. But the variances were the key components in distinguishing the two skills. Reading was usually seen as a private, visual skill which included stable material with a linear and structured message. Readers control the rate at which they need to decode and comprehend. On the other hand, listening is a social, auditory skill with transient material that includes a nonlinear and unstructured message. The speaker determines the rate in which the material is presented and the listener is then at the mercy of the speaker. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) acknowledged that some reading skills may improve listening skills. But because the two constructs are separate skill sets, they each require explicit instructional practices in the beginning. Students should be provided both reading skill instruction and listening skill instruction.

Read Alouds

There is a substantial quantity of research supporting the importance of children's language development as an essential ingredient for student's success in reading. The development of language enables children to express themselves, communicate with their world, and make sense of their own identity (Lennox, 2013; Lundsteen, 1979). Students with limited language skills are more likely to experience an achievement gap with their peers, especially in vocabulary. These

gaps will continue unless specific instructional strategies are implemented. There is also the need for teachers to understand the importance of creating quality interactions among the students to help facilitate vocabulary development—as well as inferential skills to improve comprehension (Lennox, 2013).

Jim Trelease, author of the original *Read Aloud Handbook* in 1979, strongly recommends parents and teachers read aloud to students of all grade/age levels. Reading aloud to children is an essential part of language development because students hear the story language and begin to mimic the patterns of the stories. Students are also exposed to new vocabulary which extends their own word choices (Fox, 2008). Reading aloud supports a variety of fundamental instructional opportunities for student learning.

Hennings (1992) suggests one of the questions teachers might be asking themselves when using a read aloud might be: “How can I get children to reflect on what they are hearing so that they become better listeners and, ultimately, better readers?” (p.1). Listening is more than just hearing the words; it also requires students to actively engage in the process of comprehending the message of the speaker; the active construction of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978). Readers bring with them their own filters when interacting with text, similar to the same filters they use when they are listening. They cannot separate themselves from their own “knowledge, feelings, values, and metacognitive strategies to the text” (Hennings, 1992, p. 4). This is the same if they are exposed to text presented orally or in written form.

Fox (2008) explains children cannot learn to talk unless they are spoken to. They need the oral language model. She suggests read-alouds are an effective method for students to engage in conversations that will help expand their vocabulary and comprehension skills, as well as their development of language. The interactive strategy of reading aloud to students exposes them to

more text language, vocabulary, and helps students become more effective at problem solving while also improving their concentration. Most students can listen to text at least two grade levels above their independent reading level (Fox, 2008). She discounts the misconception that reading aloud to children was not teaching by explaining that, “experts tell us that children need to hear a thousand stories before they begin to read for themselves” (Fox, 2008, p. 17).

Fox (2008) divides her explanation of read alouds into three categories: understanding the world (general knowledge), understanding the language, and understanding the print. These classifications allow the student to make connections to the story. When students can connect these concepts, or use these strategies to help them understand the text, they become more effective readers. Reading aloud to students gives them more exposure and opportunities with higher level text than they can read independently; which is acceptable because students listening levels are one to two grades higher than their independent reading level. Read alouds provide opportunities for students to improve vocabulary whether it be reading or listening and can improve students learning (Lennox, 2013; Oylar, 1996).

Interactive Read Alouds

Interactive read alouds allow students to engage in authentic opportunities for learning in which they acquire skills for how to more effectively express themselves (Fox, 2008).

Interactive read alouds include conversations in which a teacher and the students share the reading experience. The teacher orally reads the story to the class and includes students in authentic discussions of the text (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Sipe, 2000). The teacher presents questions throughout the reading to engage the students as active participants who make contributions through conversations with their own learning (Pappas et al., 2003). Teachers who create and embolden students to participate in facilitated student conversations during read-

alouds create environments that are rich for students' engagement and provide authentic meaning making situations with the text (Sipe, 2002).

Oral language and early literacy skills are improved by implementing read alouds in classrooms (Kindle, 2009; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010). Teachers can use the text of read alouds to engage students in collaborative discussions in which listening skills are demonstrated. The conversation related to the text is where teachers can model and instruct appropriate listening strategies for students. "The act of creating a read aloud context in which all students are actively engaged with a single text at the same time allows students to collectively discuss and construct meaning while simultaneously forming their own, unique experiences with a text" (Tackett, 2016). Structured read alouds permit students to move beyond just hearing information to incorporating listening and thinking skills. The transactional process of reading requires interactions with a text in order to make meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978). The use of read alouds permits a transactional social process in which students can expand their listening and speaking skills (Barrentine, 1996; Sipe 2000). Interactive read alouds then become instructional conversations. Because read-alouds require students to purposefully listen and teachers are familiar with using them, it provides teachers with a context already used in the classroom to embed listening instruction.

In Funk & Funk's (1989) three-step process (explained in the previous section) read alouds become interactive and allow students to participate in guided conversations and encourage reflective thinking before, during, and after a read aloud. This enables students to expand not only their vocabulary and comprehension but their listening skills as well (Hoyt, 2005). Teachers can facilitate interactive conversations for students to practice listening skills using an exercise (read alouds) already embedded in the educational curricula.

Comprehension

Reading Comprehension

Prior to defining reading comprehension, one must first define comprehension. *The Literacy Dictionary* (1995) qualifies the definition by stating comprehension is usually connected to reading comprehension when it is defined unless a specific context for comprehension is mentioned. A general definition of comprehension is “the reconstruction of the intended meaning of a communication; accurately understanding what was written or said” (p. 39). Reading comprehension is defined as “the act or result of applying comprehension processes to attain the meaning of graphic communications” (p. 208).

There are many influences contributing to a students’ ability to succeed in learning to improve their comprehension. The instructional methods that are utilized and how the teacher implements these methods impact a student’s ability to read for understanding (Skibbe et al. 2012; Taylor et al., 2010). The National Reading Panel (2000) suggested the following components as essential for high-quality reading instruction: (a) explicit instruction in phonemic awareness; (b) systematic phonics instruction for K-6th and struggling readers; (c) vocabulary instruction; (d) support for increasing reading fluency; and (e) teaching students to use comprehension strategies as they read. Reading comprehension is assessed throughout reading instructional practices.

Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is an essential lifetime literacy skill for all students and includes the ability to engage in information processing of an aural nature (Brownell, 2006; Goodman, 1979). This type of comprehension requires a student to engage in a listening activity such as a read aloud. Goodman and Goodman (1979) view comprehension through a psycholinguistic

perspective and address the interconnectivity of written and oral language in that learning to read is considered an extension of oral language learning. The literate child can use the two skills interactively. Engaging in the experience of read alouds requires students to employ listening skills to comprehend the meaning of a story. Listening comprehension is complicated but doable for the classroom teachers. Informally asking students to respond to questions or record their answers on a paper/pencil test after listening to a story are two measures that can be used.

Listening Skills

Teaching students to use listening skills is similar to—but not the same as—improving comprehension in reading or listening. Assessing students listening is a challenge in part because of teachers' perceptions of listening, and due to the lack of listening assessments that can be used to assess listening skills especially with younger students. Listening expectations and understandings are varied among professionals who spend time researching them, teachers also have their own habits and experiences that guide their listening beliefs as well. This further exacerbates the challenge to assess a skill that is yet to be clearly defined.

Motivation

One of the challenges for creating a change in teachers listening practices is in part due to the teachers' individual self-perceptions about teaching listening. Lortie (1979; 2002) asserts that veteran teachers are often hesitant to engage in unfamiliar instruction. Kennedy (2016) described that teachers struggle with balancing the academic and social needs of their students while also managing their perceptions of their own ability to manage the classroom demands. She shares that “teachers are surrounded by multiple and conflicting messages about what is most important to do” (p. 3). In the current cycle of assessment based instructional practices, teachers are driven more towards meeting the requirements to meet the goals of their evaluations or teaching the

content that will be formally assessed. Kennedy (2016) further explains that because teachers are habitual in their routines, they may be able to explain the new idea, but revert to their previous practices out of habit. Teachers participate in the professional development but immediately revert to their previous practices because it was not something they chose to investigate or learn (Kennedy, 2016).

Motivational strategies for teachers can be addressed by considering the MUSIC[®] Model of Motivation created by Jones (2009). The five components of this model include (a) empowerment; (b) usefulness; (c) success; (d) interest; and (e) caring. The model was designed to encompass academic instructional practices for motivating students to engage in learning. This is applicable to professional development practices because the components serve as a basis for designing instructional methods that are motivating for learners.

Pivotal Studies in Listening

This next section includes five pivotal studies on listening. These serve to further clarify the ongoing difficulties faced by many researchers of listening in educational fields due to the plethora of listening expectations in various situations and environments (Brownell, 2006, Jalongo, 2008). They also provide the background for the importance of this type of research. They are organized historically to explain the ongoing struggle with incorporating listening skill instruction in elementary classrooms. These studies support the need to improve listening instructional practices within the school environment.

“The Importance of Listening Ability” (1928)

Paul Rankin began the journey into researching listening in 1926. Rankin conducted a study in which participants kept track of the time they spent in various communication activities (21 participants comprising a total of 60 days of data). Participants recorded data for fifteen-

minute time slots from the time they woke until they went to sleep. The categories he generated were conversation, talking, writing, reading, listening, miscellaneous forms, and no communication. Although conversation consists of both talking and listening he divided the two aspects for easier recording.

Rankin (1928) found “nearly 70 percent of the total waking time was spent in some form of communication, listening ranking first, talking second, reading third, and writing fourth” (p. 625). Rankin reported listening and reading were more prevalent than talking and writing and his rationale was: “This was to be expected because one person may talk and a hundred listen, or one may write and a thousand read” (p. 625). This substantiates his opinion of oral language as being more prevalent in life than written language.

His emphasis was on the importance of oral language in schools and “the need of greater attention in the school to oral language, and particularly to the ability to comprehend oral language, here called listening” (Rankin, 1928, p. 630). He used the four language arts (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) as a means of defining the foundation for both oral and written communication. His definition was simplistic in that he felt comprehension was the key to listening. His research established listening as the skill most used throughout the day by students and adults, yet it received the least instruction in schools. He explained that listening comprised one-sixth as much instruction in schools even though it was the most utilized form of the language arts skills. Although the study was conducted with adults, Rankin stressed the need to consider students’ curricular needs regarding the four language arts skills to better prepare students for the communication needs they would face in the real world.

“Factors in Listening Comprehension” (1948)

Ralph Nichols is considered as the “The Father of Listening” and a pioneer in listening research. His exhaustive publications continue to be cited in the fields of communication and listening research. Although Nichols began as a high school speech teacher, his research laid the groundwork for more pivotal research on the role of listening in communication practices. While his interest was educational; his subsequent research works were also published in a variety of content areas including medicine and business (Wolvin, 2010). As did Rankin, Nichols weighed in on the communication skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), postulating that “we find that almost all of the formal attention is given to teaching reading and writing, some is given to speaking and almost none is paid to listening” (Nichols & Stevens, 1957, p. ix).

Nichols persisted in bringing listening to the forefront of research. His unerring defiance to create cognizance about the importance of listening research allowed subsequent researchers a niche to continue exploring innovative ways to understand and research listening. “It was Ralph Nichols who brought listening to the forefront in the minds of teachers and researchers in communication and other disciplines” (Denton, 2007, p.27). His ground-breaking research developed greater awareness towards listening research and began to legitimize listening as a field of research.

Nichols (1948) defined listening as “the attachment of meaning to aural symbols” (p. 84). He felt that participants’ previous experiences determined their receptiveness to a speaker’s message. For example, the listener could respond by concurring because the speaker’s point matched the perspective of the listener or the listener might cease to listen because their schema was challenged by the new idea. He specifically noted the differences between hearing and

listening skills; “they seem to be two distinguishable phases of a total process which we might call aural assimilation” (Nichols, 1948, p.83).

Nichols’ original research involved factors affecting college students listening comprehension and consisted of 200 freshman communication students. They were given recall tests on comprehension after attending ten-minute lectures in various content areas over three days of testing. The listeners comprehended 68% of the material after the lectures. “This seems to suggest a need for either an improvement in lecturing methods, or a refinement of the listening habits and abilities of college students, or a combination of both measures” (Nichols, 1948, p.162). Nichols referred to schools as ‘upside-down’ when referring to instructional practices because of the lack of listening instruction (which comprised 45% of students’ communications). He felt that participants’ previous experiences determined their receptiveness to a speaker’s message and that good listening was a sign of intelligence. He reasoned that students of higher intelligence, higher vocabularies, and with strategies to organize information were better listeners (Nichols, 1948).

Due to his research practices, over the next ten years listening started to become an acceptable field of research and a new focus of listening as a necessary part of the communication process was validated. He reported that any study of basic history conveys the role of oral stories as the traditional method of gaining knowledge. “Throughout history listening has often been the sole medium of learning” (Nichols & Stevens, 1983, p. 164). These oral stories necessitated good listening skills; but as learning transitioned due to more access to printed materials, the need for explicit listening decreased. Written words are manageable for a reader; spoken words require conscious listening and are more influential because of persuasive nuances in the speaker’s delivery (Nichols & Stevens, 1983).

In 1983, as in 1948, Nichols & Stevens found “formal attention was given to teaching reading and writing, some was given to speaking and almost none was paid to listening” (Nichols & Stevens, 1983, p. 165). As did Rankin, Nichols felt listening skill instruction was necessary and listening was a skill that *could* be and *should* be taught (Nichols, 1948; 1983; Rankin, 1928). Listening still comprises a large portion of students’ instructional expectations and although there are now 6 language arts skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visual representation) versus the original 4 (reading, writing, speaking, listening) the position across the research of both Rankin and Nichols shows formal instruction should be provided for listening strategies.

“Meeting the Communications Needs of the Adult Learner” (1984)

Andrew Wolvin is a communication scholar that continues to research and influence researchers of listening (i.e., Brownell, 1990; Imhof, 2008; Janusik, 2004). His academic research in the late 60’s and early 70’s included communication studies in business and higher education which raised his awareness about the need for educational listening practices. “The need for training in listening is a problem which has baffled educators for years” (Wolvin, 1977, p. 101). After reviewing Rankin’s research (Rankin, 1926) which stated listening transpired in at least 45% of the communication skills people engaged in daily, Wolvin expressed “despite the evidence that we do so much listening, our educational system has not kept pace with training effective listeners” (Wolvin, 1977, p. 101). He felt the emphasis in language arts curricula was dominated with reading and writing instruction, with no listening skill instruction occurring even though research validated listening as the most utilized of the language arts skills.

In a study conducted in 1981, Wolvin focused on adult learners (age 19-60: over half above the age of 25) who were returning to college. The focus of the research project was to evaluate

adult student's perceptions of their own communication skills to establish and modify curricula to meet the needs of these diverse learners, as well as help them improve their communication skills. The 134 participants had previously completed some college coursework and were all enrolled in communications courses. The students completed a survey that focused on their perceptions related to: "how much time they estimated they spent in the various communication modes and further, how important specific oral communications skills were to them in both work and social settings" (Wolvin, 1984, p. 269). Participants were specifically asked to rank order (most important to least important) communication skills in relation to work communication and social communication.

Listening was listed as the most important work and social communication skill. Interestingly, the participants also ranked listening as the communication skill they were most adept at using and felt speaking was the area where they needed the most instructional help—which per Wolvin, was typical of students enrolled in a communications course. "These students recognize the primacy of listening as a communication skill in both their career and social settings" (Wolvin, 1984, p. 270). People tend to believe they are good listeners.

In the background for this study, Wolvin explains the costly training that businesses and industries engage in to prepare employees for effective communication. For example, Wolvin reports in 1975 companies spent about 1.6 billion dollars in training employees to be more effective in communication skills (1984). Most professions require "professional role models" (Wolvin, 1996, p. 8) including teachers. One example he used was of an airline pilot. In 60% of all airline crashes, the cause was poor communication. Healthcare, police officers, businesses, sales personnel—all share a commonality; effective communication is a requisite for success.

The question of why do businesses have to devote time and money for communication

training modules for employees who have successfully completed high school or college was answered through the research of Rankin (1928), Nichols (1948), Bostrom (2011), and Wolvin (1996). “Upside down,” educational practices continue to plague the educational systems even today (Nichols, 1948, p.162). Listening research has shown that (Nichols & Stevens 1948; Rankin, 1928; Wolvin, 1984) the importance of teaching listening skills is lacking.

“Teaching Listening, What Do We Do? What Should We Do?” (2005)

Laura Janusik (2005), a communication professor, has researched listening using a variety of lenses. Some of the different perspectives of listening include: cognitions, conversational listening, and listening in context. She also worked with Margarete Imhof to create the Imhof-Janusik Listening Concepts Inventory (Imhof & Janusik, 2006), which measured cultural differences in listening behaviors.

In this pivotal study, Janusik (2005) did a content analysis of previous listening research to help advance effective approaches for the teaching of listening. Previous research indicated that people, on any given day, spend more time listening than they do reading, writing, or speaking (Nichols, 1948; Rankin, 1928; Wolvin, 1996). This study also investigated the top justification many instructors stated as to why they did not teach listening in their courses which was they simply did not know how to teach listening (Janusik, 2005; Steil, 1984). Janusik found that although Rankin’s study (1926) garnered awareness for the need to incorporate listening instruction it wasn’t until 1947, that a course on listening was implemented by Ralph Nichols, at the University of Minnesota (Brown, 1987). In 1949, a course on communication at Florida State University incorporated listening assignments along with speaking assignments. In 1962, the need for listening practices in teacher training was recognized based on surveys done by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Janusik, 2002). The research indicated

a variety of resources were developed for teaching listening beginning in the 1950's and publications on listening increased in the 1980's, with 29% of the literature on listening specifically addressing listening instruction as well as examining more effective strategies for teaching listening. In the 1980's assessments as well as instructional models for listening were created for educational environments and private industry. In the 1990's, listening was the fourth most written about topic, but most of this information was reported from surveys given about courses and the materials used to teach listening. Most courses that taught listening embedded the instructional strategies in freshman and sophomore communication classes with *lecture* as the main instructional method although it was taught as a separate unit by some of the professors. Many instructors relied on Nichols' (1948) ideas and worked to explain the process of listening, identify the barriers inherent in listening, and subsequently taught strategies for improving listening skills (Janusik, 2002).

In her analysis of the research, Janusik (2002) stated, "The paucity of theories in both teaching and listening research presents difficulties in the approach one takes to teach listening" (p. 25). She referred to the inability of listening scholars to come to an agreed upon definition for listening and the idea of approaching listening from both the cognitive and behavioral standpoint. The cognitive aspect of listening is what happens in the brain while a person is listening that cannot be viewed by the speaker. The behavioral aspect of listening is what most speakers actually use to check to make sure the listener is listening.

Janusik suggested listening is an interactive skill, which should contain: student interaction, knowledge of contextual information, and the stages or process of listening. Janusik (2002) advised the weakness of listening instruction was not in the lack of texts, but in the deficiency of instructional methods for teaching listening effectively. Her suggestion to

improve listening instruction calls for more research to be conducted by teacher researchers who create collaborations of discourse about real listening experiences in the classroom (Janusik, 2002).

“What Have You Listened to in School Today?” (2008)

Margaret Imhof’s (2008) abstract for this article begins by stating that, “Listening is the one language activity which is used most during the day” (p. 1). Imhof, the current editor of *The International Journal of Listening* (research journal of the International Listening Association), investigated the time elementary students (grades 1 – 5) spent on listening tasks in school. Classroom observations were conducted to compare the transition from primary to secondary grades in a German elementary class (Imhof, 2008). Although previous research confirmed that listening obligations in any given day outweigh all other language tasks (Imhof, 2008; Janusik, 2004; Nichols & Stevens, 1957; Purdy & Borisoff, 1997), Imhof (2008) felt the various aspects of listening obligations in a school day were not specifically addressed in most of the previous listening studies. Another concern was the validity of self-reports in some of the research due to participants’ miscalculations of how much time they perceived was spent on speaking and listening. She explained that passive activities are perceived by individuals as lasting longer than active activities which are usually perceived as occurring quicker.

Imhof’s (2008) study focused on various listening opportunities occurring within different instructional practices in a German elementary classroom. The primary grades (1-4) and fifth grade (secondary) were compared in this study, to determine if listening obligations increased as the student’s age/grade increased. Observations were based primarily on behaviors that occurred every 30 seconds within the 45-minute class period. Observers tallied the “who/what was the

(main) source of acoustic information, and which instructional method was being used” (Imhof, 2008, p.4).

Two observers (in opposite areas of the room) collected the data and a comparison of their data was calculated with an interrater reliability of 93%. The instructional practices observed were: teacher directed class interactions, teacher instructions, lectures, guided pair practices, independent group work, student presentations, media listening, and seat-work. The findings indicated students in grades 1 – 4 were required to listen during 60% of the classroom instructional time whereas fifth grade students were expected to listen 68% of the time. These findings are similar to that of Rankin (1928) and Nichols (1948) who determined listening comprised over half of the communication skills required by students in classroom environments.

Imhof (2008) ascertained that “the proportion of instructional time that students are expected to spend listening increases over the years, whereas the variety of instructional situations in which there is a demand for listening decreases” (p. 9). She also cautions teachers to be aware of requiring young students to sit for long periods of time and listen to an abundance of instructional content. Teachers need to be aware of instructional practices as well as the method of delivery of content to facilitate effective listening practices that lead to learning. Students can look engaged yet be totally disengaged and usually this occurs when students experience an overload of information or a lack of motivation. On the other hand, students also can be out of their seat, doodling at their desk, or look totally disengaged, but understand the content and be listening (Imhof, 1998).

Imhof’s (2008) final conclusions lead back to previous research conducted on listening.

Listening is the most prevalent communication skill not specifically taught in schools (Nichols, 1947; Rankin, 1928; Wolvin, 1984). She explains further research into why essential listening skills are not being taught is required. Is it because listening is a prerequisite skill educators expect students to already have mastered before entering school? Students are expected to listen in the classroom or engage in communication practices for most the school day. Research findings have consistently indicated the need to teach listening throughout the past 90 or more years.

Imhof (2008) suggests the instructional environments are failing students by not incorporating instruction in the most used communication skill. Instructional methods need to be implemented due to the prevalence of effective listening being a precursor to success in school, life, and work. The vernacular in the language arts curricula includes listening as an essential skill, but instructional practices for teachers to teach listening skills in the elementary classroom aren't specified in the education curriculum.

Conclusion

Parents send students to school with the expectation that teachers are prepared to teach students to be successful in all areas of learning including listening. The teacher has the expectation that students come to school prepared to listen to learn. This misalignment has been researched since 1926 and might be considered a missing link for instructional practices. In the past 20 years, researchers such as Wolvin (2010), Brownell (2006), and Imhof (2004) suggest student's academic achievement can be enhanced by explicitly teaching listening skills in the elementary classroom.

Teachers aren't exposed to the curricula they need to understand for teaching explicit listening skills to elementary students. It is a new construct for teachers and requires

conversations and professional development opportunities that allow teachers to engage in listening exercises. They need to evaluate their own listening perceptions to help them determine what their listening perceptions are for their students before they can effectively implement listening instruction into their classrooms.

Rhodes, Watson, & Barker (1990) explain that listening is a skill that can be improved with continued practice. As children grow they learn to listen, speak, read, and then write. Listening is an expected skill that students experience more in any given school day, than any other literacy skill (Janusik, 2004; Nichols & Stevens, 1983). Steil (1984) explains, although all literacy skills are important, effective listening skills are directly related to student achievement in the classroom.

In 1996, Wolvin and Coakley reported that most Americans spend 12 years on writing instruction, six to eight years on reading instruction, one to two years of speech related instruction and nearly no prescribed teaching in listening. Listening situations require different listening abilities (Burlison, 2011). Students who listen effectively in the classroom exhibit more motivation and improvements in both learning and listening (Bond, 2012).

Teachers need support in learning how to overcome the challenges of listening in the classrooms. They need to be more aware of how to help students whose listening skills have undergone a drastic transformation, “our classrooms are filled with students who either do not listen or listen with their ears but not with their brains” (King & Womack, 1983, p. 310). Veteran and pre-service teachers need professional development opportunities that are practical, hands on, and that can be implemented with ease. This study allowed teachers to review their own listening habits and work collaboratively to create activities in which listening practices were implemented in the classroom with minimal interruptions through read alouds. Using the

format of the interactive read alouds to teach listening skills gave teachers a known context to more comfortably implement listening skill instruction.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to work collaboratively with elementary teachers to explore teaching listening through the context of interactive read alouds. It was designed to contextualize teachers' perceptions of their current listening practices within their second-grade classrooms, as well as facilitate the development of new instructional pedagogies for teaching listening. The proposed theoretical framework for this research was founded on the theory of constructivism, which relates to how people construct their own understandings and knowledge through their interactions with the world. By reflecting on their practices, the participants can construct meaning based on those experiences (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Burleson, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Burleson explains when using a constructivist approach the teacher “conceptualizes listening as the process of interpreting the communicative behavior of others in the effort to understand the meaning and implications of that behavior” (Burleson, 2011, p. 42). I chose a qualitative, formative and design experiment approach (Reinking & Bradley, 2008) to implement the intervention with the teachers.

Research Questions

The proposed study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were teacher perceptions about teaching listening, and how did these perceptions' influence the planning of read alouds in second-grade?
2. How did engagement in professional development impact teachers' practices with listening instruction?

The purpose of this intervention was to use a systemic approach to produce “rich explanatory descriptions that link interdependent variables in an authentic educational context to

pedagogical outcomes in ways that inform theory” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 46). The research questions were answered through analysis of differing types of qualitative data collected across the study which included: (1) pre and post teacher questionnaires about teachers perceptions of listening and current use of read alouds; (2) researcher observations of teacher led read alouds; (3) researcher planning meeting notes from the bi-weekly JEPD meetings; and (4) the Listening Study Group (LSG) teacher weekly reflective journals (completed after the teacher implementing each read aloud to their class). The overall objective of this study was to collaboratively explore teachers’ current practices in the educational environment to generate an intervention for informing the teaching and planning of explicit listening skills in second grade classrooms. The constructivist methodology was chosen because “formative and design experiments mirror instructional situations where teachers make changes in response to their perceptions of the effectiveness of an instructional method” (Ball, 2014, p. 79). This study provided authentic opportunities for exploring how listening can be used and cultivated in a naturalistic, classroom setting.

Research Design

Formative and Design Experiments

Implementation of a Formative and Design Experiment methodology, (referred to as FADE from this point on) was used in this study. The goal of the FADE methodology was to collect data systematically in an educational environment to create instructional interventions to enhance educational practices. These types of studies are needed to generate answers to pragmatic, real-world classroom instructional practices (Brownell, 2006; Burses, 2011; Wolvin 2010). This type of research methodology was utilized to inform theoretical understandings in order to examine them in the real world of the classroom. The ongoing expectation was that

participants' understandings of these theories would function as the conduit for understanding and that alterations in understanding and theories might transform over the course of the research (Ball, 2014; Bradley, 2010; Ivey & Broaddus, 2007). In FADE, transformation begins with the acknowledgement and understanding of the relationships and occurrences of the interactions with the phenomena (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). This study explicitly attended to teachers current listening perceptions and practices in the classroom and how teacher participation in professional development about listening instruction influenced their perceptions, planning, and implementations of read alouds

Reinking & Bradley's (2008) methodological explanation of FADE includes the need for rigor, triangulation, ample research time, multiple theories, along with specific and targeted site selections, as well as skepticism. It was also necessary for the researcher to recognize that the result of the intervention was completely dependent on the process. This includes informing the participants that the study would consist of some trial and error, while supporting their understanding that problems and solutions are an integral part of any research project (Hoadley, 2004; Reinking & Bradley, 2008).

As Bradley and Reinking (2011, p. 192) point out, Design research in general and formative experiments in particular fill a neglected gap in research aimed at guiding instruction because they address more directly the questions and issues that practitioners face and that are not addressed as authentically or as directly by other research methodologies.

Literacy research using this type of methodology engages practitioners in genuine discussions of the practicability and the value of the intervention (Bradley & Reinking, 2011; Reigeluth & Frick, 1999), and in this case, allowed the teachers to work collaboratively with the

researcher, continually discussing how to implement and modify read aloud interventions aimed at promoting listening.

Characteristics of Formative and Design Experiments

Reinking and Bradley (2008) stipulate seven specific characteristics for each formative and design experiment, which directed and informed this research study and are used to describe how this study addressed each characteristic:

1. **Intervention centered in authentic instructional contexts.** According to Bradley and Reinking (2011, p. 198), “the intervention may be innovative and aimed at addressing a problematic area of instruction.” This instructional intervention occurred in the authentic setting of each teachers’ own second grade classrooms to support instructional practices in listening with the use of teacher read alouds. Teachers used many read alouds daily in their classrooms, and this listening practice was incorporated into one of those read alouds once a week.
2. **Theoretical.** Considerate of situations that influence the effectiveness of the teacher created interventions for understanding and teaching listening behaviors in the classroom was addressed by creating the collaborative Listening Study Group (LSG) meetings. (Bradley & Reinking, 2011). For this study, the intervention was designed to be effective, practical, and provide engaging instruction for the teachers to use. As such, the framework for this study was built on the theory of constructivism from the point of listening research, which Bureson suggests “conceptualizes listening as the process of interpreting the communicative behavior of others in the effort to understand the meaning and implications of that behavior” (2011, p. 42). Teachers reviewed their own

perceptions and expectations for listening and were influenced by their students' perceptions as well.

3. **Goal oriented.** Reinking and Bradley (2008) set specific parameters to include certain goals for data collection, interventions and the process for the research. In this study, listening instruction within the classroom read alouds guided the teachers reflective journal data. The methodological researcher files were compiled from the LSG meetings, and used to inform each subsequent LSG meeting and planning for the next read alouds. The observations of teacher read alouds were collected over the course of the study and used to compare teachers' reflections on practice and their actual engagement with the listening instructional activities.
4. **Adaptive and iterative.** The iterative process allows the researcher and the team of teachers to design and fine-tune the listening experiences and practices to adapt them as needed to improve the intervention. Participation in weekly LSG meetings allowed for reflection to adapt and modify the interventions and generate suggestions for new strategies to promote listening.
5. **Transformative.** This intervention was meant to "fill a gap in the curriculum" and "respond to difficult instructional problems" (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 21). The researcher prompted teachers to reflect on results of the intervention. The transformational goals of this intervention included teachers altering the way they conceptualized their listening instruction. Ongoing collaboration with the LSG allowed teachers to become more aware of their perceptions regarding listening instruction.
6. **Methodologically inclusive and flexible.** Data collection and approaches were adjusted as needed during the research study to facilitate appropriate methods and strategies for

teaching listening. Adjustments were made specifically related to LSG discussions while keeping the research questions in mind. Articles to inform teacher practice were chosen based on the LSG meeting discussions.

7. **Pragmatic.** Being pragmatic about the research allowed for the teachers to engage in authentic, collaborative interventions that were implemented and modified during the study to inform decisions about how to teach listening.

Site Selection

I used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to identify both the site and the teachers for this study. I chose Layne County Public Schools (pseudonym) because of my previous knowledge of the school system and its literacy practices that included an ongoing commitment to professional development opportunities for teachers. The school system subscribes to inclusion practices (no separate special education classrooms for students with disabilities) and one of their core values was ‘open communication’ within their schools. The specific school chosen for the study; Alexander Primary School (pseudonym) was a fully accredited, schoolwide Title I (approximately 44% free and reduced lunch in 2008) primary school that housed approximately 500 pre-K through second grade students. There were approximately 35 teachers in the school with a teacher to student ratio of 20:1.

Participants

I used purposive sampling to select four, second-grade elementary teachers to take part in the ten-week LSG at Alexander Primary School. Second grade (7 – 8 years old students) was utilized for this study because few studies in listening involve children between the ages of birth to age eight (Clark, 2005). I chose the two teams of second grade teachers for the study based on the following reasons: (a) I had previously worked with the teachers in the capacity of a

coworker and a university supervisor so trust was established; (b) each of the teachers had expressed interest in learning more about teaching listening; (c) the teachers currently collaborate in teams of two to plan their lessons and each have more than 9 years of experience with their teaching partner.

Job-embedded professional development (JEPD) allows teachers ongoing real-world practice using the new content during classroom instruction. This experience with collaborative planning allowed the teachers to work more effectively in the proposed research project. Zepeda (2015) suggests, “teachers work and plan differently, meeting daily or almost daily with peers to engage in professional work” (p. 80). The ability to actively engage in conversations about teaching and learning with peers with whom there is already a collaborative relationship will facilitate authentic discussions of listening practices. The influence of the teachers’ role in the research was integral to the knowledge gained in the study (Zepeda, 2015), thus explicit care was taken to ensure that the teacher participants were educators with strong classroom knowledge and collaborative experience.

My previous history with the teachers comes from my professional relationship with them as both a classroom teacher and an adjunct professor supervising student teachers in their classrooms. We had previously taught at the same school but in different grade levels and we had worked together mentoring student teachers. Our professional relationship provided the trust needed to support the study and I believe the teachers viewed me as a supportive colleague as well as trusted me as a researcher/facilitator. I expected this to increase the participants’ active engagement required for this study and allow for increased investment in facilitating listening awareness.

Description of the teachers. The four teacher participants (all names are pseudonyms) were white females who had worked collaboratively with their teaching partners for at least 9 years. They range in ages from 35 to 60 with their years of experiences ranging from 13 years to 30 years, further identifying data is included in Table 1. The teachers participate in weekly collaborative planning meetings to discuss and plan the lessons for their students. Each teacher previously expressed interest in learning about ways to help their students listen so were recruited because of their desire to improve listening in their classrooms and interest in the study.

Table 1: *Demographic Data*

Teacher Demographics									
Demographic Questions Teacher Alias	Gender	Age	Highest level of education	Degrees	Ethnicity	How long 2 nd	Total Experience	Collaboration with teaching partner	
Xellie Tatum	F	35	Masters C& I	BS El Ed K-5 Masters C& I	White	9	13	9 years	
Emily Sowers	F	53	Bachelors EL ED	BS El Ed Pre-K-8	White	24	26	9 years	
Holli Levine	F	41	Bachelors IDS	BS K-5	White	19	19	19 years	
Molly Blanton	F	60	Masters Admin	BA El Ed and Psychology MS El Ed	White	23	30	19 years	

The first collaborative planning team consisted of Mrs. Tatum and Mrs. Sowers.

Mrs. Tatum holds a Masters' Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and has taught for 13 years in different counties and at different grade levels since coming to Alexander Primary School. She

has collaborated with Mrs. Sowers for the past 9 years. Mrs. Sowers holds a Bachelors' of Science in Elementary Education; certified Pre-K through 8th grade, and has taught in a variety of school systems (as well as grade levels) throughout the past 26 years.

The second collaborative planning team consisted of Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Blanton. Mrs. Levine has an IDS (interdisciplinary studies) degree and was certified K-5. She has taught for 19 years at the same school; always taught second-grade and has consistently collaboratively planned with Mrs. Blanton. Mrs. Blanton has worked in the same school division for 30 years, taught different grade levels; but has taught second-grade for the past 19 years. She holds a Bachelors of Arts degrees in Elementary Education and Psychology and completed Masters' degrees in Elementary Education as well as Education Administration.

These two groups met every other week with me and they collaboratively planned read alouds with a focused listening instruction objective (to be conducted weekly). They discussed their read aloud lessons and reflections. They were also asked to review information about best practices for teaching listening in the classroom. These discussions were used as to guide the planning for subsequent read alouds.

Role of the researcher. I provided read aloud resources, listening activities, and facilitated the discussions during the LSG meetings, and observed two of the eight read alouds that were conducted. After providing initial background about listening research and resources, I worked specifically as a facilitator and a source for information about listening as needed by the teachers. I also provided access to read aloud resources for the participants to plan the lessons in which they taught listening skills.

MUSIC® Model of Motivation. As I planned for the first Listening Study Group meeting, I wanted to motivate the teachers to participate in the LSG meetings. To do so, I used

the framework of the MUSIC[®] Model of Motivation (Jones, 2009) as I planned the components of the first meeting. The importance of eMpowerment relates to the learners' perceptions of how much control they have over the learning. The next component, usefulness, allows the learner to understand the benefits of learning the content as it relates to their goals. Next, when learners feel that they can be successful in the endeavor they are more willing to invest in the learning. Interest is important when designing learning because it motivates students to engage in the activities and can allow the learner to create long-term interest in the activity or content. The final component of the MUSIC model is caring. Caring requires the creation of a learning environment that exemplifies that the instructor cares not only that students learn the content but also that they care about the student (Jones, 2009).

I worked to include activities that provided opportunities for each of the five components of the MUSIC model to be addressed to help motivate the teachers. Although I consciously addressed teacher motivation in my planning of the first meeting, I did not specifically address each component when I planned the subsequent LSG meetings.

Data Collection

This type of FADE study was innovative for the participants. The unfamiliar area of instruction (in this case, listening) was implemented to help teachers collaboratively plan for an intervention in the authentic environment of their classroom using the real-world applications of read alouds. A systemic approach was used to “produce rich explanatory descriptions that link interdependent variables in an authentic educational context to pedagogical outcomes in ways that inform theory” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 46).

The teachers completed the pre-questionnaires about their current listening instructional perceptions and practices prior to the study. Teachers completed the postquestionnaires again at

the end of the study. Qualitative data collected included: (1) both questionnaires, (2) researcher observations of teacher led read alouds, (3) teacher/researcher planning meeting notes, and (4) Listening Study Group (LSG) teacher weekly reflective journals (completed after implementing each read aloud to the class).

Phases of Formative and Design Experiments: (FADE)

Along with the seven characteristics of FADE, Reinking and Bradley (2008) outline the six phases of the research process used in this type of study. Formative and design experiments include a timeline of the following six specific phases which permits flexible guidelines for the researcher and the participants to engage in reflective practices to inform the interventions generated by the study (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). A description of the study timeline and phases can be found in Appendix A.

Phase One: Recruitment of Participants

Before the implementation of this study, the researcher met with the teacher participants to explain the FADE process and to review the characteristics of the job-embedded learning professional development (JEPD). The researcher and the participants met and discussed the consent forms, the expectations of both the participants and the researcher, and created a timeline for the study. Teachers agreed to meet every other week to discuss and plan the read alouds with their own specific goal of completing the study prior to the beginning of parent/teacher conferences. The teachers and the researcher met for about 60 minutes.

Phase Two & Three: Collection of Demographic Data & Compilation of Baseline Data

Demographic data regarding the teacher participants was collected prior to the start of the study in the first LSG meeting. Information compiled in this meeting included the information from Table 1 on page 51. The information from the questionnaires, which included teacher's

perceptions of their students' ability to listen during read alouds and their current read aloud practices was collected at the first LSG meeting. This data was used to generate baseline data for teacher's current practices and beliefs about listening in the classroom and were used to inform the suggestions for alternate strategies for the intervention.

Teachers shared their answers from the questionnaires and through these discussions we collaboratively discussed their perceptions of listening and their use of read alouds.

Methodological files (Bailey, 1996) were generated from the teacher discussions during each of the LSG meetings. I used the methodological files to triangulate the data with the teachers' reflective journals to provide ongoing resources about listening for the teachers.

Phase Four: Implementation of the Intervention

The teachers and the researcher met for about 60 minutes for the LSG meetings except for the first and the last meetings which lasted approximately 90 minutes. The teachers' perceptions and ongoing intervention ideas about listening were reflected upon in each of the LSG meetings. Thoughts and ideas from the teachers' discussions were noted by the researcher and analyzed after each meeting in the form of methodological files. Each teacher was informally observed twice over the course of the study. These observations of the interactive read aloud were used to further guide the intervention suggestions. The focus of these observations was to provide feedback for the teachers concerning the guidelines created by the LSG meetings for the criteria to incorporate in the read alouds. The observations were focused solely on the teachers.

Over the course of the study, I collected and reviewed the teachers' reflective journals after each Lesson Study Group. Due to the authentic intervention of a FADE study, modifications occurred during the study that were based on the data. The data collection field

notes were valuable when explaining the decisions made during the study. Since these field notes specifically deal with the methodology, these were used as methodological files to capture how the intervention was adapted over the course of the study. Triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Reinking & Bradley, 2008) of the data collected from the four participants was used to generate emerging themes. I qualitatively analyzed using the constant-comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method was used to identify emerging themes regarding teachers' perceptions of listening and their use of interactive read alouds to teach listening.

The implementation of the intervention required teachers to use specific strategies for teaching listening within the context of the read alouds. The teachers were asked to use Funk and Funk's (1989) three criteria: (a) prepare students to listen; (b) set a purpose for listening; and (c) provide students with opportunities before, during, and after the read aloud to engage in practicing dyad strategies (DS) with their peers. Dyad strategies required students to take turns being the speaker and the listener—student one would listen, student two would speak—and then the students would switch roles.

Data collection tools

Demographic data and Questionnaires. Initial demographic and baseline questionnaires were collected at the beginning of the study. The questionnaires were also completed with the teachers after the study. The questionnaires were used to informally assess teachers' perspectives on planning and teaching listening in their classrooms.

Reflective Journals. Participants were asked to complete journal entries after each weekly read aloud. Journals were supplied for each participant. There were guiding questions provided if the teachers chose to use them which are depicted in Table 2. Teacher chose to use

the questions at the beginning of the study but eventually used the first question and then created their own reflections without the specific questions. These reflections were used after each lesson was implemented to record the successes, failures, and perceptions from the participants about the intervention. These reflections were then qualitatively coded using constant-comparison to help me facilitate the next meeting. Teacher responses and emerging themes were developed to create the ongoing adjustments suggested for the following read aloud lessons.

Table 2. *Teacher Journal Prompts*

Journal Prompts			
What went well during the read aloud?	What surprised you during the read aloud?	What did not go well during the read aloud?	What will you do differently in the next read aloud?

Listening Study Group] (LSG meetings). After each LSG meeting the researcher created methodological files which consisted of informal reflective notes pertaining to the groups' discussion of the intervention. These were also transcribed and qualitatively coded using constant-comparison to generate themes to give a thick description of the intervention and the participants' perceptions.

Informal observations. Each teacher scheduled two read aloud observations. I observed these read aloud lessons specifically looking for the criteria that was discussed in the first LSG meeting. The components of Funk and Funk (1989) were the guiding questions for the observations. Did the teachers prepare the students to listen and set a clear purpose for listening? Did they give the students opportunities to engage discussing with each other their responses to the questions? And finally, did they allow the students to share that information back with the rest of the group after they had talked with their partner?

Procedure. The read alouds were conducted over the course of ten weeks, with the

requirement that each teacher implement an intervention at least one time per week. The time allotment for each intervention was determined by the LSG and each teacher allotted at least 20 minutes for the lesson. The intervention included teacher participants instructing students using children's literature texts that have a focus on listening skills each week. Teachers were provided with the texts, the strategies for practicing listening (DS), and the context of using the format suggested by Funk and Funk (1989). Teachers also chose to include the Whole Body Listening Larry visual (components are in Table 7; page 84) to introduce and provide descriptors for their students about what good listening means and looks like.

Phase Five: Comparison of the Baseline Data to Intervention Data

I analyzed the data quantitatively using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) constant-comparative method to consistently compare the categories and themes that emerge from the observations and reflections gathered during all phases of the study. This iterative process allowed for concepts to emerge during the research process and inform the researcher as to what additional data was required for the intervention (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This data was analyzed weekly prior to each new LSG meeting in order help facilitate the discussions and lesson activities implemented by the participants over the course of the intervention.

The demographic and baseline interview data was collected prior to the study. The questionnaires were completed both pre-and post for comparison of teachers' initial and ending perceptions related to listening. Categories were developed from the reflective journal notes, methodological files, and the questionnaires to create initial and descriptive codes from the data that were modified and examined with the goals of the intervention used as the main overarching theme for analyzing data. The process of open coding (Charmaz, 2006) was used to read and re-read the data to examine and gain initial concepts and to scrutinize the data for new

understandings and unexpected discoveries that were used to inform participants and the researcher during the study.

Phase Six: Consolidation of Findings and Results Summary

My data collection during the intervention was analyzed, categorized, and then coded to provide ongoing analysis of what listening instruction during read alouds involves. Teachers' perceptions and reflections also served to inform the researcher's analysis of the data and the intervention practices incorporated during the ten-week intervention. Through ongoing qualitative analysis of the data in which coding and categorizing the data was systematically done on a weekly basis, the interventions were iteratively altered and facilitated according to findings from the data. The data was simultaneously collected and analyzed to interpret the meanings derived from comparisons and triangulation of the data collection tools. Analytic memos were also used to develop ideas for the lessons and to analyze issues to help guide analysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The ongoing 'findings' from the data were used to inform the procedures in the intervention.

Conclusion

As the researcher, I saw myself as the researcher-as-instrument in this qualitative study. By facilitating the discourse in the LSG meetings I created a "conversational space" (Pezalla, et al., 2012) for the participants to engage in sharing their reflections about their interactions during the study. It was essential that I be aware of my own perceptions and ideals to allow for cautious approaches when examining the participants' data. This interrelationship between myself and the participants required reflexivity when regarding the complex issues of the study (O'Sullivan, 2015).

To ensure validity, criteria recommended by Creswell (2014) was used throughout the study. Member checking was employed during the LSG meetings via discussions of the teachers' reflective journal responses. This data was triangulated with my methodological files from the meetings to establish accuracy of the information with the participants. Thick, rich descriptions of the data were included in the findings to provide transparency. My own experience required me to consistently step between the role of the researcher and that of the classroom teacher. This was considerably easier in some ways than I expected, because like the participants in the study I had not been aware of the importance of including listening in my own instruction so the process evolved over the course of the intervention. The lack of empirical research regarding listening instruction in primary grades allowed the constructivist approach to provide data to inform further research studies for listening with younger children. The following chapter provides descriptive analysis of the findings and further explains how the data was used to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose of Study

Data will answer the following research questions:

1. What were teacher perceptions about teaching listening and how did these perceptions influence the planning of read alouds in second-grade?
2. How did engagement in professional development impact teachers' practices with listening instruction?

This study was designed so participants could engage in a collaborative, job-embedded professional process for a better understanding of their perceptions about listening instruction in primary grade classrooms. The format of read alouds were used as the delivery method for listening skills instruction.

The original research design called for a 10-week intervention with four second-grade teachers. Due to an unexpected illness on the part of one of the teachers; the last half of the study was conducted with only 3 participants. Four participants' data was included up until week four of the study; beginning at week five, the data consists of information from the remaining three participants.

Because this study started in January, there were also multiple snow days which forced the timeline to be adjusted to meet the teachers' goal of data collection ending prior to the start of the parent-teacher conference week in March. The study still included 5 LSG meetings and 2 observed read alouds with the 3 participants. Although the study encompassed 10 weeks, due to snow days, the study included 8 weeks of read aloud lessons.

Study Environment

The study began with four second-grade teachers who worked in a Title I primary school (PK-2 grade) where approximately 48% of the students received free and reduced lunch. The school was built in the 1970's and it utilized an open-space floor plan. Of course, the teachers created walls using modular furniture to divide their classroom spaces. Second-grade was housed in the back of the building in a wing adjacent to first grade. There was no floor to ceiling walls in the second-grade workspaces; only rolling carts, book cases, and bulletin boards served as dividers between the classrooms. The fluidity of the classroom environment allowed teachers to interact with other teachers throughout the day. Eight second-grade classrooms can generate a tremendous amount of noise, but the teachers stated that the noise level from the surrounding classrooms was "something you just get used to and tune out while teaching." The teachers shared that the students get used to tuning out the noise from other classrooms sooner than the adults do. Since the LSG meetings took place after school, noise was not a distraction for the collaborative planning discussions. The openness of the meeting environment did cause some distractions from other staff members who would pass by.

Overview of Teacher Participants

The participants for the study were chosen using purposeful sampling based on my own previous observations of their collaborative practices, consistent use of read alouds, and their expressed interest in working with students to help them become better listeners. Since I had previously worked in the school with them as a teacher and as a supervisor of their student teaching interns, their comfort level within our LSG meeting discussions was high. As is the case for most primary classrooms, participants were solely responsible for teaching all content to their students and, they chose to incorporate multiple daily read alouds in their classrooms. The

participants had the flexibility of incorporating the read alouds at any time throughout the day based on their own schedules. This allowed for flexibility within each classroom for the participants to conduct their individual read alouds.

All four participants worked in connecting classrooms and consistently interacted daily. Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Tatum had co-planned content for the past 9 years, and Mrs. Blanton and Mrs. Levine had collaboratively planned for the previous 19 years. All reported they had not received any specific instruction in their teacher preparation programs in listening, although they had each participated in at least one communication course in their undergraduate curricula.

Participants appeared to be a little defensive about their roles as listening educators at first. They stated that they told the students to listen every day in their classrooms and shared their expectations for listening with their students at the beginning of every school year. Mrs. Tatum presented her belief that she used a listening book at the beginning of the year and students knew that they had to listen when she reminded them that, “It is time to be an active listener” because they knew her expectations. Each participant expressed dissatisfaction with their students’ ability to listen and follow directions. Mrs. Sowers reported, “I am just used to repeating myself several times when I give directions; sometimes they just don’t listen.”

Questionnaires

There were two questionnaires completed by the participants at the start of the study and then again at the completion of the study. The first was used to collect information about teachers’ current use of read alouds in their classes. This information was used as an introductory conversation in the first LSG meeting for participants to think critically about how implementing the read aloud for listening instruction could be structured in their weekly schedule. The second questionnaire was about their perceptions of listening and was completed

to compile baseline data on participants' perceptions of their listening expectations and listening instructional practices prior to the study. These were self-evaluation type questionnaires that required them to informally evaluate listening in their classrooms. Both questionnaires were completed pre-and post-study for participants to self-evaluate how participating in the study influenced (a) their planning and implementing read alouds; (b) their perceptions for student listening in their classrooms; and (c) their instructional practices for teaching listening.

Read Alouds for Listening

Because the LSG meetings were held every other week, each team wanted to plan for one of the two read alouds that would be used and then share that lesson with the other team. This would then only require each team to spend time planning one lesson for the two-week period before we met again. Planning included previewing the text, creating a 'hook' or motivating introduction for the story, and compiling a list of questions for stopping points during the read aloud to allow students to engage in listening practices. As suggested by Smith (1986) it was stressed to the participants the need to incorporate a more active listening environment for students to engage in listening practices. Participants were asked to use Funk and Funk's (1989) criteria which included: a) setting a purpose for listening by creating a hook or motivational concept for students, b) preparing students to listen by explicitly giving students listening expectations, and c) student engagement in conversation by using the DS to practice taking turns being the speaker and the listener which included before, during, and after the read aloud. Because it was apparent from their own perceptions that students were more motivated to listen if they were interested first, teachers stated, "They do listen better when we use something that they are really interested in."

Finally, the opportunities for students' discussions were stressed to be the critical piece for participants to monitor. The participants were asked to monitor their students as they practiced using the DS to informally assess students as they engaged in the listening practice. Monitoring required them to listen in to the different groups and informally evaluate how the student performed when they (the students) were in the role of the listener. The importance of 'listening in' on the student conversations facilitated by the questions asked during (and at the end) the read aloud would permit participants to gauge students' performance as they practiced listening. Participants again felt each of those main ideas were currently embedded in their own read alouds and readily agreed to implement them.

Participant Roles in Planning

The Participant's Role. Planning was a large part of the LSG meetings. The participants previewed texts and discussed how often to stop and ask questions. They also discussed which questions would be generally asked to the whole class and which questions would be used for incorporating the DS so that students could engage in practicing listening to each other. The participants willingly engaged in discussions about their perceptions, expectations, and the use of the read alouds to engage students in the process of listening. Their experiences with implementing the read alouds were used as a guide as they planned each of the read alouds. The participants readily shared their reflective journal notes and engaged in critical discussions about not only how their students responded to the read alouds; but described the challenges they faced as teachers when implementing listening instruction. Challenges included students not meeting their (the participants) listening expectations and the students' ability to state how to be a good listener, but then not following through by exhibiting the teachers expected behaviors.

During the first few meetings, the participants' attitudes became less defensive about teaching listening as they appeared to gain more experience and confidence with using the DS and teaching listening. Participants were encouraged to ask questions that would motivate students to engage in practicing listening and speaking (creating conversations within the DS) with each other when responding to questions from the text. An instructional suggestion for incorporating the DS activity was explained and practiced with the participants in the first LSG meeting. DS are generally used to allow students to engage in authentic conversations about their learning, and are like a turn and talk or a think, pair, share activity. The difference in the dyad approach is that the teacher sets specific listening expectations at the beginning of the activity. Students were asked to specifically fill the role of listener or speaker and the participants were to monitor the conversations to ensure students were meeting that expectation. After using this in the first read aloud Mrs. Levine shared that, "It was nice for everyone to get a chance to speak and actively listen."

My Role as the Researcher. One of the main goals for me as the researcher in the LSG meetings was to serve as a facilitator for listening instruction strategies. My roles as the researcher during this process also included answering questions or making suggestions as requested by the participants. I analyzed these research notes and compiled information from the planning discussions to document the participants' ideas and questions about using the read alouds for listening instruction. My research notes and the copied journal pages from the participants' reflective journals were used to generate articles, strategies, and other information needed to support teachers' questions.

Initial Perceptions of Participants

The next section is an overview of the participants, their experiences, and their expectations for student listening in the classroom. This information provides a context for the participants' perceptions of listening at the onset of the study as well as their expectations for student listening. Participant' initial perceptions were used as a comparison to their final perceptions after participation in the study. This information was analyzed from the completed questionnaires about their current listening practices as well as their reflective journals. This background information serves to help the reader understand how this FADE study might have transformed some of the participants' perceptions about the overall construct of listening and instructional practices.

Mrs. Blanton. Mrs. Blanton said she used at least two or more daily read alouds. She reported that her students did not follow oral directions well and she often had to repeat instructions because students “did not do what is expected” when she gave directions. When responding to what she thought good listening looked like in her classroom, her responses included “students kept their body quiet, their eyes on the speaker, and had engaged expressions.” She further explained that:

Being exposed to listening is a learned behavior. You also should be taught to listen—situational listening is usually taught. Teachers need to model expectations and be a good listener yourself. If children can listen better, then they should more effectively learn. She felt “moderately” comfortable with teaching listening and shared she thought she spent at least 90% of her day teaching listening to her students. She also shared that when the read aloud was connected to content that students were interested in they were much better listeners.

“When I teach Egypt, especially when we discuss mummies, they are always very attentive.”

Her current listening instructional practices included using the following strategies: a) Simon Says, b) random directions, “Put your hand on your head if you are finished,” c) have a student repeat the directions to the class, and d) read alouds (where students were supposed to listen to the story). She also explained that she would change her voice level when she was trying to regain their attention so they would focus (listen) to her. Mrs. Blanton’s expectations for student’s behavior during a read aloud included the need for students to be silently listening with their hands to themselves while sitting still and paying attention to the reader. “I know they are listening to the story when they have their hands in their laps, are looking at me, and sitting still.” Mrs. Blanton participated in the study for the first 4 weeks before she had to drop out because of illness.

Mrs. Levine. Mrs. Levine explained how she used read alouds to: a) build language skills, b) encourage listening skills, c) for vocabulary and fluency instruction, d) to expose her class to a variety of literature, and e) for enjoyment. She also shared that she used read alouds across all content areas in her classroom. Her expectations for students during read alouds included: (a) listening, (b) verbal exchanges, (c) student interaction, (d) attention on the speaker, and (e) eyes on the book. She also suggested read alouds were an effective way to model skills for students.

Her listening instructional practices began with a ‘hook’ for her lessons to engage students because she wanted to motivate them to want to listen. She shared that she tells her students when it is time to listen by saying something like “it is time for important instructions, eyes on me.” Other strategies she uses include counting eyes by 2’s and having students repeat the directions back to her. She consistently engaged the students in cooperative learning

strategies and stated she understood the importance of modeling listening for them in the classroom. She shared the following about her current listening perceptions:

Listening has a big impact because if they are being active listeners they are engaged and learning is occurring. Some children have been exposed to what good listening is and some need to be taught and it needs to be modeled for them. Listening is very important for them to learn the concepts being taught, also to be an active listener during group work.

She was “very comfortable” teaching listening in her classroom and stated she taught it “off and on throughout the school day.” She felt her students really listened well, “when we are studying Egypt or China, this is something very interesting and motivating to them.”

Mrs. Sowers. Mrs. Sowers stated that she currently used read alouds for the following reasons: a) to increase vocabulary, b) build language, c) improve fluency, d) expose students to a variety of vocabulary and texts, and c) for enjoyment. She reported read alouds were used to enable students to have a fluent model and for specific teaching points in her lessons. She also shared that her read alouds were used to share information from all content areas.

Repeating everything was her primary strategy for ensuring students were listening with additional methods that sometimes-included modeling and using attention getters. For example, she would say a phrase that was a signal for students to know when to listen like, “it’s time to listen.” She shared she would also have students consistently repeat her directions back to the rest of the class. Her perceptions included:

Some of listening is learned at home and exposure to books. Some must be taught such as eyes on the reader and active listening. Listening is very important to be taught in order for students to learn concepts taught as well as during group interactions and

collaborative work. Teachers need to model being a good listener. I think it (teaching listening) will have a positive impact—I'm hoping they will improve their listening skills.

She felt “comfortable” teaching listening and shared that “we talk about listening all day, but I’m not sure I actually ‘teach’ it a lot.” Like Mrs. Blanton and Mrs. Levine, she shared her students were most engaged in listening when they learned about mummies and were interested and engaged in the topic.

Mrs. Tatum. Mrs. Tatum explained that she used read alouds to help students: a) build language skills, b) improve fluency, c) expose students to literature, d) build on SOL content, and e) for fun. She agreed with Mrs. Sowers that read alouds were a good tool for modeling a variety of concepts for students. She used them to build on as well as incorporate specific teaching points based on the SOL content. Read alouds were also used to expose students to a wide variety of literature and to help build their listening skills.

Her listening instructional practices included lots of repetition for the students which including modeling and restating directions. She also stressed the importance of using nonexamples when modeling so students could see what listening should look like and what it does not look like. Mrs. Tatum explained how she taught active listening specifically using the term ‘active listeners’ with her students every day. “It is time to be active listeners” or “active listeners, it’s time to listen to the directions.” By reading *Harry B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen (2005)* at the beginning of the year, she stated she could consistently remind her students to be ‘active listeners’ for the remainder of the school year. Her perceptions of listening included these responses:

Active listening makes people feel heard which creates respect and learning. Teachers need to model the expectations and also be a good listener. It is vital that students should listen to instruction and be able to actively listen during group work and social interactions. Listening is something that should be taught and is a learned behavior. It comes from exposure as a child and expectations of family. Students must be taught what active listening looks like in different situations. Modeling is important.

She stated she felt “very comfortable” teaching listening. “I believe structure helps with classroom discipline and provides a sense of community to promote success.” She felt she taught listening “multiple times daily” in her classroom and students were better listeners when they were “actively interested and engaged by hands on learning.”

Listening Study Group Meetings

Listening Study Group meetings were held every other week from January through early March. There was a total of 5 collaborative planning meetings that consistently included: a) strategies for teaching listening, b) teacher discussions of the read alouds, c) choosing texts and planning activities for the weekly read alouds, and (d) ongoing dialogues about listening instructional practices. These after-school meetings were held for approximately sixty minutes.

I provided short articles for participants to review about literacy standards for listening, listening myths, and classroom listening skills. The articles for the first meeting were chosen to provide an overview for participants with an emphasis on why teaching students how to listen was beneficial. Additional articles were selected as topics arose from the LSG meetings. These articles were highlighted for participants to identify key points they had specifically inquired about or noted as interests during the previous LSG meetings. The second-grade language arts standards for oral language were also discussed periodically throughout the study.

Each article was chosen specifically to support participants as they developed awareness of the need for new listening pedagogies. The receptiveness of the participants to each article was generally positive in the beginning of the study and led to conversations and sometimes debates about how teachers can authentically teach listening. Although they defended their current listening practices at the onset of the study, participants they readily discussed the highlighted information from the articles openly.

The articles also directly related to listening strategies, research, or suggestions for improving classroom listening. Articles were chosen based on their availability and relatedness to practicing teachers at the primary level. The articles in Table 3 were taken mainly from journals that were principally used by practicing teachers.

Table 3. *Articles for Teachers*

A Listening Focus: Articles for Teachers							
LSG Meeting Date	1/7	1/7	1/7	1/19	1/19	2/4	2/4
Author & Year	Lowry 2007	Denton, 2007	IRA/NCTE 2012	Manning & Boals, 1991	Winn, 1988	Brent & Anderson, 1993	NEA n.d.
Publication	www.sherrylowry.com	<i>Virginia Journal of Education</i>	<i>IRA/NCTE</i>	<i>Day Care and Early Education</i>	<i>The Reading Teacher</i>	<i>The Reading Teacher</i>	<i>National Education Association</i>
Title	Two Ears and Only One Mouth: Are You Listening?	The Power of Listening	Standards for Language Arts	Literature, Listening, and Young Children	Developing Listening Skills as Part of the Curriculum	Developing Children's Classroom Listening Strategies	Now Hear This! Build Better Listening Skills

All materials shared with participants were offered as resources but not presented as material that must be read. Focused discussions for participants were centered on the content from these articles.

The first meeting took about ninety minutes because of the additional components of the questionnaires. Each successive LSG meeting took 60 minutes, except for the last one (which also took approximately 90 minutes). The first three LSG meetings followed a similar format: (a) discussions of the previous read alouds, (b) articles/information discussed, (c) questions/ideas generated for the next meeting, (d) planning for the read alouds. There were no articles discussed in the fourth meeting. The final meeting contained an extra section on the listening perceptions for teachers use to reflect on the entire process of being involved in the study. In the next section, my reflections for each LSG meeting will signify the end of each LSG meeting.

LSG Meeting One

The first LSG meeting included completion of the questionnaires: Current Read Aloud Practices and Teacher Listening Perceptions. This information was used to create baseline data for participants' current use of read alouds and their current perceptions of how they teach listening. Each of the participants communicated their interest and curiosity for participating in the study at this first planning meeting. "If we can teach them how to listen, we can teach them anything," said Mrs. Blanton.

This first meeting also permitted the participants to discuss expectations for oral language in second grade by previewing the IRA/NCTE/SOL information and comparing it to their expectations for second grade. There were two articles included for teachers to review that specifically addressed the need to teach listening. Participants also engaged in practicing using

the dyad strategy and were introduced to Whole Body Listening (WBL). The final stage of this meeting was the selection of children's literature for the first two read alouds.

Questionnaire: Current read aloud practices. This information was collected to help participants report their current practices with read alouds. This data was helpful for understanding how participants currently implemented read alouds in their classrooms. It also functioned as an introductory topic for the first Listening Study Group Meeting.

The questions in Table 4 specifically related to how read alouds were conducted and used in the participants' classrooms. After briefly looking over the questionnaire, Mrs. Sowers asked, "How long does the answer have to be for each question?" They were told they could respond to the questions by writing one sentence or a few sentences, whatever they thought they needed to write to answer the question. I told them I was not looking for any specific number or length of response to each question. I stated, "Everyone's response should be based on your own classroom, it is ok to have one sentence, or more than one, whatever you think you need to answer the question." They explained that they wanted to "give good answers," but it was hard for them to think of a number. For example, Mrs. Levine shared, "I know I do a lot of read alouds every week, but I am not sure how many I really do." I suggested that they make an educated guess based on the number of read alouds they *thought* they used in any given day. It was evident they were unsure of how many they used each week and had to think about this to generate a guess. Again, they were reassured there was no right or wrong answer for how many or why they were used. They were also reminded that teachers used read alouds for a variety of purposes and content and it was okay to include all read alouds in their estimations.

Table 4. *Current Read Aloud Practices*

Current Read Aloud Practices: Questionnaire				
How often do you read aloud to students per week?	What does a read aloud look like in your classroom?	Why do you use read alouds in your classroom?	What behaviors do you expect during a read aloud?	In what content areas do you currently implement read alouds?

Without prompting, the participants began discussing their answers immediately after finishing the questionnaires. Mrs. Levine asked the other teachers, “How many read alouds do you think you do each week?” The participants compared their answers and found they had reported very similar results (between 15 and 20 read alouds weekly). Participants stated that read alouds were used for teaching content, modeling fluency, and writing. “Our current writing program has a read aloud component so we usually have a read aloud when we do writing,” said Mrs. Sowers.

The data from the questionnaires showed that participants expected student behaviors to include being attentive, interactions between the students, and to be listening to the speaker. Participants also shared that they consistently incorporated read alouds in the daily routine of their classroom and used them for both instructional purposes as well for enjoyment. Read alouds were used for content areas including: (a) language arts, (b) social studies, (c) science, (d) math, and (e) writing. “That is why it is so hard to really know how many we use each week, because we use them for so many things,” said Mrs. Sowers.

They each supported the idea Mrs. Tatum initially shared, “I use read alouds at the beginning of the year to teach listening skills to my class, so I can remind them to be *active listeners* when I am teaching them the rest of the year.” Each of the participants reinforced using read alouds as a good way to introduce listening skill instruction for students. Mrs. Levine stated,

“Finding time for this will be easy to do since we already use read alouds every day and at least 15 a week!” The participants and I worked to establish a timeline for implementing the DS during the read alouds. The participants estimated that each planned read aloud would require about 20 to 30 minutes each week. Most of the read alouds ended up taking between 25 and 35 minutes depending on the book and the amount of questions asked during the read aloud.

Questionnaire: Listening perceptions. This questionnaire focused on teachers current listening perceptions of their students in the classroom. Participants took more time completing this form and were again eager to share their thoughts with the group to discuss the behaviors they thought showed non-listening in their own classes. Their first reaction when discussing listening was to focus on the non-listening behaviors exhibited by students. These behaviors were what participants wanted or expected to see their students do when they presented them with statements to remind them to listen.

Table 5. *Teacher Listening Expectations*

Teacher Listening Perceptions: Questionnaire							
Describe what good listening looks like	How would you define listening: a behavior or something that can be taught?	How can teachers teach listening?	Describe a time when you felt students really listened well.	How comfortable are you teaching listening?	How much time do you think you spend teaching listening each day?	What are the impacts of good listening in your classroom?	What book/s would you use to teach listening?

Participants’ perceptions of behaviors that indicated their students were not listening encompassed some basic generalizations that included students engaged in the following behaviors: (a) not making eye contact; (b) asking for directions to be repeated; (c) unable to follow directions; or (d) the inability to do the assigned task. Discussion of this question

included the following participant comments, “squirmy students-off-task students” (rolling on floor, hands on head), “not looking at me” (looking around the room or not paying attention to the teacher), and “talking to the person next to them.” When asked if students could be a good listener even if they were “squirmy”, the participants’ agreed that they could be. Mrs. Blanton further clarified “but it is too distracting to the other students who are trying to listen, so students need to try and pay attention.” Mrs. Sowers shared that “We need students to be good listeners to be able to learn the content and do well in school; if they aren’t good listeners it makes it hard to teach everyone.”

Each of the participants felt they taught listening at the beginning of the school year by using different read alouds. Some examples they mentioned included: *Miss Nelson is Missing* (1985), *The Teacher from the Black Lagoon* (2008), and *Harry B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen* (2005). They shared that these were good books to use with students. The first two children’s books deal primarily with classroom expectations. *Harry B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen* (2005) is a story about the consequences of not being a good listener (and was included as a resource in this study). These introductory texts were used as a way for participants to set student expectations for classroom behavior for the school year. Participants felt they could revisit these texts as needed to remind students of their classroom expectations which included being good listeners. Participants might reference one of the books as a reminder for students of what they should do when they need to be an active listener (pay attention to the teacher, listen carefully). For example, Mrs. Tatum stated, “I remind them it is time to be an active listener and remind them of Harry.”

Table 6 provides an overview of participants’ perceptions from this first meeting. Participants reported using lots of reminders and repeating directions to get students to listen.

They relied on attention getters to regain students' attention during lessons and for transitions. Participants also shared that they used modeling as an ongoing strategy to help students improve listening. When asked to give an example of how she modeled listening, Mrs. Blanton said, "I will use something like Simon Says or hands on your head, hands on your lips, and they have to listen to know what to do."

Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Levine both shared that cooperative learning activities were used to help students as well. "Cooperative learning gives them the chance to practice listening because that they have to listen to their partners in the groups," said Mrs. Levine. A big idea for participants was that they knew that listening was occurring if students were very attentive to them when they were talking. "I know my students are good listeners when they have their hands to themselves and are showing me they are attentive by looking at me and not the person next to them," Mrs. Sowers shared and Mrs. Blanton reiterated, "I know for sure they are really paying attention to me when I can see them do all of those things (eyes on me, hands in their lap, attentive)."

Figure 1. *Teacher Perceptions Prior to Intervention*

Expected Student Listening Behaviors	Student Non-Listening Behaviors	Listening Instructional Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •attentive •eyes on speaker/book •interactions •hands to self •sitting still •listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •no eye content •squirmy •cannot restate/retell •don't know what to do •just sitting •ask for repeat of directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •repetition of directions •modeling •attention getters •students repeat directions •motivate students •cooperative learning

Although participants' perceptions were divided into three sections--listening behaviors, non-listening behaviors, and listening instructional practices--the first two included some overlapping. Participants' expectations for what they wanted aligned with what they expected good listeners to do. When explaining her responses on the questionnaires with the other members of the group, Mrs. Sowers shared, "I know they aren't listening because as soon as I give the directions, they ask me what to do." Participants all agreed that they consistently repeated directions throughout the day for their students.

Standards information. In LSG 1, we reviewed the IRA/NCTE/SOL standards. In part, these were shared as an illustration of how listening skill instruction is often overlooked when literacy standards are created. Participants made comparisons to the second-grade oral language SOL's. Mrs. Blanton shared, "they have to listen to read alouds because it helps improve their language skills, but it doesn't really tell us any specific listening strategies to use." The following is a description of expectations for students for oral language skills in the current second-grade SOL's for Language Arts (2010):

At the second-grade level, students will engage in a variety of oral activities to develop an understanding of language structure and enhance their ability to communicate effectively. They will listen and speak in discussions and presentations that expand their vocabularies, increase their background knowledge, and enhance both their reading and writing skills.

Also, in second-grade, the students are supposed to "increase listening and speaking vocabularies" (VA, L.A., SOL's, 2010). The example in the framework for how participants will know a student mastered this is explained in the following way, "To be successful with this standard students are expected to listen to and discuss a variety of texts" (VA L.A., SOL's,

2010). The framework for oral language in second-grade provides information on *what* students are expected to do, but it doesn't explain *how* to accomplish this.

Lowry article. A brief synopsis of listening by Lowry (2007) was included in this first meeting as well. It provided excerpts of information on how much time is spent daily in listening and included relevant information as to why listening is hard for most people to master. For example, she explains how the average listener is so focused on replying to the person speaking that information is often missed. Another example that Lowry shared was how peoples' emotions can impact how they listen to someone; trigger phrases can impact how much is heard. When a trigger phrase is used, the listener is often unable to understand the rest of the message. She further explained that for active listening to occur, the listener needs to reflect and share what the speaker has discussed to assure they understood the message.

Participants' responses to this included a brief discussion of how much time they might require their students to listen throughout the school day. They admitted they did expect students to listen quite a bit, but coming up with a set time was not easily determined. Mrs. Sowers said, "I think I ask them to listen a lot, but I expect them to talk too. There is so much I have to get them to listen to so they know what they need to do and learn." Mrs. Levine had a little different perspective, "I know I talk to them a lot during the day, but I use cooperative learning groups a lot and they get to work and talk with their partners too." Of course, each participant was familiar with the language arts skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening and they stated that they were featured predominately every day in the classroom. They were surprised that listening encompassed 50% of those skills and students might only remember 25% of what they had been expected to listen to during the day (Lowry, 2007). Mrs. Tatum explained that, "I remind my students to be active listeners all day long, but especially when I need them to really

pay attention to something I am saying.” Mrs. Blanton stated, “My students know that they need to listen, but I think sometimes they just use selective hearing and don’t listen so that’s why they probably can’t remember.”

When we discussed the impact of trigger phrases on students listening, participants were a little defensive. I quickly reassured that what they were saying was not wrong, it just might need to be said differently. The suggestion was made that rewording some of the directions or reminders they used might be helpful to improve students’ ability to listen based on some of the information from the article. For instance, we discussed how saying something like, “After we finish this last math problem, we will go to recess.” This might mean some students heard the part of the sentence they were interested in (recess) and are unable to focus on the last math problem. Another example provided was when explaining how they were going to use a math activity that included candy. Instead of saying, “We are going to use candy to make a graph,” participants might give directions for the graphing lesson and then tell students they will get to use candy. Participants were receptive to this idea and discussed how their students would react to the direction of using candy if it was presented first. “My students would definitely not hear any more after I said the word candy. They would be wondering what kind it was,” said Mrs. Blanton.

Denton Article. The next article was included because participants were asked to actively listen to the students to informally assess their students listening practice. Participants listening to their students’ responses after directing the students to use the listening strategies (DS, inside/outside) to respond to the questions from the read aloud was a critical component for this study. The participants’ questions provided authentic opportunities for students to engage in listening practice with their responses to each other (Denton, 2007, Funk & Funk, 1989,

Manning & Boals, 1991). These articles also served to reinforce the participants need to not only purposively ask questions but also to actively listen to the student responses. Denton (2007) further explains, “Listening is more than passively receiving someone’s words” (p.3). It requires actively engaging in the conversation.

Although many participants ask students to make predictions at the beginning of read alouds, for the purposes of this study, I asked participants to use those predictions differently. The students were asked to make predictions and then they were told to discuss those predictions with a peer as a method of practicing listening *to* each other (i.e., DS). The participants were asked to ‘listen in’ to the different conversations to informally assess student listening.

Participants stated this strategy was like activities they already used, like cooperative learning, turn and talks, buddy shares, or elbow partners. Although they used these strategies, they did not always listen in to the conversations—participants would gauge students’ understandings by having different students share back a response. They did not see that listening in to the dyad conversations would be a problem. “I can listen to each group to see if they are doing what they are supposed to,” said Mrs. Sowers. Mrs. Tatum further explained, “I listen to their responses when I ask them to discuss questions already and I always have them share with me. I set clear expectations for them to be active listeners every day.”

Participant practice using DS. After explaining how to use the dyad strategy, participants expressed interest in trying it for themselves. As the participants engaged in practicing with DS in the first LSG meeting, they reported that it was “hard to just listen” while their partner was sharing. Mrs. Levine shared, “it was hard for me not to interrupt her and tell her what I was thinking when she was talking.” The struggle to *not* listen with the intent to reply (Lowry, 2007) but rather to listen to understand (Jalongo, 2008) was discussed. I reinforced the

idea that since it was hard for them to practice engagement with DS this would also be a challenge for their students. Participants discussed the need to focus on explicitly teaching this to their students and provide practice time for the students. “It wasn’t as easy as I thought it would be to just sit and listen without interrupting. I just wanted to tell her what I was thinking too,” Mrs. Blanton shared. They discussed that since it was hard for them, it was essential that they give the students extra time to practice. Mrs. Sowers stated that, “it might give real listening practice for the students.”

Whole body listening. Whole body listening is a strategy originally created by Susanne Poulette-Truesdale in 1990 to help students in the field of speech and language therapy. Sautter and Wilson (2011) expanded on this original idea and created two children’s books about whole body listening that included the character of Larry. Larry helps students who are new to his school learn to be better listeners. The colorful handout depicting Larry and the components for whole body listening (Table 7) was in my folder of resources (I had not planned to use it in the first meeting). The participants were immediately drawn to it and asked if they could use it. I had ordered the book, (but it was on back order) and planned to share this resource after receiving the children’s book that accompanied the visual. But since the participants noticed it and asked what it was, I felt it was appropriate to go ahead and share the concept of whole body listening.

Table 6. *Whole Body Listening*

WBL Expectation	WBL Observable Behavior
Listening with the eyes	Looking at speaker
Listening with the ears	Both ears ready to hear
Listening with the mouth	Quiet – no talking, humming or making sounds
Listening with the hands	Quietly at the side of the body or in the lap
Listening with the feet	Standing still or quietly on the floor
Listening with the body	Facing the speaker
Listening with the brain	Thinking about what the speaker is saying
Listening with the heart	Caring about what the speaker is saying

Adapted from: Whole Body Listening Larry at School, 2011

Whole Body Listening (WBL) is a strategy that was created to help students pay attention to *what they are doing* when they are asked to listen. Truesdale (1990) suggests that there are lots of resources to practice listening skills, but “what appears to be missing from these programs and methods is the instruction of the behaviors necessary for effective and efficient listening” (p. 183). She stresses that listening requires students be engaged in active versus passive listening. Students need to know “what they must *do* in order to listen” (p. 183). After the WBL concept was explained, Mrs. Tatum suggested it would be “another good way to engage students in really listening because our kids really love visuals.” They liked the idea that students would be reminded to listen with their whole body and suggested that by using this visual with their students, they (the students) might really be able to connect to the idea of what being a good

listener should look like. (At the teachers' request, Sautter and Wilson's (2011) book *Whole Body Listening Larry at School* was used as the final read aloud).

Planning the first read aloud. Collaborative planning for the read alouds with a focus on listening instruction and discussions of the implementation of the read alouds was a primary focus of the Listening Study Group (LSG) meetings. The participants skimmed through the children's literature and chose the book *Listen and Learn* (2003) to be used for the first two weeks of read alouds. The participants worked collaboratively to generate logical and meaningful stopping points for questions throughout this text for students to engage in the authentic listening practice using the DS strategy (DS). This book included preset questions at the back of the text and Mrs. Sowers stated, "It already has questions, so it makes our job easier, we just read through and figure out which ones we want to use." For the students to practice using the DS, the participants chose a question to ask students after every fourth page in the story.

The participants divided the book *Listen and Learn* (2003) into two sections and only read the first part during the first weekly read aloud so they could give the students extra time for practice using the DS. During the second week, they read the rest of the book and allowed students additional time for more practice. "It might be good for them to practice using the DS with the same text for two weeks" said Mrs. Blanton. The rest of the participants agreed with her and Mrs. Tatum further explained, "I think we need to give them time to practice with the DS for a few weeks with *Listen and Learn* so that they can practice using those whole body listening skills too before we start the other read alouds."

Donna's reflections. Although the first LSG meeting took longer than expected, the participants' enthusiasm for wanting to learn more about teaching listening was clearly expressed through their frustration with children's not listening. Some of the participants readily agreed

they did not do a good job of teaching listening to their students. Mrs. Blanton shared, “I try to model it for my students when we use games like Simon Says so they can practice listening to me, but I know they don’t always listen when I give directions.” Mrs. Levine also explained how her students reacted to most of the directions that she gave, “I can tell them step by step how to do something and they still will need me to tell them again.” Mrs. Sowers stated that her students still couldn’t follow directions even after she told them how to do an assignment. She followed up by having a student share the directions with the rest of the class and said that most of the time, “they still can’t do what they are supposed to.”

Mrs. Tatum felt that she taught listening well because she consistently reminded her students to be active listeners. She stated that every time there was something important for her students to listen, to she would refer to a book to reinforce active listening. She shared:

That’s why I use *Henry B Wigglebottom* at the beginning of school, so my students know what it means to be an active listener. I can remind them to be active listeners like Henry and they know they have to use their active listening skills.

By sharing these expectations for how they wanted students to listen, the participants perceived that they were teaching students to listen, they were modeling listening, and giving students reminders when it was time to listen throughout the school day.

Mrs. Sowers shared, “I know they can’t be listening when they are looking at the ceiling or playing with their neighbor. I can also tell because they don’t know the answer to the question.” When asked to explain how they knew that students were listening, participants explained that students were being good listeners when they were following the rules and the directions. Mrs. Tatum shared one strategy she used with her students: “I know you are a good listener when...” she would follow up this phrase with whatever behavior she expected to see.

For instance, this phrase might mean that students needed to sit quietly at their seat or on the rug, or it might mean they were expected to work with their partner quietly. At the beginning, participants' expectations for good listening centered on the need for students to outwardly *show* that they were attentive to the teacher. When discussing their current expectations for listening, the participants shared that they did not think they asked students to listen too often, but were undecided about how much time they spent asking students to listen. They did not think they asked them to listen as much as Lowry (2007) suggested. The Lowry article was used during this discussion to further facilitate the conversation about how much time students might spend listening each day. It was also used to initiate a conversation about the barriers that they and their students might have as listeners.

At this LSG meeting we also discussed the importance of separating listening and hearing as distinct abilities. Listening is an active skill and hearing is a passive skill. I asked the participants to share how they thought hearing and listening might be different. Although Mrs. Blanton suggested that her students might be selective listeners, she did agree that hearing and listening were two different activities. Mrs. Levine stated, "Listening is hearing something, students hear things but they don't always listen to them." Mrs. Sowers added, "Listening means they understand and can follow directions." When the participants were asked about listening in their open-school environment, participants explained that they had to tune out the extra noises around them and just focus on their own classrooms. They began to nod their heads and agreed with Mrs. Blanton when she explained that the teachers learned to tune out the other sounds, "that even though they might hear those other sounds, they were only really listening to their own classroom." I restated their comments to show I was being a good listener and understood their message by sharing, "So, part of listening for you in this classroom environment means that

to actively listen to your class you need to focus on the sounds you want to understand and filter out the other sounds you hear.” Participants agreed and stated that it was just part of their normal routine.

The participants were defensive when sharing that they had no prior experiences in any of their teacher preparation courses about listening instruction. Although they said they had taken communication courses, participants shared that they had never been exposed to methods for specifically teaching students to listen. “It is just part of my classroom management practice,” said Mrs. Tatum. She explained how she told her students at the beginning of the year about the importance of being a good listener to show respect to their teachers. She further clarified that the, “students have to know that when they don’t listen to the teacher they are not being respectful.”

The participants’ current practices were similar when they described how they used interactive read alouds. They all said that they used read alouds to engage students by having them make predictions about the text and respond to comprehension questions during the story. Students were occasionally asked to share their ideas with another student. When asked if students could discuss a question with a partner before responding, the participants seemed to think that this might be a trick question, but I assured them that everyone has their own ideas about different educational terms and I hoped to understand how they currently used interactive read alouds. The question was never answered (do students discuss their answers with a partner), but the participants indicated that they had a willingness to incorporate more discussions with partners into their read alouds.

The participants’ enthusiasm for using the WBL Larry visual was encouraging. They made connections with how students could practice using each of the strategies to become better

listeners in their classrooms. The participants appeared to think that WBL would motivate their students to become better listeners. They transitioned toward the new ideas discussed and were receptive to more concrete listening expectations. For example, Mrs. Blanton's summarized, "I think that I might need to switch from just talking about listening to them. The DS might help them really practice listening." The participants were more aware of the need to teach listening after practicing the DS's with each other. Because they struggled with being good listeners when they practiced using the DS (wanting to interrupt each other) I was optimistic about the participants' implementations of the read alouds. It was also interesting that the teachers thought that they would need to divide the first read aloud up and do it over two weeks to allow students to practice using the DS. It appeared they did not see the first two weeks as actual listening interventions or teaching. It was merely practicing learning how to use the strategy (DS) to prepare for the listening instruction lessons.

Articles were chosen strategically for the next meeting based on the conversations from the LSG meeting. These articles addressed concerns about the belief students should already know how to listen by the time they were in second-grade. Another article was included because the teacher belief was that students' listening skills develop naturally, without instruction.

LSG Meeting Two

The next meeting began with participants immediately sharing their introductions to the whole body listening strategies. "They really liked the idea of listening with their whole body," Mrs. Tatum remarked. After the participants shared their experiences using the read alouds, the two articles selected for this meeting were discussed. Lastly, the books for the read alouds for the next two weeks were collaboratively selected and planned. The collaborative partners each chose one book and planned questions and stopping points for the DS. Mrs. Levine and Mrs.

Blanton planned their read aloud for the book *I Have a Little Problem Said the Bear* (2009) and Mrs. Tatum and Mrs. Sowers planned a read aloud for the book *My Mouth is a Volcano* (2005). The participants eachers planned to share their lesson plans; thus, all four classrooms would use the DS based upon the two lesson plans each group created during this second LSG meeting.

Participant discussion reflections. Mrs. Blanton and Mrs. Levine reported that their students were very excited to use the DS to talk and listen with their partners. Mrs. Blanton remarked:

My students can connect to the components of listening with their whole body. They can tell me what WBL means and they want to use it. They are so excited when they tell me what each component means and then show me with their body!

Mrs. Tatum and Mrs. Sowers communicated that their students might be getting bored with it and suggested we find other ways for students to communicate with their partners. The participants also commented that their students liked having the opportunity to talk to each other. Mrs. Levine, “My students loved talking with a partner to discuss their answers.” The participants also stated that overall their students were beginning to pick up on the idea of being an active listener. They discussed that they might need to model their own expectations for being a good listener more with the students.

The participants’ perceptions of their experiences were all very distinctive. Each participant had various opinions about how well their students were responding to the focus on listening in the read alouds. Mrs. Blanton explained that even though her students liked using WBL and could restate the directions of what they needed to do to be a good listener, they still had trouble when it was their turn to listen.

Mrs. Levine stated that she modeled how to use the DS and she thought that the book *I Have a Little Problem, said the Bear* (2009), “was an excellent book to teach active listening and not just hearing.” Mrs. Sowers discussed how important it was for students to comprehend the story and that by asking so many questions during the read aloud, it was hard to maintain student engagement. Mrs. Levine stated that her students’ responses showed their understanding for the need to be active listeners but she would have to monitor some of her students more closely to ensure that they were actively engaged in listening.

Articles. The articles chosen for this meeting were selected after reviewing the questionnaires and the discussion notes from the first LSG meeting. For instance, one concern from the first meeting came from Mrs. Sowers, “They have listened all of their lives and have been in school long enough now to know how to listen.” Participants’ suggestions that students’ previous experiences with school should have helped them develop listening skills was addressed using the articles by Manning & Boals (1991) and Winn (1988). The Manning and Boals article was designated to help dispel “the myth that children naturally learn to listen” (p. 13). Furthermore, Manning & Boals (1991) also specifically address the idea that good listening is not necessarily identified by looking attentive. Winn’s (1988) support for direct instruction is detailed in this article with a specific focus on using sequential and structured activities. Both articles identified the need to move students toward more active listening experiences through actively engaging students in listening instruction.

Manning and Boals article. This article (1991) illustrates how incorporating well-chosen literature to actively engage students in dialogues can improve their listening abilities. It also reiterated that teachers who provide direct instruction for listening can help their students improve listening skills (Funk & Funk, 1989; Manning & Boals, 1991; Winn, 1988). Specific

literature that integrates listening topics was recommended as the best choice for direct instruction. This article reinforced the rationale for using read alouds to teach listening skills. By carefully choosing texts to teaching listening skills, teachers can integrate listening instruction within authentic classroom experiences (Manning & Boals, 1991).

Manning and Boals (1991) also noted that listening should be integrated throughout the school day but that direct instruction based upon regularly scheduled lessons is needed to explicitly teach children how to listen effectively. These authors recommend using children's literature as the foundation for these explicit listening lessons. The participants in this study were unsure of how this might look in their classrooms and they said that they were a little alarmed that I might be asking them to do this all day in their classrooms. I assured them that using the read alouds was a good place to start practicing direct listening instruction with their students. I also explained that my expectation was for them to provide the listening lesson during the weekly read aloud as an introductory strategy that they and the students used specifically for just listening practices. Teaching one read aloud weekly was doable; but the participants were unsure if they had time to integrate listening instruction like they were doing in the read alouds throughout the day. Mrs. Tatum still reiterated that she already taught listening stated, "I teach listening all day long." At this point in the study, she was not willing to think about using the specific strategies or concepts we discussed in the LSG meetings beyond the weekly read aloud. And Mrs. Sowers specified, "Students should learn how to listen from these read alouds we are doing. The books are all about how they should be listening."

Another example of why this article was helpful for participants came from a comment Mrs. Levine made during this meeting. "My students listen to me, but not to each other." Although this article was not chosen for that specific reason because this information only became

apparent after she began her read alouds, it became very relevant in this meeting because of her students' responses to the read alouds. "I have to teach them how to listen to each other, not just to my voice," Mrs. Levine decided. Her awareness that students would pay attention to her voice when she directed them to listen but did not know how to listen to each other when they were using the DS's was a pivotal moment for her. Although she still felt that the reminders she used to get students to listen to her voice were effective, she also realized that students needed instruction and practice with learning how to listen to each other.

Winn article. Classroom teachers who can create experiences that allow students to engage in active learning experiences help promote better listeners. "They need to learn skills that will enable them to become connoisseurs and rational consumers of auditory input" (Winn, 1988, p. 144). According to Winn, teaching listening skills using structured opportunities for practice is of utmost importance. Stressing the need for specific steps in listening instruction (like Funk and Funk's, 1989 three steps) provides a solid, well-defined teaching approach for listening.

Planning the read aloud. As participants reviewed the children's literature for the next two read alouds, they discussed how books that depict a problem with listening were good choices for their students because the students could see the consequences of not being a good listener. Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Blanton chose the book *I Have a little Problem, said the Bear* (2009) and Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Tatum selected *My Mouth is a Volcano* (2006). Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Tatum wanted to ensure that fewer questions were included in the planning of the read alouds to help students maintain comprehension. Mrs. Tatum, "I really want to ask fewer questions because I think they forgot what the story is about when they stop so many times." Mrs. Sowers supported this idea and stated, "I think that all those questions might be part of the

reason I can't keep them interested in the book and they start distracting each other." We agreed to use the prediction question at the beginning and incorporate less stopping points for the questions in the books and the participants were still having students engage in the DS when responding to the questions. The participants were reminded that the lessons were about listening strategies and to monitor students while they were discussing the questions to ensure they were practicing their listening skills. "We can do both in the lessons, we do lots of content in the read alouds all the time with the students," said Mrs. Sowers.

Donna's reflections. Participants' initial interactions during this meeting were conflicting. Mrs. Sowers was frustrated with her class because there were ongoing issues with her students distracting themselves. "My students have such a hard time staying on task, they are so busy telling on each other for not listening, they can't listen." Mrs. Blanton shared her students were doing a better job remembering because she used the sticks to help them remember their role when they were asked to listen in the dyads. (Students were given small sticks to hold so they knew they were the speaker—if you had no stick, you had to listen). Mrs. Levine explained how the students that sat closer to her were much better listeners than those at the back of the rug. Her students were also very perceptive and noticed when their partners were not being good listeners. Mrs. Tatum shared how her students had the wrong idea about interrupting when they were listening to someone:

They think it is ok to interrupt because they think I should understand that they only interrupt because they have something important to say. They don't understand that it shows they are being disrespectful.

Each participant shared how they integrated the three components (Funk & Funk, 1989) in their read aloud and that students were doing better (for the most part) with showing them that

they (the students) knew how to be good listeners. They again discussed how modeling for the students might be a topic we could discuss more in our next meeting. The participants reported that their students were beginning to observe their peers not showing good listening skills and told them (the teachers) that they were not being good models for listening either.

The participants also discussed that they thought the next lesson should incorporate a nonfiction text and asked if they could add some comprehension and higher order questions to the lesson. I stressed the need to use these read alouds specifically for listening instruction but teachers still felt that they could do both. It appeared participants might not see the value of teaching listening in isolation. Their continued belief that other skills were ‘just as important’ confirmed that although we had discussed how often teachers expect students to listen throughout the school day, listening was either not considered a teachable construct yet or it was not deemed as important as other literacy skills. Mrs. Levine shared, “We have to ask higher order questions in all of our lessons. It’s one of the skills we have to focus on with our students.” Higher order questions were something they were ‘expected’ to teach students to use, not listening skills. participants acknowledge outwardly they need to teach listening but I am not sure they have transitioned to seeing it to be as teachable as reading or writing.

Participants’ perceptions that they need to be good models for listening was a strength in their reflections as well as their desire to include more strategies for their students to use when practicing listening. However, teachers buy-in for using the read alouds for teaching explicit listening skills was not observable at this point. Since teacher modeling of good listening had been discussed in the last two LSG meetings and additional requests for alternative strategies for student discussions, an article by Brent and Anderson (1993) was chosen for the next meeting.

An article from the NEA was also chosen to do provide distinction between telling and teaching students to listen.

LSG Meeting Three

This meeting began with a brief overview of how we would adjust the meetings due to the unexpected departure of Mrs. Blanton. The study was continued by having everyone plan the read alouds together. This meeting was less productive than other meetings possibly due in part to the stress of losing Mrs. Blanton (she would be out for the rest of the school year).

Participant discussion reflections. There was a discussion among the participants about their students' progress with listening during the read alouds. They said that their students might be getting bored with using the DS. In the previous meeting, the participants had discussed some alternative strategies to use for the students to practice listening to each other. We discussed an article by Brent & Anderson (1993) that included recommendations for additional strategies that would help engage students in listening practice. In LSG 3, the participants continued to discuss specific expectations for what student listening behavior should look like. For example, the participants continued to refer to students as being good listeners when they were exhibiting attentive behaviors when listening. In this meeting the article from the NEA was used as a guideline for participants to reinforce that telling *how* to listen is not teaching listening.

Although participants had been practicing the listening skill strategies with their students, their perceptions about what good listening 'looked like' was still an issue. Mrs. Sowers shared, "They can really only listen for a short time. They started out well, but I lost them at the end." When prompted to explain, what students did that helped her understand that the students had stopped listening carefully she explained, "The ones in the back were not paying attention anymore, they were not looking at me; they just weren't using all of their whole-body strategies

for good listening.” Although they were not looking at her for the last part of the read aloud, she did share, “All the students did a really good job of responding to the questions from the story.” The inside/outside method was introduced during the planning section of the previous LSG meeting. This strategy requires the students to sit/stand facing each other and as different questions are posed, one side of the group is asked to move down one space (teachers usually had the outside move). The purpose of this strategy is students are practicing their listening skill with a different peer each time a new question is asked. This strategy was more beneficial when used at the beginning or the end of a lesson. Because students had to move a lot it took a lot of time to implement. Participants did not feel it was as useable during the read alouds as the DS. “During the lesson we tried the inside-outside method this time. It worked well, but the students got tired of turning (moving to another partner) so much.” Another participant who used the strategy said, “The students enjoyed talking to different partners, but it was very time consuming during the read aloud.”

Brent and Anderson article. In the classroom environment, teachers are expected to be the role models for listening and as such, they should provide students with specific strategies and skills that can be used to authentically practice listening (Brent & Anderson, 1993). This article was chosen because the participants’ responses indicated they were struggling with how to model good listening for their students as well as their request for additional strategies for their students to use to practice listening. For example, Mrs. Sowers shared this about her students, “When I was talking to one of my students he called me on not being a good listener when he was talking.” Participants also said that students were becoming more aware of what was expected of them as good listeners and “called their friends on not being good listeners during different parts of the day,” (not just during the read alouds). Students were noticing when the

teachers were not modeling the same behavior they were asking them (the students) to do. Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Sowers also discussed how their students were telling them that their (students) “parents weren’t being good listeners either.”

A strategy suggested by Brent and Anderson (1993) was for teachers to engage their students in structured cooperative learning discussions with specific reminders for students to attend to how they were listening. Providing students with opportunities to retell and share their learning in meaningful conversations was also recommended to improve listening. They suggested that teachers who become good role models can create structured learning situations for student discussions.

Brent and Anderson (1993) also stressed the importance of modeling listening with students daily. They further explain that, realistically, a teacher cannot drop everything each time a student has something to share, but they reiterate the importance of teachers modeling the same behavior that is expected from the students. This article provided ideas for teachers’ future use (author’s chairs, read alouds, writing workshops, cooperative groups, reader’s theatre, and retelling) in developing more diverse listening situations for their students.

NEA article. The National Education Association prompts teachers to “build better listening skills” for their students. It focuses mainly on *why* listening skills are important. It doesn’t address *how* to teach listening. In this article, listening is identified as important for the following reasons, (a) to learn; (b) to make friends; and (c) to show good manners. It also gives an overview of what behaviors constitute poor listening versus good listening.

The participants compared the article briefly to the SOL’s and the lack of information about listening instruction there as well. The discussion of this article led to teachers sharing their ideas about the need for teacher preparation programs to include courses or information

about teaching listening. Mrs. Sowers shared, “I think if there was a specific method for teaching listening it would be easier.” Their discussion also included the importance of knowing what your own expectations for listening should include. They felt it was important to understand that everyone has their own set of expectations for good listening and that good listening might not always look the same in all classrooms and for all students. Their consistent expectation included being respectful by showing your attentiveness when asked to listen.

Planning read alouds. As participants previewed the books, Mrs. Levine chose to use *Howard B Wigglebottom* (2005) since she had not previously read the book and planned the questions for her book. Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Tatum selected the book *Decibella* (2014) since they had previously read *Howard B. Wigglebottom* (2005) and mapped out the questions and stopping points for their read aloud. The teachers chose *Listen Buddy* (1995) as the book they would read for the second week. Teachers planned this read aloud together. As we were finishing up, the participants also reminded me that parent-teacher conferences were coming up soon and asked if we could meet for a shorter time during the next meeting. I assured them we could spend the next planning meeting discussing their perspectives on how things were going so far and planning for the next read alouds. I would not plan to bring any articles to accommodate this request.

Donna’s reflection. Although the participants had engaged in the article discussions in the LSG meetings, it was evident that the actual discussion of their experiences was more important to them. They were more engaged when discussing their experiences with the read alouds and their students’ behaviors in the lessons. They continued to focus on the non-listening behaviors students exhibited as well as supporting the need for students to listen to show respect and for safety. Mrs. Sowers shared, “They can tell me what they are supposed to do during the

read aloud, but then they don't do it. They start looking around and they are still distracting each other." Mrs. Tatum shared, "My students need to know that being a good listener is one way to show respect, not paying attention to the speaker is very disrespectful." Mrs. Levine explained that, "students need to listen in order to be safe too. They have to understand that listening can keep them safe."

It appeared that the participants' busy schedules were beginning to impact their participation. It seems that some of their resistance to learning more about listening was obstructed by the pressures of their other teaching requirements. Participant conversations referenced their focus on making sure that their content (from the SOL's) was a priority in their lessons. Because of this, I believe a barrier for listening instruction might be that listening is not perceived as a testable item. Although participants outwardly support listening instruction, their buy-in appears to be impacted by not only the lack of experience with teaching listening; but also, their lack of understanding for how to teach listening. Getting kids to listen has always been a battle in a classroom. Listening instruction, like reading instruction, takes practice and a time commitment. It is hard to commit to doing something that you still are not sure is teachable.

I observed each participant as they conducted a read aloud during this two-week period. Each participant followed the first two criteria in the format suggested by Funk and Funk (1989) which included setting the purpose and preparing the students to listen. Although they did have the students talk with a partner when answering the questions, they did not always remember to check in with the students to see if they were practicing their listening skills. They also did not have the students share their discussions with the whole group. This is the part that is most neglected and participants had stated in a previous meeting that they needed to allot more time in

the read aloud to allow for students to share their answers back with the group. Participants did not appear concerned that they had omitted this part of their read aloud.

LSG Meeting Four

The meeting was scheduled to last 45 minutes, because one of the participants had another meeting and participants had requested this meeting to be shorter. The meeting started late because of an issue with one of the buses. The meeting lasted about 35 minutes. There were no articles planned for this meeting.

The participant discussion included their concern for what I thought about their read alouds. I assured the participants that each of them had enthusiastically read the books and the students were prepared to be good listeners at the beginning of the story. I asked participants to tell me how they thought the read alouds went. Mrs. Levine immediately stated, “I know I forgot to have them to do the talking with each other and then tell us about their partner talk. I always run out of time for that part.” Mrs. Sowers also shared that she did not remember to “listen in” to their conversations and that was something she needed to work on. Mrs. Levine discussed how she sometimes listens to them when they are using the DS, but that she often forgets to have some of them share what they talked about with the whole group. All the participants were aware they had left out the last part of the read aloud criteria, but did not seem to think it was essential since the students got to “practice listening to each other” in the read aloud.

Planning the final read alouds. Participants asked if they had to use a listening text next week since Dr. Seuss week was coming up. They discussed the different texts they wanted to use (Mrs. Levine, Happy Birthday to You, Mrs. Sowers, Oh the Places You’ll Go, and Mrs. Tatum, If I Rad the Zoo) and briefly talked about questions they might use in the stories. The read alouds were not totally planned in this lesson prior to the end of the LSG meeting because

the participant wanted more time to think of different activities to use with the students to practice listening.

After Mrs. Tatum left to go to her meeting, Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Sowers asked about the final read aloud. I shared that I had received *Whole Body Listening Larry at School* (2011) and asked if they would like to use it as a way of connecting their WBL visual back to a book for the final read aloud. They previewed the book and Mrs. Sowers shared, “I think it is a great way to end our read alouds about listening.” Mrs. Levine agreed and stated, “They can use their whole body listening skills again like he shows the new kids to do in the book.”

The participants then asked, since I was familiar with the book, if I would plan the final read aloud for them since our time was up for this meeting. “Since we use the same format each time, you can include anything else you think we might can do to help them (the students) with their listening,” said Mrs. Sowers. They reminded me that parent-teacher conferences were coming up and it would be easier for them to just do the lesson if I planned it for them. I asked if there was anything specific they thought I should include to the lesson. The participants thought that evaluating their students listening might be helpful so I agreed to incorporate a survey for their students to also use during the read aloud

Donna’s reflections. This meeting began with participants’ overall concerns about what I thought about their read alouds. I shared with them how engaging each participants’ delivery of the story was and noted the high level of student interactions. I reinforced how they had met the goal of setting a purpose for listening and getting students ready to listen. Before I could ask about the student to student discussions, the participants immediately acknowledged that they did not “check in with the students when they were practicing listening to each other” (as Mrs. Levine shared) or allow them to share their discussions because of time constraints. This was

concerning because this is how participants were asked to evaluate how and if their students were practicing their listening skills. Modifications to the number of questions asked was made early in the study to allow for more time for this part of the read aloud. Participants were apologetic but again did not seem overly concerned that this part of Funk and Funk's (1989) criteria was absent.

Participants request for me to plan the final read aloud was in part my fault I believe. Because our meeting time was shorter, when I shared the *Whole Body Listening Larry at School* (2011) book, to save time, I introduced it by explaining how they could create a hook for the students by introducing the book by saying something similar to, "This is Larry and he really knows how to be a good listener because he uses whole body listening. Do you think the new kids know how to use WBL? How can they learn?" Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Sowers liked the idea of the hook and suggested I could also include any ideas that I thought might help them in the lesson as well. "I think it would be good to see how you would plan the lesson, I know we used the same format, but if you can think of any more things that might help, that would be great," stated Mrs. Sowers.

I agreed to plan the final read aloud to respect the participants request. Time constraints, their own beliefs about teaching listening, their lack of preparedness to teach listening, and pressures related to incorporating other content skills continue to impact the participants buy-in for seeing listening as an important literacy skill that requires explicit instruction. I included a survey that the students could use to evaluate their own listening abilities and a listening exercise that participants could give to the students as well to honor their request for some type of listening assessment.

LSG Meeting Five

The final LSG meeting was a participant-led discussion of how their perceptions of listening had evolved over the course of the study. Teachers also completed the Current Read Aloud Practices and Listening Perceptions questionnaires again in this meeting. Participants shared how much they had learned about listening during their participation in the study. When Mrs. Tatum shared “we can refer back to these read alouds to remind students how to listen” each of the other teachers nodded in agreement.

In the final read aloud participants administered a listening survey to their students at the beginning of the lesson, followed by the read aloud, and then a short listening directions sheet. When the participants discussed their students’ survey results. Mrs. Sowers commented, “My students really thought they were good listeners, but they weren’t as good of listeners as they thought when they had to follow the directions.” Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Tatum both agreed that their students rated themselves higher on being a good listener than they were.

The meeting ended with participants discussing their overall perceptions of how being a part of the study had improved their ability to teach listening skills to their students. They each agreed that they were more aware of how to teach their students listening skills and would refer to the lessons when students needed to be reminded to be good listeners. Each of the participants also shared how using the listening texts at the beginning of the next school year would be a good tool to help their students be better listeners in the class. Mrs. Levine reported, “I will definitely start the next school year using these types of texts to help my students with listening.” Each of the participants followed up their summarizing statement by sharing how they would also make sure they incorporated listening texts when they introduced classroom expectations at

the start of the new year. “I will definitely use them next year and refer to them when I remind students to be active listeners this year,” Mrs. Tatum stated.

WBL. Each teacher stated they reviewed the WBL components at the beginning of each read aloud with the students. They reported that students could share the expectations for WBL and ‘tell’ how they could listen with their different body parts. The participants used the Whole Body Listening character throughout the study as a method to help the children focus on specific listening criteria. The book *Whole Body Listening Larry at School* (2011) was used as the final read aloud by the participants and they connected the components of WBL as a review of good listening for the students.

The participants described how this strategy ended up creating a strong listening connection for students throughout the study. Students related to the concept of listening with their whole body and referred to the components when discussing listening behaviors. Participants stated that students shared with them that “student ‘A’ wasn’t listening to them with their whole heart” and enjoyed saying things like “I am listening with my hands” or “I am listening with both of my feet now!” Although participants shared that the students could consistently share the specific requirements for using WBL strategies, they did not reliably employ them.

Donna’s reflections. Participants were enthusiastic about using the survey with their students and having the students compare the survey with how they did on the teacher-led following the directions sheet. Having a written record or assessment seemed to validate their listening instructional practices. Although students rated themselves high on the survey as being a good listener and did well on the following the directions sheet, teachers still felt their students’ perception of their listening ability did not match their overall listening performance.

Participants' beliefs about their participation in the study were for the most part very positive. They shared they had a better understanding that telling students to listen was not the same as teaching students to listen. They also were very positive about using read alouds to teach listening in conjunction with the WBL and DS activities. The participants combined agreement that they could start the year out with the listening texts and revisit occasionally as needed throughout the year showed a greater awareness for the need to teach listening. Mrs. Levine shared, "Now I know that my students can improve their listening skills. I can use these books to help them learn how to be a better listener." Participants shared that it was something they would practice at the beginning of the year and then revisit it as needed in their classrooms. Although they stated their beliefs that teaching listening could be done using the read alouds their conflicting statement that listening would be revisited as needed did not parallel their understanding for explicitly teaching listening. Listening was not considered to be a literacy skill like reading or writing in that they never connected it to something that could be practiced in other contexts. It remained in the role of classroom management strategies as something that would be returned to when the observable behaviors were not identified.

Discussion Prior to Implementing Read Alouds

The LSG meetings were a useful tool for the researcher and the participants to engage in discussions about their implementation of the read alouds. Participants quickly shared their experiences at the beginning of each meeting and were excited to talk about how their students responded to the read alouds. They also had lots of ideas for what would help when they were doing the read alouds; suggestions of what went well and what might help make the lessons better. These suggestions many times including adding more of a content area focuses in the

read aloud, for example including higher order questions or more comprehension questions rather than just practicing listening.

Because of my prior working relationship with the participants, I felt they engaged in authentic, honest conversations about their listening instruction ideas. The participants enthusiastically engaged in conversations about how they incorporated listening and read alouds in their classrooms. Their explanations of their own expectations for student listening in the classroom were shared freely but with an air of frustration because of the student's inability to meet those expectations. Mrs. Tatum and Mrs. Sowers supported their belief that they did a good job of teaching students how to listen in the classroom by reminding their students to be "active listeners" or "listen closely to the important directions." They stated that repeating the directions and reminding students was part of their daily routine for getting students to listen.

Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Blanton shared they thought they did an 'okay job' of teaching listening. Mrs. Blanton stated, "It appears it is not working" and both teachers asked for more strategies to help their students become better listeners. They wanted to quit wasting time "repeated directions even after telling them step by step what they have to do," shared Mrs. Levine. As the researcher, I worked to ensure each of the teachers' ideas were valued and supported without any criticism or disapproval.

Read Alouds

Introduction to Individual Teacher Read Alouds

As explained in chapter 3, read alouds were used in the study as a context in which participants could provide the opportunity to practice explicit strategies for improving listening skills within a familiar format. Teaching listening strategies was the context for using during the read alouds. After Mrs. Blanton had to drop out of the study due to an unexpected illness, Mrs.

Levine then joined Mrs. Tatum and Mrs. Sowers' team and the study continued with the remaining three participants collaboratively planning as a group of three in conjunction with the researcher.

Each participant implemented the interventions in her own classrooms and with her own students. The time of day chosen for read alouds varied by teachers with times that ranged from early morning to late afternoon. Participants were given access to pre-selected children's literature that I compiled prior to the study in which listening skills had been embedded in the text (see Appendix B). Each of the read alouds were conducted based upon these texts from the list except for one week when teachers chose to use Dr. Seuss text for Dr. Seuss festivities at their school. For the first two weeks, each participant used *Listen and Learn* (2003) to ensure that students understood the expectations for using DS and how to practice their listening skills. Since it was difficult for the participants to be good listeners when *they* practiced using the DS, they concluded that their students would need more practice with it as well.

Table 7 depicts the book choices participants made for their read aloud interventions. Each participant conducted the pre-planned read alouds in their individual classroom. Participants usually implemented these lessons at some point during their language arts lessons. Most read alouds lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. The final read aloud took approximately 40 and 45 minutes because of the added component of the survey administered by the participants to their students.

Table 7. *Teacher Read Alouds*

Read Aloud Texts used for Lessons								
Week	1/8	1/15	1/22	2/3	2/10	2/17	2/24	3/7
Blanton	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>I Have a little Problem said the Bear</i>	<i>My Mouth is a Volcano</i>				
Levine	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>I Have a little Problem said the Bear</i>	<i>My Mouth is a Volcano</i>	<i>Howard B Wigglebottom</i>	<i>Listen Buddy</i>	<i>Happy Birthday to You</i>	<i>*WBL Larry at School</i>
Sowers	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>My Mouth is a Volcano</i>	<i>I Have a little Problem said the Bear</i>	<i>Decibella</i>	<i>Listen Buddy</i>	<i>Oh The Places You'll Go</i>	<i>WBL Larry at School</i>
Tatum	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>My Mouth is a Volcano</i>	<i>I Have a little Problem said the Bear</i>	<i>Decibella</i>	<i>Listen Buddy</i>	<i>If I Ran the Zoo</i>	<i>WBL Larry at School</i>

*WBL: Whole Body Listening

Participants' Reflective Journals. For each participant, a case study was written on their reflective journal entry. The following section includes overall comments from selected portions of the participants' reflective journals about their perceptions of their implementation of the read alouds during the interventions. It also includes their written perceptions about their students listening behaviors. Sections were chosen to encompass a broad range of participants' perceptions and provide rich descriptions of their thoughtful insights into their participation in the study. LSG meeting discussion notes from the researcher's journal are also included as they

relate to each individual participant's comments and reflections. These reflections transition the entirety of the study and include evidences of the participants' perceptions during the study.

Mrs. Blanton. Mrs. Blanton completed four weeks of the study before she became ill. Prior to beginning the read alouds, she wrote that she shared with her students the importance of listening with their whole body and previewed the Whole Body Listening Larry hand-out with them. She then asked her students to model the WBL characteristics to show that they were being good listeners. After practicing use of the WBL strategies, Mrs. Blanton explained that she prepared students to listen by telling them that they would practice those strategies while they listened to the story.

Mrs. Blanton reported that the first book, *Listen and Learn* (2003) gave the students authentic opportunities to engage in listening practice as she read the story. The students responded to questions from the book using the DS. The partners practiced, prior to the read aloud, using the DS with one person being the speaker while their partner was the listener. Mrs. Blanton shared that throughout the lesson her students had problems with interrupting when it was their turn to be the listener. (This was like how the teachers interrupted each other during their own practice.) She specified that during the next read aloud she would have the students who were speakers hold popsicle sticks as a reminder of their role.

In her next read aloud, *I have a Little Problem, said the Bear* (2009), she introduced the popsicle sticks to the students as a reminder. Students who held the stick were told that they were to be the speakers. "If you don't have a stick, you don't get to talk." After practicing using the DS's and switching the sticks, Mrs. Blanton stated that the students began to understand the new expectations for how they were *supposed* to listen to their partner. She summarized that it

allowed the students to actively think about what their 'job' was during the discussions (speaker or listener).

Because the students did well with the popsicle sticks in the second read aloud, Mrs. Blanton modeled for them again how to use the DS at the beginning of the third read aloud but had the students use the DS without the popsicle sticks. "I want them to do it without the stick if they can." She stated that the students did well when it was their turn to be the listener. "The children really showed they were listening to me without using the sticks this time because they used the (WBL) expectations and no one had their head in their laps." She explained that the students "really enjoyed" the opportunity to talk with their partners about the stories.

After the fourth read aloud, *My Mouth is a Volcano* (2006), Mrs. Blanton felt that the students could name the expectations but did not always follow through or do them. She also stated that she had been using the same partners every time they practiced (their writing partner) and that she would mix up the partners for the next read aloud. She said that her students "remembered to listen with their heart." However, she reported that not all students were listening because some still had "their head in their hands or were looking around the room." She also explained that she might need to 'listen in' more to the partner groups to make sure they were on task when using the DS. She felt that she might not be monitoring their listening practice as much as was needed.

Mrs. Levine. Mrs. Levine introduced the first read aloud by explaining the WBL Larry visual to her students and reviewing the WBL listening expectations. She stated that she prepared the students to listen by reviewing the WBL expectations for listening. Students were asked to model what each component as it was reviewed. For example, if a child was modeling how they would use their hands to show how they were listening they would put their hands in

their lap.

The students were asked to make predictions about what they thought the story might be about and they were told to practice WBL use the DS during the story when responding to questions. When sharing how her students performed after the first read aloud she said, “The children seemed very excited to listen to the story and loved having a partner to talk with throughout the story.” She explained that the students enjoyed talking to each other. She was surprised to learn that students would pay attention to her voice when she directed them to listen, but were unable to listen to each other in the DS context. Mrs. Levine explained that she wanted to help the students learn to listen to each other. She found that one drawback of the partners sharing experience was that some would just repeat what the speaker (their partner) said rather than coming up with their own ideas.

She suggested that she needed to supervise her students more closely when she asked them to do the DS pairs to monitor their engagement in the lesson.

I was surprised by the number of students that couldn’t just listen to their partners when we did the DS. I was also surprised that when my voice came on to continue reading the book, they all became excellent listeners. I guess we often teach kids to be good listeners when the teacher is talking, but we need to practice this more with their peers. I also noticed when I was in close proximity to the different groups, they became better listeners for their partners.

At the end of the first read aloud she reported that some students said their peers weren’t being good listeners because, “they weren’t looking at them when they were talking.” She suggested “I think they are beginning to become more aware of what being a good listener means.” Mrs.

Levine planned to include a modeling strategy in her next lesson. She would work with another student to model good listening versus bad listening (examples and non-examples). She felt that the first read aloud went well and stated, “I also feel that this was an excellent book to teach active listening and not just *hearing*.”

In her next read aloud, *I Have a Little Problem, said the Bear* (2009), Mrs. Levine clarified that students remembered the components of WBL and shared how to be good listeners both during the story and when they talked with their partners. She incorporated modeling for the students using examples and non-examples of good listening by having students model good listening and ‘bad’ listening behaviors. Her students could share the WBL expectations at the beginning of the read aloud and model what good listening behaviors included. After engaging in WBL, Mrs. Levine explained that the students listened well at the beginning of the story, but not nearly as well at the end. Students’ were not as motivated to listen as the story progressed. She shared the following in her reflection about the read aloud:

I didn’t think they would figure out so early in the book that bear keeps getting interrupted. One of the students even said, “Someone needs to let him say his problem so he will feel better.” I loved that this book addressed not listening to someone who needed to share a problem. I would like to use a different book that addressed another problem that comes from not being a good listener.

Although she said she felt that students didn’t listen well at the beginning of the story, she admitted they were critically listening at the beginning because of the responses they gave. Her students’ frustration with the characters in the story not giving the bear time to finish telling his problem was evidence for her that they were listening. As her read aloud lesson continued, she

stated how the students started understanding the importance of waiting their turn to speak when the listener was sharing.

In her next read aloud, Mrs. Levine shared that her students enjoyed the book *Howard B Wigglebottom* (2005). “They also made the connection with how it is important to listen for your safety.” She liked that this book showed students “the positive things that occur from listening.” She was surprised at the improvement that she could see in their active listening when they were talking with each other. “Most of the time they really show how to be an active listener when they are talking with their partners.” She did say that she needed to allow for more time to have them share their answers with the class. She also stated she would like to incorporate activities that included listening comprehension in the read alouds. “I feel like I need to include other things in the read aloud as well.”

After reading *Listen Buddy* (1995) to her class, she reported that it was an effective book to help students understand the difference between hearing and listening. It helped her to explain to her students how you can sometimes hear things, but not understand what is meant, which is what you have to do to be an active listener. “I love how the students are able to talk about what an active listener looks like.” Instead of just using the DS for this read aloud, she decided to implement a movement strategy in which students would find a partner to discuss the question from the story by “hopping like a bunny.” She felt this engaged the students in the read aloud as they listened to the story. “The kids were excellent listeners during this, and it also gave them a chance to be with different students.” She also shared that her students began to make a conscientious effort to show they were being active listeners by making eye contact with their partners.

She felt like she needed to work on managing the time for the read aloud better and wanted to focus on incorporating listening comprehension into the lesson. She also thought it might be a good idea to include science or social studies content into the read alouds. Because she incorporated lots of cooperative learning activities in her teaching, she stated she consistently had to adjust the activities during the read alouds (DS, inside/outside, switching partners) for her students. She explained that this allowed her to keep students motivated to listen. Mrs. Levine also specified how she would like to start incorporating non-fiction texts into her read alouds while having students engage in “active listening” strategies.

I will continue to reinforce whole body listening for the rest of the year. I will also start my year out with it next year. I am so glad to have had the opportunity to do this with my class. I am amazed at what an impact teaching whole body listening has had on my class. I love it! After doing the interactive read alouds, I feel that my students have become better listeners. I feel I have *taught* them to listen, rather than *told* them.

Mrs. Sowers. Mrs. Sowers began her read aloud by introducing Whole Body Listening Larry as a visual for students to use as well. She wanted to “help them show their good listening skills.” After implementing her first read aloud she stated that “the students listening skills were worse than I realized.” She reported that students did not answer the correct question that was asked or were too distracted by one student who appeared not to be listening. She asked how she could help this child as she explained his behavior:

One child in particular seemed to try and do the exact opposite of what we said showed good listening—looking down when we talked about looking at the speaker, making noises when we talked about listening quietly, getting up on his knees when we talked

about sitting on our bottoms, etc. The other kids spent a lot of the time watching him and telling on his behaviors.

She believed that he just wanted to gain her attention so it was suggested by one of the teachers to try moving him closer to her during the read aloud.

She shared that the DS went well with the rest of the class but she suggested that a ‘brain break’ or movement activity might have helped students prior to having to sit and listen to the read aloud (they had just come back from a specialty class where they had been sitting for about 30 minutes). She also stated that there were too many questions for the students to stop and respond to during the read aloud and fewer questions might be more effective. She shared, “It is too hard for them to focus on comprehending the story because I ask so many questions.”

The next read aloud, *My Mouth is a Volcano* (2006), was a book that her students had previously heard in guidance. She stated, “The kids enjoyed the book. They had used it in guidance and were very familiar with it. She shared the students were “picking up quickly on the active listening idea.” Her concern, at this point, was her students’ short attention spans. Some of her students focused on what the other children were doing rather than listening to the read aloud. “Other kids spend so much time watching those kids that they miss information.” Although she stated they were “practicing active listening each time,” she shared that moving students around to see if that would help students from distracting each other during the read alouds would be a strategy she would use in her next read aloud.

Her read aloud of *Decibella* (2014) went well because she stated that she started using the terms for student voice levels in her classroom. “The different voice levels were easy to understand because we have been using terms like ‘table voice’ and ‘six-inch voice’ since we

read the book.” Her students remind each other which level of voice they need to use. She continued to struggle with a few of her students using active listening:

Some of the kids still have difficulty listening quietly and others are too focused on those kids. I want to get the kids to stop trying to tattle on every little lapse in listening by other students. I’m going to ask them to focus more on me and less on the others. (hard for second graders!)

Prior to reading *Listen Buddy* (1995), she shared that “We did talk about focusing more on me and less on others during active listening and it seemed to help some.” She explained that her students were able “to anticipate that Buddy would have trouble on his long hop.” Her students were listening well because “they wondered why his parents would let him go since he was such a poor listener.” She felt that this lesson went much better and her students were beginning to demonstrate more active listening strategies for a short time.

She continuously switched back and forth during the read alouds regarding her own perception of how well the students were listening. Sometimes she felt that they were doing well but other times she explained it was hard to try and maintain student focus on being good listeners. After the final read aloud she stated:

I do plan to continue using the term ‘active listening’ and reminding the kids about being whole body listeners. I didn’t really think about actually teaching listening skills before this. We did talk about rules, raising your hand, not interrupting, etc., but never really talked about how to listen. I realize now that I need to spend more time focusing on what good listening really looks like and how to teach kids to show that they are active and whole body listeners. Then we can do reminders and follow up lessons when needed.

Mrs. Tatum. Mrs. Tatum began her lesson by reviewing the whole body listening expectations with her students. During her first read aloud, *Listen and Learn* (2003), she reported great success using the DS with her students and a high level of engagement on the part of the students. She also commented on how the students seemed to enjoy the DS. “It was nice for everyone to get a chance to speak and actively listen.” Mrs. Tatum’s stated her students connected listening with showing respect for their teacher. She explained:

The children shared some great ideas about active listening and how it shows respect. Several of the students had an AHA! moment when we discussed how you feel when someone doesn’t listen to you. Many of them had never thought about how I felt when they didn’t listen in class.

Listening as a way of showing respect was something that Mrs. Tatum stressed throughout her interventions.

Whole body listening was a strategy that she felt was helpful for her students. Her students were excited by the visual of Larry with the different components for actively listening. She reported, “As a class we decided that we were going to create a poster with our active listening parts.” She wanted her students to have a visual reminder for being a good listener. This poster was something she used frequently with her students when reminding them to be active listeners. In her first reflection, she explained:

During the next read aloud I would like to ask less questions that are found right there in the book. We have been asked to add higher order thinking questions to our lessons and this is a great way to incorporate them. I also feel that an important part of listening is being able to hear the whole story. Sometimes students lose the story when we stop so

many times to ask questions. Reading for fluency, comprehension, and fun are all very important.

In her next read aloud *My Mouth is a Volcano* (2006), she shared that even though her students had previously heard the story, “they seemed to enjoy reading the story and discussing active listening with the class.” Several of her students “made reference to the book throughout the week.” She felt that her students were doing a good job of practicing their active listening but, “However, there are still several in la la land.” She commented:

Many students were surprised that talking out of turn was disrespectful to their friends.

They saw it as showing excitement about their discussion. I found this interesting because they know it is disrespectful to blurt out and interrupt the teacher.

Their perspective about interrupting was very different from hers. She saw the interruptions as being disrespectful to the teacher but her students thought they were showing how excited they were about what they wanted to say. Their perceptions were at odds.

During the read aloud of *I have a Little Problem, said the Bear* (2009) she shared that the students were engaged in the story and enjoyed listening to the book. In this story when the bear tries to explain his problem to different animals, they all interrupt him and finish his sentence for him. Mrs. Tatum explained, “they (the students) were very surprised at his actual problem. We discussed how many times we think we know what someone is going to say or what someone needs, but we don’t actually listen to them.” She remarked that some of her students still struggle with active listening, “I may end up trying to seat the non-listeners closer to me and see how that goes next week.”

When she read the story *Listen Buddy* (1995) she stated that her students were really engaged in listening to the story and wrote:

The students really enjoyed the book. They thought Buddy was a lot like some of us. We discussed how we often think we are listening but really aren't. I confessed that I do the same thing. We reviewed being an active listener and why it is important to do all the components of active listening.

She further stated that she reminded her students to use their WBL skills to show that they were being active listeners in the classroom. She stressed that she needed to be more aware when she was reading and pay attention to the students who were not listening. Mrs. Tatum also wanted to monitor students who were easily distracted. She decided to move some of those students nearer to her when she was conducting her read alouds to monitor their listening behaviors.

She used a group activity with the students during her Dr. Seuss read aloud and declared that "even after 120 some days of school and many days of group activities, they still struggle being active listeners in a group." She explained that all the students wanted to share, but they did not want to be the one who had to listen. She decided that they still needed lots of practice with listening activities. She felt that it did not matter whether the students worked in small cooperative learning groups or worked together as a whole group; listening was still a struggle for them. After engaging in the study, Mrs. Tatum wrote:

I am more focused on actually teaching active listening, modeling active listening, and consistently revisiting it. Many students have never been taught how to be an active listener with their whole body. We expect that they do, but it never takes much time, minus the first few weeks of school, to model and teach it. I am more aware of student listening skills and use the language daily. My perspective on students that I often thought were not listening has changed as well. I have many students this year that can't do all the active listening expectations at one time, but they are still listening.

Researcher Observations of Participant Read Alouds

Read aloud observations were done twice over the course of the study during a time scheduled with the individual participants. The first read aloud was observed between weeks 5 and 6 and the second read aloud was observed during the final week of the study. On the request of the participants, the final read aloud was exclusively planned by the researcher to include the suggestions and ideas generated over the course of the study from the participants. Participants then slightly adjusted the lesson based on their own classroom environments. They also gave the students an informal listening survey before the read aloud and the directed listening activity after they read the story.

These read aloud observations were solely based on the participant and their execution of the strategies discussed in the first LSG meeting (Funk and Funk, 1989) during their read alouds. These hand-written observations of the read alouds were transcribed and coded using a qualitative, iterative process based on Strauss & Corbin's (1998) constant-comparative method. Researcher methodological files were used for triangulation to further compare participant's perceptions during the LSG meetings with the read aloud observations. All student related comments came directly from participants' discussions during the LSG meetings or from their reflective journals.

Prior to the observations, participants asked what I (the researcher) would be looking for in the read aloud observations when they were observed. My response was that I would be looking for the components previously discussed in our first LSG meeting. This included the elements suggested by Funk and Funk (1989). Because each read aloud was planned at the LSG meetings, these elements were included in each lesson. Teachers were reassured that the observations would be used to help facilitate listening instruction and discussed in the next LSG.

Introduction to observations. The read aloud observations served as an effective tool to see how participants implemented the strategies and ideas discussed in the LSG meetings. All the participants delivered engaging read alouds. Each participant modified the lesson for their own class (for example, skipping some questions or inserting questions they thought might be more appropriate for their class). The participants reported their students were very engrossed in the story and were glad “to finally meet Larry.” They also shared that their own excitement about reading the book helped them maintain student motivation during the lesson. Interestingly, some teachers asked more questions during the read aloud than were on the actual lesson plan provided.

Table 8: *Researcher Observed Read Alouds*

Read Aloud Observations	Observation One	Observation Two
Levine	<i>Howard B. Wigglebottom</i>	* <i>WBL Larry at School</i>
Sowers	<i>Decibella</i>	* <i>WBL Larry at School</i>
Tatum	<i>Listen Buddy</i>	* <i>WBL Larry at School</i>

*WBL: whole body listening

First read aloud. Although each participant chose to use a different read aloud for their first observation, their planned lesson and implementation at the start of each read aloud followed the outline we adapted based on Funk and Funk (1989). Participants focused on setting a listening purpose for the students by having them make predictions using the cover of the story. The students were asked to predict what the story might be about and were told to discuss their ideas with a peer using the DS. These predictions were then shared back with the group before the read aloud began.

Setting the stage for good listening included having the students share what the components of WBL included and modeling WBL prior to the read aloud. After having students engage in making predictions, the participants prompted students to use their active listening strategies and asked students to share what whole body listening meant. Participants reinforced students' responses and reiterated they needed to use those strategies as they listened to the story to be able to check their predictions.

The participants supported the use of DS during the questioning part of the read aloud, but didn't consistently check in with the students to see if they were on task with the listening activity (i.e. monitoring students to ensure they were discussing the question and engaged in listening to their partner). Participants stopped the read aloud to ask students questions so they could use the DS to practice their listening skills. After students took turns using the DS, the participants didn't always remember to have the students share their answers back with the whole group. This was to be used to check to see if the students were listening to each other. Mrs. Sowers and Mrs. Tatum agreed with Mrs. Levine when she shared, "I don't always listen in to the DS when they discuss their responses to the questions." All the participants displayed these inconsistencies in their read alouds. The students did engage in the DS, but they did not share the information discussed during the DS with the rest of the class. Participants acknowledged that they needed to be more vigilant with that part of the lesson.

At the end of the read aloud, participants focused on the *why* of being a good listener. For example, they reminded it was important to listen to show that you care about the person who is speaking, to understand what the directions are, or to show respect for the speaker. Mrs. Tatum explained that she had her students answer the following question: "When is it really easy for you to listen and why is it important to listen at home and school?" She connected student

conversations to WBL (listening with their brain or their whole heart) and asked the students to discuss strategies they could use to help them become better listeners.

Mrs. Levine. Her read aloud of *Howard B. Wigglebottom* (2005) was conducted as if she was having a conversation with her students. She showed that she valued her students' responses by stating affirmations like, "good point" or "I can see what you mean." She engaged in modeling active listening by looking directly at the student, nodding as they talked, and saying phrases like, "I can see why you thought that" when they finished sharing their answers to a question. She provided guided practice for the students by using the inside/outside strategy for partner discussions. When students were ready to begin their partner discussions, she prefaced her question with "this is such an important question, raise your hand to answer, who are the A's (pause) and who are the B's, good, you know your very important job." She set clear expectations for the students to use their whole body when being a good listener. "Now remember to use all of your whole body listening as I read the story."

She began the read aloud by having students make predictions about the story. "Look at the cover of this book and I'm going to tell you right now, this is Howard B. Wigglebottom." She asked her students to make predictions about the story by looking at the cover of the book. After allowing students to share their predictions she began reading the story. Although she did not have students share any of their answers from their conversations before or during the reading, she did allow them to share their responses from the questions asked after the reading. Students used inside/outside to respond to the question, "Can you tell me what happened in the story." Students first talked with their partners and then she called on different students to tell what they had discussed. Students were given specific praise, "Boys and girls, you listened so well to all of your partners while they were talking. I could tell you all were listening with your

whole body.” Although she only had students share their conversations from the DS once at the end, she monitored students to ensure that they were engaged in discussing the questions asked during the read aloud.

Mrs. Sowers. After reviewing the listening expectations with her students, she asked them to “show me how you are an active listener.” She was very dramatic for her students when read the story *Decibella* (2014) and incorporated teacher to student interactions throughout the reading. For example, when she would come to a silly word like “slurpadoodle” she would have students repeat it with her. She told the students they were becoming “voice volume experts.”

This book focused more on the speaker than the listener, but was included because both roles are important for students to understand effective communication skills. When this book was shared with the teachers, it was noted that students needed to understand how to communicate when they were talking with a partner to adjust their voice levels. Using quiet voices was an important detail teachers wanted students to be aware of when they were using DS to discuss their responses to the questions asked during the read alouds.

Although Mrs. Sowers asked the students questions during the read aloud and students interacted with her she forgot to include the DS for them to practice their listening skills. Her questions like, “Who can raise your hand and tell me what the problem was in this story” were all directed towards the whole group. All students could share their ideas, but they never were given the option of discussing those ideas with each other during any part of the read aloud. When the students were too loud in the story, she asked, “do you suppose we have that same problem in this room?” She explained to the students, “Sometimes you don’t use your active listening to know what type of voice you are supposed to use when I give directions. She ended

the read aloud by telling the students to, “show me one more time what it looks like when we are active listeners.” Her focus was on the students observable listening behaviors.

Mrs. Tatum. She was very explicit in setting her expectations for student listening before reading *Listen Buddy* (1995) to the class. For example, her prediction question, “Take one minute to look at all the things you see on the front of this book, and if you are a 1, you are going to tell your partner what you think is going on in this story.” After students made their predictions with each other using the DS, she did not have them share those predictions with the rest of the class.

Her next question “Remind me, what does active listening look like with all of your body parts.” She waited for her students to show that they were using their whole body listening skills. As she read the story with lots of enthusiasm and expression to the class she asked questions like, “Why did he have so much trouble in the story?” Students responded with each other using the DS, but they were not asked to share any of the discussions with the whole class.

Final read aloud. For the final read aloud observation the participants chose to use the same book, *Whole Body Listening Larry, at School* (2011). Because I was asked to plan the final read aloud, I reflected on the previous LSG meeting discussions before creating the lesson. Throughout the planning of the final read aloud, participants’ suggestions and consideration for their individual ideas during our previous LSG meetings were considered. For example, there were less planned questions for them to ask during the read aloud and not all questions had to use the DS. Some questions could be asked of the whole group. There were also specific reminders included for participants to allow students to share their discussions with the whole group at different points during the read aloud. Specifically, the shared discussions were planned to be used after students made their initial predictions, at least once during the read aloud, and then again at the end as students reflected on their initial predictions.

One of the discussions from an earlier LSG meeting related to the participants' questions about wanting to know how their students perceived their own listening behaviors. To help the participants to learn more about their students' perceptions about listening, a survey that students could use to self-evaluate themselves was planned for the beginning of the final read aloud. The actual data from the surveys are not included since only participant perceptions were being evaluated. The surveys were for the participants' personal use in their own classrooms. Some participants shared information about the surveys at the last LSG meeting so this data was only included if it was shared by the participants.

Participants had their students complete the survey at their desks. Then, each of the participants had their students come to the carpet for the read aloud. The premise of this story, *Whole Body Listening Larry at School* (2011) has Larry helping new students in his school become better listeners. The participants implemented the final read aloud by setting clear expectations once again for what an 'active - whole body listener' should do and look like during the read aloud. Each of the participants chose to remind the students about the previous books they had read on listening and told the students this would be their last listening read aloud (this was not included in the lesson plan provided).

Since this story was about whole body listening, each page of the story specifically related to the components of whole body listening (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, body, brain, and heart). Each participant engaged the students with DS to practice their listening skills when responding to the questions. Although the lesson plan had 4 questions for the participants to ask, (one prediction, two during the story, and one at the end of the story) the participants had the flexibility to determine which ones to ask depending on their class. The amount of questions asked varied in the different read alouds and was based on the participants' assessment of their

students during the read alouds. While Mrs. Sowers did not have, her students' share the peer discussions with the whole class, Mrs. Levine and Mrs. Tatum did have their students periodically share. They also would rephrase what the students said to the class to show that they were listening to them.

The participants connected listening as a way of showing respect, caring, learning, and for safety in their conversations with the students at the end of the read aloud. Mrs. Levine told her students, "We spend a lot of time repeating directions so you can learn, to stretch our brains, so if you aren't a good listener you might not be safe." Mrs. Sowers shared with her class, "Being a good listener means you are being respectful to all your teachers and then you can learn so much more." Mrs. Tatum implemented higher order questions into her read aloud. One example of this type of question was, "Have you ever struggled with a time you had to listen to your parents?" Students were asked to discuss their answers with their partners. After a few minutes of discussions, she connected the question back to their previous AHA moment and stressed, "See how important it is to be a good listener to show you care about what the listener is saying. Being an active listener shows you care when someone is talking."

The participants also did a following directions activity with their students after the read aloud. This listening exercise required the students to draw on a paper (follow the directions) as they listened to the directions. For example, "draw a circle in the middle of the page." Students were reminded that the directions could only be read to them once. Participants' shared how students seem to think they were better listeners on their surveys than they were based on how they did on the listening/drawing exercise. Participants chose to have the students review their initial survey responses with their picture. Mrs. Sowers said she wanted them to see "they might not listen as well as they think."

Mrs. Levine. After administering the listening survey, she set expectations for listening with her class. She showed them the cover of the book and told them to “predict with me what you think is going to happen in this story about Larry.” She then had students work with their partners to “decide who is one and who is two.” After she was sure students knew their job, she told them, “oh good, you know your job.” As she enthusiastically read the story, she paused on each page to allow students to finish the ‘rhyme’ in the story. She also reinforced students’ good listening behavior during the read aloud with comments like, “You know what I saw? I saw twos were listening as the ones were talking.” Each time Mrs. Levine was ready to start reading the story again she would calmly ask, “are you ready?” before starting to read again. She also included personal connections for the students like, “do you ever daydream when it is time to listen...sometimes you just have to shake that head and really listen.” After the read aloud she asked students “How do you feel when you know someone is really listening to you.” She also asked students to “Tell your partner how you feel when someone is not listening to you.” Mrs. Levine monitored her students as they shared their responses with each other. They used the DS during the read aloud and were asked to share their final responses with the rest of the class.

Mrs. Sowers. Mrs. Sowers began her read aloud by having students review WBL and asked students to remember that they should be “ignoring those around you so you can focus on me as I read.” She asked the students to “think about what happens when there are new kids at the school, what do you think Larry can do to help them?” She had students respond to the question by sharing their individual responses. Students were asked to use the DS periodically during the story and she reinforced students’ answers by saying, “wow, he’s giving him really good advice,” and “Larry is really helping them be better listeners.”

At the end of the story she asked students to use the DS to respond to the following question, “So how do you feel when someone doesn’t listen to you?” She restated one of her students answers with a question, “I know it is sometimes hard, but why do you think parents have trouble listening too?” The conversations from the DS were not shared back with the whole group.

When we discussed the read aloud at the LSG meeting, she talked about her students’ responses to the question about parent listening. She said her students “are really picking up on when someone isn’t listening to them.” She shared that her students thought their parents were, “distracted or maybe they (the student) just didn’t pick a good time to ask them a question.” She admitted, “Sometimes I feel like I do it to, when they ask or want to talk and I am too busy.”

Mrs. Tatum. Her students had not done a good job of being good listeners in guidance (the specialty class they just returned from) and she stated to me at the beginning of the lesson that she was going to use the read aloud as a ‘teachable moment’ because they had done a “poor job of listening in guidance.” She specifically asked students, “How do you think all of the teachers’ feel when the students aren’t listening?” Students were asked to use the DS to share their answers with each other. Her next question, “How do you think Mrs. W. felt when people weren’t listening to her today in guidance?” Students discussed their responses and she asked them to share back their answers with the whole group. She then restated some of their answers. For example, “Yes, it is hard for a teacher when students aren’t listening and it probably did make her sad.”

After prompting students to use their whole body listening, she reminded them to think about the previous books they had read about listening. As she read the story *Whole Body*

Listening Larry at School (2011), she prompted students to notice the pictures and pointed out the specific instances in the book where the students were not being good listeners. Half-way through the read aloud, she started having students finish the rhymes that were part of the text for each of the WBL components. After reading the book, she connected their active listening back to showing respect. “Active listeners can show teachers respect by listening when teachers are talking.” She shared in the LSG meeting that when she asked the question, “Why is it hard for a teacher to teach when students aren’t being active listeners” that one of her students responded, “I think it would be utterly impossible.”

Themes

Teachers Perceptions About Listening

During initial discussions, it was clear that participants focused students’ attention on the ‘important times to listen’ by saying phrases such as “okay boys and girls, this is important, it is time to listen” or “these directions are important, let’s listen closely.” Participants’ specified they needed to repeat everything either for repetition or because the students were not listening the first time and “they always asked for the directions to be restated anyway.” Their perceptions of teaching listening included embedding instruction into read alouds. This included classroom rules and the beginning of the year expectations. They stated this allowed them to integrate active listening as a reminder for students to be good listeners throughout the school year. Generally, participants reported they taught listening to their students throughout the day by modeling or using attention getters when they needed students to listen.

After the study, participants reported many of the same expectations they had shared in the beginning for students listening and non-listening behaviors. Students needed to be attentive, respectful, and show eye contact. There was a clearer understanding that students who might not

look like they are paying attention could still be listening, but it was still a behavior they suggested needed to be changed to ensure listening to avoid distracting other students. They specifically stated students needed to listen for the following reasons, a) to show respect, b) to learn, and c) to be safe. Participants also shared they understood the importance of teaching their students to listen versus just telling them when to listen.

Whole body listening components were seen to be a strength for teaching listening by the participants. The students' connections to the components of listening with their whole body permitted the teachers to actively reference a visual reminder for students about 'how' they needed to listen. Table 10 depicts a brief overview of participants' perceptions from the final LSG meeting.

Figure 2. *Teachers Perceptions after Intervention*

Expected Student Listening Behaviors	Student Non-Listening Behaviors	Listening Instructional Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •attentive •eyes on speaker/book •on task interactions •hands to self •respectful •listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •no eye content •cannot restate/retell •don't know what to do •playing with things •ask for repeat of directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •review WBL •modeling •discussions with students about listening •cooperative learning

The next sections provide overviews of the participants' transitional ideas from the beginning of the study to the end. Because the participants seemed to focus on listening behaviors and non-listening behaviors, the expectations for each were separated for clarity.

Student listening behaviors. Participants' expectations of good listening prior to the start of the study included the following observable behaviors: a) eyes on the speaker; b) sitting

still; and c) hands to themselves. Their *general* perceptions of students' behavior did not change during the study although, they did allow that students did not necessarily have to be sitting still (squirmy) to be a good listener. Mrs. Tatum shared that she understood how not all her students would be able to look engaged all the time but that "didn't mean they weren't listening."

Participants added that being respectful was a good listening behavior and a reason students should want to listen. During the study participants reported that students could listen to the teacher's directions but did not know how to listen to each other. They stated that students "learned to listen to their peers" over the course of the study by being engaged in the DS to practice their listening skills.

At the end of the study the participants concluded that students were more aware of listening practices by using the WBL strategies and more aware of the expected "good listening behaviors." Participants reflections and discussions detailed how students would explain the WBL components when asked what it meant to be a good listener. Students would call out their peers for not being good listeners by saying, "they aren't listening to me with their whole heart" or "they aren't looking at me when I am talking." And some students even asked the participants, "are you listening to me?" Participants discussed that they had raised their student's awareness of what good listening is by providing the listening intervention.

Student non-listening behaviors. Non-listening behaviors included no eye contact and being squirmy. This category also included students not being able to respond appropriately to the story questions or restate directions. This type of behavior also included students who just sat after directions were given and did not participate, or looked at others papers to figure out what to do. Participants stressed that even when they gave "step by step directions" and had students repeat those instructions, students still had trouble following them. After the study,

participants still stated students failed to listen regularly and continued to need extra prompts after the directions had been given.

Listening and instructional practices. Participants' instructional practices prior to the study included repeating directions, modeling activities, using attention getters, and having students repeat directions. They also used cooperative learning and motivational strategies (creating a hook for a lesson/activity) to get students to listen. Games like Simon Says and incorporating signals for when they should listen (give me five: hold up your hand) were also used to help students focus when teachers felt it was time for students to listen.

After the study, participants reported they would use modeling and reviewing WBL strategies as well as incorporating more opportunities to engage students in listening exercises.

Mrs. Levine shared:

Now that I have taught active listening, we review whole body active listening signs often. Students are more aware of what active listening is and how it relates to respect and learning. We discuss how it isn't easy and we all struggle with it often.

The participants agreed that their students needed to understand the importance of listening to become better learners, to show respect, and to stay safe.

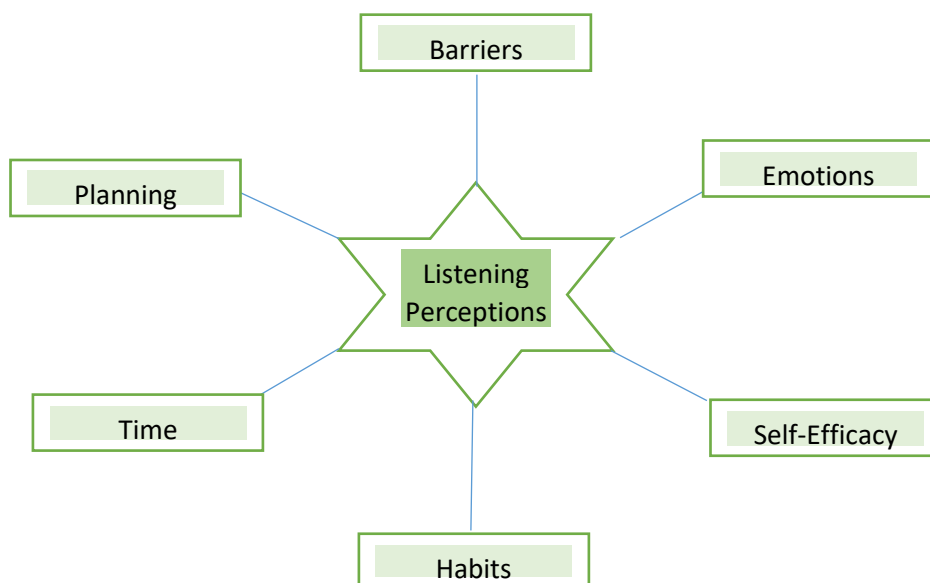
Outline of Themes

The themes from the data are depicted in Table 10 and include both participants' perceptions about listening and their perceptions about teaching listening in their classrooms. Participants felt that they addressed listening during their start up at the beginning of the year when they discussed classroom expectations with their students. Their stance about this was

adjusted somewhat during the study after discussing this and after Mrs. Levine stated, “I think we were telling them to listen rather than teaching them to listen, don’t you think?”

While analyzing the data, it became apparent that these themes overlap in numerous categories. For example, time is a theme, but it could easily be a barrier as well.

Figure 3. *Themes*



Theme 1: Barriers

One of the challenging barriers for participants with regards to teaching listening came from their justifications that they already taught their students to listen. They reiterated that their review of classroom expectations at the beginning of the school year should permit the students to understand the expectations for listening. The transition from telling students to listen to teaching them to listen began to change through the LSG discussions. Participants began to reference some of the handouts from the LSG meetings and asked for more information about how they could motivate students to want to listen to them.

Participants' perceptions and knowledge about their students' abilities to listen was another barrier. They explained that since students had already attended kindergarten and first grade "they should really know how to listen in a classroom." Although the participants all agreed that students were poor listeners, they attributed it more to the students' lack of paying attention to them when they gave instructions than the students' lack of listening skills. The participants shared that students knew when the "important times to listen were" and should actively listen when key phrases like, "it's time to be an active listener" were used in the classroom.

While discussing their own lack of background experiences for teaching listening skills the participants were a little defensive and talked about how they already taught listening every day. By explaining all the strategies they did to remind students to listen, the participants' conversations began to address how their awareness of what they were doing prior to the study might not really be teaching listening. Over time, it appeared that they began to see themselves as part of the solution to help students become better listeners. "Before I was just telling them *when* to listen, now I think I have a better idea of teaching them *how* to listen" shared Mrs. Levine.

Time. Participants' interest level appeared to be high at the onset of the study, but time became the next barrier for ongoing listening instruction. The barrier of time was revisited over and over throughout the study. Due to the assessments, interruptions, and other 'teacher responsibilities' on any given day, the participants buy-in for integrating the read alouds was limited to the timeframe of the study. Although they said that they wanted to continue using read alouds with a listening topic embedded in them, the participants also echoed each other when they reminded me that they did teach listening at the very beginning of the school year. They did

not connect listening as a literacy skill similar to reading or writing that needed ongoing instruction and practice.

More evidence of time as a barrier came from the participants request for me to plan the final read aloud. Participants' time was limited for meeting and they were often rushed when it came to the planning stage of the LSG meetings. They also asked if I would plan the final read aloud for them because of time constraints in our meeting. In part, it appeared that the participants wanted to see how I would organize the lesson, but it was also because they said that they all had other things they needed to do. With the additional pressure of preparing for conferences (compiling assessments and information about their students), the participants were less engaged in the fourth listening study meeting.

Theme 2: Emotions

Frustration. A common theme for the participants was frustration because they felt students were not listening to them. Their frustration about having to repeatedly use reminders and restate directions were also revisited repeatedly throughout the study. "Students start by listening pretty good at the beginning of the read aloud, but I think all of the questions we are asking causes me to lose their attention," said Mrs. Sowers. The teachers' desire for a 'quick fix' was evident in the LSG discussions, but as with most literacy skills, ongoing repetition and practice are required for improvement. Their lack of previous exposure to listening instruction also appeared to cause some frustration, which leads into the next theme: resistance.

Resistance. Frustration transitioned into resistance in some instances, and the participants questioned whether students could learn to listen by just practicing it. Although they were given materials and strategies to use immediately, their overall understanding of how to teach listening was limited. Participants wanted to help their students become better listeners but their lack of

experience required a change in mindset in their teaching practices. Even though they said they understood the need to teach listening; their ability to justify spending the amount of time required for ongoing practice was impacted by the demands of other literacy skills. The participants' consistent omission of the final part of Funk and Funk's (1989) discussion portion of the interventions most likely impacted some of their success with improving their students listening behaviors.

Theme 3: Listening Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy. All the participants were experienced teachers who were very confident with their content and teaching practices. Most veteran teachers are confident in their abilities to teach their grade-level content. Although I worked carefully to ensure participants confidence, I created a conflict in their teaching identities. Sometimes they experienced conflict with the construct of teaching listening in part because it was something they felt they already did in the classroom. This was clear as they explained in the first LSG meeting how often they spent teaching listening each day (all day long). Separating listening into a specific skill for teaching although not insurmountable, was a challenge.

Teaching Listening. Because of their lack of experience combined with their lack of training, participants were sometimes defensive in discussions about listening instruction. Although participants discussed this in the first LSG meeting, it reappeared occasionally in discussions when a read aloud did not go as effectively as one of the participants might have hoped. Their ongoing need for affirmation that with continued practice the students listening skills would get better was addressed at every LSG meeting. Discussions of the articles and research on listening helped support their self-efficacy concerning their ability to teach listening

skills to their students but their lack of success created a disequilibrium in their own beliefs about their capability.

Theme 4: Habits

Listening Practices. Teaching pedagogies about listening mainly included using cooperative learning strategies, modeling, and trigger phrases for when it was time to listen. Participants used these as reminders for students to be good listeners. Although the participants used these strategies frequently, they were used to telling students *when* to listen rather than to teach students *how* to listen. The participants referenced instances from the read alouds where students could listen to their instructions of how to use the DS, but the students did not understand how to take turns (even when it was modeled) and listen to the speaker. After repeated modeling and one participant using the Popsicle sticks, students became better at switching from the role of the speaker to the listener and vice versa. This took a lot of practice and participants were surprised that the students did not know how to be active listeners even after all the time they spent telling them to listen.

Trigger Phrases. Teacher language was discussed. This includes more than just telling the students when to listen or how to listen. Trigger phrases include language at the beginning of a direction that causes students to focus only on that portion of the information. Denton (2007) reminds teachers to be brief when stating directions to allow students time to listen to understand and to avoid using phrases that will cause students to lose focus on the rest of the message. This was addressed briefly by explaining that what a teacher says is not necessarily wrong, it just might need to be worded in a different order or be more specific. One example shared by Mrs. Levine about her own experience was, “I tell them we will have recess after reading, so I guess they are probably only thinking about recess during reading groups.” Mrs. Sowers admitted, “I

probably do talk a lot when I am giving directions, but I want them to know exactly what I need them to do.”

Multi-tasking. One habit that was apparent during the read aloud observations was related to teacher multi-tasking. Participants would consistently do something else while talking to students or passing out papers while giving directions. In discussing this during the LSG meetings, the participants readily agreed with Mrs. Sowers when she explained her viewpoint that “it might show the students that what I am saying isn’t really that important, especially since they know I will tell them again anyway.”

Although the participants could state the importance of focusing on the students when they expected them to listen, time constraints played a part in this. They were used to multitasking to make the most of their instructional day, and this habit was not affected by the study. For example, when participants were passing out the survey during the final read aloud activity, each of the participants gave the directions for what they wanted students to do on the survey while they walked around the room. Habits then becomes closely aligned with barriers. Participants know they should not give directions when doing another activity, but it is truly a habit created from having to multi-task and do many things at once to get everything done. Which also lends itself to also overlapping into the next theme: time.

Theme 5: Time

Time constraints were a constant issue during this study. Even though the dates for each meeting were collaboratively planned, adjustments were continuously needed. Participants would have unexpected meetings and in some cases, it was apparent that they had so much on their plate and that meeting was hard for them. They did not see the value of spending time discussing and planning for listening instruction when listening was not something that was

going to be assessed. The participants constant need to include other content areas into the read alouds was representative of the pressure they felt to cover all their SOL's and improve students' achievement, but they did not think they could do it through this intervention. Participants concerns for their students included: (a) how much practice should they need, (b) what time of day was best to do the read aloud, (c) justifying the time for teaching "just listening" during the day. Because of the time required to cover the curriculum and the assessments required by the school division, the participants were not comfortable teaching *just* listening. Including the listening lesson in a 20 to 30 minute read aloud once a week was all they felt they had time for. The need to cover the standards and curriculum exacerbated the component of time for the participants.

Other content. Participants consistently urged me to allow them to embed other language arts content into the read aloud to 'justify' to themselves that it was ok to teach listening. Their need to include other skill instruction into the read alouds was consistently presented. Including other assessable content would have been managed easily, but participants continued requests to include other content showed that the teachers did not see the value of teaching "just listening" in isolation.

Theme 6: Planning

Participants were at a loss when it came to creating a lesson plan for a read aloud that included instruction in listening. This was totally understandable, but it appeared to make them slightly uncomfortable. The participants discussed their lack of training and experience with any previous coursework for teaching listening. They referred to their previous practices of using modeling and attention getters as their strengths for getting students to listen. The participants

connected listening to planning a lesson that would be similar to a classroom management skill rather than to a literacy skill.

Student motivation. One of the consistent criteria they discussed when planning was how to get students motivated to want to listen. The participants discussed how they used hooks to get students engaged in a lesson, but they were unsure how the hook could be used (other than making predictions from the story) to maintain students' motivation to listen. We discussed Funk & Funk's (1989) method of making sure to set a purpose for the students to listen at each meeting. This would resemble lesson hooks which they were more familiar with using in their instruction. Making predictions about the story was considered a good hook if the participants allowed the students to discuss predictions using the DS. Students would be more motivated by engaging in the discussions with their peers.

Participant motivation. Although teachers stated they were interested in participating in the study, their lack of motivation was demonstrated in different ways. For example, their lack of consistently implementing the Funk and Funk (1989) criteria in their read aloud lessons, and their request for me to plan the final read aloud lesson due to their perceived lack of time. Participants were not motivated because they did not appear to see the significance of teaching listening strategies.

Summary

The findings from this chapter outline the themes the participants displayed during their participation in this study. Participants' perceptions about listening and teaching listening were challenged in a variety of ways. As experienced teachers, their confidence in some instances was shaken by their lack of understanding of how to teach listening. Their beliefs about their own teaching were also challenged as they became more aware that they were *telling* students to listen

but not necessarily teaching them *how* to listen. I worked with teachers to create a new pedagogy for listening instruction during the study. However, it appears the study raised their awareness about listening in their classrooms. It is now part of their conversations with students.

As participants engaged in the study, their perceptions of what students listening and non-listening behaviors changed slightly. Their perception of students who might not look like they are listening (squirmy, off task) changed and they began to understand those students might be listening, while the students who were extremely attentive might be daydreaming.

This understanding of their students' unique listening behaviors enabled the participants to know when to continue teaching, redirect students, or to prompt students to be good listeners.

The participants' perceptions for some students (behaviorally challenged, special needs, or attention deficit) did not change radically. They continued to share that these students were less likely to engage in active listening in the classroom. Their perceptions about teaching listening also altered slightly in that they became more aware of the need to teach listening in their classrooms, but teaching listening did not rise to the same level of importance as other literacy areas that are consistently and outwardly assessed.

These expectations greatly affected the participants' perceptions for planning and implementing the read alouds. Even though they were provided with resources, strategies, and background information about teaching listening, it was still a challenge for the participants to plan a lesson that was solely for teaching listening. Their desire to include other content and literacy skills in to the read alouds to multi-task and maximize their instructional time suggests listening did not transition into a teachable construct for them. The participants' main modifications for planning the read alouds came from adjusting the amount of questions they

asked during the read aloud or using proximity (moving students who they decided were not good listeners closer to the teacher) to help students listen more actively.

The participants also suggested that when they asked too many questions the students lost comprehension about the story or lost their motivation to listen to the story. During the read aloud observations, not all participants incorporated all parts of the Funk & Funk (1989) strategies. Most often left out was the opportunity for students to share their ideas with each other at the very end of the lesson. Student motivation to listen might be impacted by this oversight in the lessons. When consistently implementing this strategy, most participants shared in the LSG meetings that students were engaged when they were discussing the story with their peers.

The participants appear to have a greater awareness for resources to use to teach listening as well as how to use the DS to allow students to practice listening. Understandably their overall beliefs about listening were altered somewhat over the course of the study. Specifically, the participants can now *explain* the difference between *telling* students to listen versus *teaching* them to listen. The implications for further research and teacher practice will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their pedagogy for teaching listening. I designed this research study based on Reinking and Bradley's (2008) methodology for formative and design experiments and included the foundation of Zepeda's (2015) learning theory for professional development. One of the goals was to advance the participants' understanding about listening; specifically, the need for explicit listening instruction through job-embedded professional development. The findings from these data provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What were teacher perceptions about teaching listening and how did these perceptions influence the planning of read alouds in second-grade?
2. How did engagement in professional development impact teachers' practices with listening instruction?

A discussion of the findings with implications and suggestions for further research are provided to promote more studies about listening instruction in primary grades.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Perceptions about Listening Instruction

The participants' initial perceptions about listening were typical of most classroom teachers (Brownell, 2006; Jalongo:2008; Wolvin, 2012). They generally perceived good listening behaviors as those that demonstrated students' attentiveness (Spooner & Woodcock, 2010) which were explained as students sitting quietly and paying attention to the teacher. The methods participants used to get students to listen consisted primarily of attention getters and reminding students to listen. The participants acknowledged that they identified listening as

mostly a classroom management skill that they implemented at the beginning of the school year. It was something they revisited as needed, but not something that they implemented as a literacy skill.

Although participant awareness about the need to teach listening was consistently stated throughout the LSG meetings, this awareness did not lead to buy-in for incorporating explicit listening instruction. They consistently stated that there was a need to include other content within the context of the read alouds. Though the participants never specifically referred to assessments, their focus on the content areas consistently implied concerns specific to the standards of learning and the ideas that central office administrators had recommended (i.e., higher order questions). The pressures of covering the Virginia SOL content impacted the participants' ability to perceive that there was a need for teaching listening as a literacy construct. This perception persisted throughout the study.

Although the focus of this study was on the participants' perceptions, they consistently included in the discussions their students' reactions to the intervention. The participants' increased awareness of students' perceptions about being a good listener increased their vision of themselves as good listening models for their students. This was important because students need to see teachers as role models for good listening (Jalongo, 2008).

Whole body listening was implemented immediately by the participants. In part, this went along with their perceptions about listening being more closely related to classroom management strategies. The expectations for WBL incorporated all the behaviors expected by the participants for good listening. Students could state and show what the WBL strategies entailed at the start of every lesson, but did not continue to exhibit these consistently within the

read aloud. These strategies did transition into other parts of the school day when students would share that their partner was not being a good listener in other activities.

Although this strategy appeared to be a good avenue to use as an introduction to the listening lessons for the students, it became more of a hindrance. Over the course of the study the participants leaned on it as a way to reinforce their perceptions of how students should demonstrate listening behaviors. By asking students to show what being a good listener looked like, it became a barrier for the participants. It allowed the participants to lean on WBL to reinforce their beginning perceptions of how students should show good listening behaviors. The participants' perceptions were reinforced that students needed to sit quietly, look attentive, and focus specifically on the speaker. It was the key component that participants continuously reinforced and stated they would use throughout the year to remind students to be good listeners. It did not facilitate a change beyond their concrete-visual expectations for listening.

Participants' Perceptions of Planning

The participants' perceptions of planning and implementing the read alouds varied, but the general-consensus was that teaching listening might be doable *if there was just more time*. The planning segments of the LSG meetings were rushed and were focused on choosing the questions for the read aloud. Participants were often rushed to get through all the components of the read aloud and regularly omitted the listening practice component. The planning of the lessons did not transition into the actual execution of the lessons.

Participants did agree that listening was probably the most used skill students needed to use when they were delivering instruction in their classrooms. They agreed that the skill their students used most often was the one that the students were least proficient using. Participants stated their willingness to continue using the instructional practices for listening after the study.

But, as Kennedy (2016) suggests, although the participants' reflections detailed how much more they knew about listening, their conversations in the last LSG were basically the same as their comments prior to the study. The participants stipulated that the strategies could be used during the first few weeks at the beginning of the school year and revisited as needed. This was a solid demonstration of the fact that they viewed listening as a teacher management skill rather than an instructable literacy skill like reading and writing. Because the participants continued to view listening as an expected *visible* behavior, and not a teachable construct, it would maintain its' role as the "Cinderella Skill" (Vandergrift, 1997). Listening instruction might be visited as needed, but not taught as a valued content within the curriculum like other literacy constructs.

Osborne and Jones' (2011) explanation that the value a person places on different domains can explain the participants' motivational capacity for learning about these domains was evident in this study. The motivational levels of the participants were important relative to the creation of innovative changes in their current practices. Their motivation for planning was affected by not only their lack of previous training, but also by their perception that they already *told* the students to listen every day.

JEPD. Lortie (1975; 2002) asserts that veteran teachers are often hesitant to engage in unfamiliar instruction. Teachers often struggle with balancing the academic and social needs of their students while also managing the demands of the classroom (Kennedy, 2016). Many professional development opportunities are not carried into the classroom because of those demands. Because of this, a job-embedded professional development approach to teacher learning was employed in the study, with the goal of engaging participants in hands-on practices in their classrooms with real students. The impetus for including this type of learning theory was that it provided them with professional development that required modification of their current

instructional practices. These modifications could ultimately lead to student improvement (Zepeda, 2015). Because this type of practice is primarily embedded in the classroom environment, teachers can assess and adjust their practices based on student performance (Hawley & Valli, 1999), which is the ultimate-goal of all instruction.

Research about effective professional development (Creemers, et al., 2013) suggests that teachers who are actively engaged with a personal and professional learning community have greater participation and change in pedagogical practices. This type of professional development, in combination with reflective and collaborative practices, promotes teacher learning (Creemers, et.al, 2013; Zepeda, 2015). The essential elements of collaboration and reflection allowed the participants to participate in authentic learning opportunities with their own students (Zepeda, 2015). The expectation that participants would *listen* and *learn* from each other through the collaborative process was vital to the study.

JEPD also includes the components of self-efficacy, participant voice, and human agency (Zepeda, 2015). Although opportunities were provided for the participants to use their voices in the planning and implementation of the lessons, there were still structures for the participants to follow. Human agency was encompassed through the collaborative and reflective components of the study. However, because they began the study with a lack of self-efficacy for teaching listening and did not gain it during the process, buy-in from the participants was not accomplished. Teachers can be habitual in their routines and, although as participants they could explain the listening strategies that were used during the study, their previous expectations for listening reigned supreme in their perspectives (Kennedy, 2016).

MUSIC® Model of Motivation

One of the essential suggestions from this study regarding further research to improve teachers' understanding of listening instruction is to use the MUSIC model (Jones, 2009). The five components of this model identified by Jones (2009) include (a) empowerment, (b) usefulness, (c) success, (d) interest, and (e) caring. The model was designed to encompass academic instructional practices and could also be used as a basis for motivation within professional development for teachers.

In this study, *eMpowerment* was planned by having the participants design lessons for their read aloud sessions. Participants' choices about which children's literature they wanted to use were included to help them feel they were making decisions about their practices. Allowing the participants to use WBL strategies from the onset was a choice made to help them feel empowered. Providing these opportunities for participants to make decisions was helpful but clearly not enough to create a change in practice. More planned opportunities that fully involved the participants in becoming empowered in teaching listening were needed to increase teacher buy-in.

Although many researchers (Brownell, 1990; Jalongo, 2008; Nichols, 1948; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996) support the *usefulness* of teaching listening, there was an imbalance with the participants' perceptions. The participants stated that it would be extremely useful if the students listened better, but they did not buy-in to the advantages of spending valuable class time on teaching students how to listen. The short and long term benefits of improving student listening were discussed and reviewed in the LSG meetings, which included how better listening could improve student achievement. Participants' inability to fully comprehend the usefulness of teaching listening may have been founded, at least in part, in their prior teaching experiences.

They had not taught listening before and their students were usually productive. More connections needed to be made to help teachers understand the usefulness of teaching listening.

The inconsistencies with *success* that the participants encountered challenged their identities (Diener & Dweck, 1978). The participants lacked consistency with modeling the listening process and this, combined with their students' erratic responses to listening instruction, was a key element in the participants' perceptions. Their listening pedagogies may have been affected by their own self-efficacy and when students did not consistently improve in their observable listening behaviors, participant buy-in began to fade. As veteran educators, the participants consistently exhibited a strong level of confidence with their teaching abilities, and the success they had encountered in their previous teaching practices seem to create a disequilibrium for them.

The participants' *interest* in the study was notably absent after Mrs. Blanton's departure. Their interest in the study seemed to be driven primarily by the *usefulness* to their goals. In the beginning, it was useful for them to achieve a quick-fix to get students to listen in the classroom. After a few weeks of teaching listening, they said that they wanted more results. Their immediate interest in just teaching listening declined as the complexities increased. Specifically, the participants' perceptions of usefulness seemed to be grounded in two areas. One, they wanted to help their students become better listeners; and two, they wanted to help me with the study. For more authentic and lasting buy-in, it could have been helpful for them to perceive the project to be useful beyond these two goals. The participants initial interest decreased as the demands of their other responsibilities became more pressing and they did not consistently see improvement in student listening.

The *caring* component was reciprocal, as outlined above. These participants cared about providing a context for the study and I worked diligently to show that I cared about their participation, their dialogues, and their suggestions. Although I felt the participants were allowed many choices in the LSG meetings, I did not support their suggestions to include other content in the read alouds. Fay and Funk (1995) consider using choices when designing instruction is a way of showing that you care about learners and value their input. They use the analogy of a bank account by explaining that you can give meaningful choices to learners so that when choices need to be made for them the students are more likely to comply. Choices can not only promote caring, but they can also empower students, thus building on two of the MUSIC model components: caring and empowerment. Perhaps in this study, the caring component included a variety of choices for the participants – but these were not necessarily the choices they wanted. It would seem that the participants consistently made choices that required low levels of change on their part; then, they were disappointed to see that there was little change on the part of the children in their classrooms.

Summary

Listening is an essential literacy skill for students and teachers. In this study, the participants' perceptions changed very little over the course of the intervention, but their awareness about listening increased. The participants valued listening in their classrooms and they acknowledged that it was a constant source of redirection during the instructional day. Perhaps the absence of this instructional construct in their teacher preparation courses made it difficult for them to see how they could teach listening.

Although the participants chose to participate in the study, the use of the JEPD did not in effect promote teacher learning or a change in teacher practices. Their choice to participate was

due, at least in part, to their relationship to me and their interest in having their students listen, for the express purpose of following directions more easily. They did not develop an understanding of listening as an essential literacy skill. I believe it is the goal of all teachers to have students listen, but this requires ongoing practice and reflection about the implementations of listening strategies. This type of literacy instruction also requires a commitment to provide time for instructional practices, in addition to taking time to learn about the construct itself. Oral language requires listeners to use both verbal and nonverbal cues (Imhof, 2004) to understand the message. The listener consistently has to adjust for the rate of the speaker who is delivering the message “because the ear does not differentiate between the message and noise until after the sounds are processed, a listener is unable to hear only what is important (Jalongo, 2008, p. 5). This requires more structured practice to improve listening literacy and is one of the reasons listening instruction is a challenge (Jalongo, 2008). Duffy (1982) reported that many classroom teachers’ instructional choices are determined based on the management of the class rather than for instructional purposes. This was the case in this study. The management of student listening was evident during the students’ explanations of WBL, but did not consistently transition into other components of the read alouds.

The study included a small participant group that was purposefully chosen to maintain an atmosphere for collaborative discussion opportunities. The participants’ comfort levels during the collaborative discussions were high because of their familiarity with each other and the LSG meetings being conducted in their own environment. However, this also served to create some instability due to their preoccupation with other school responsibilities. Mrs. Blanton was a strong proponent for conducting the study with the second-grade teachers. Her interest in learning more about listening and teaching listening was an impetus for choosing the school site.

Prior to Mrs. Blanton's departure, the discussions during the LSG meetings were more focused on how to improve their own practices for listening instruction. Although participants were always rushed due to the multitude of teaching/family responsibilities, this sense of urgency to plow through the LSG meetings surfaced more notably after Mrs. Blanton's departure. The tone of the meetings became more of pushing through to *be done*, rather than to continue to improve practices.

The participants' lack of motivation may have been due to their own lack of confidence and to their perception that teaching listening had not been not successful. The participants in the study seemed to mimic participants in other motivational research (Diener & Dweck, 1978, Elliott & Dweck, 1988) in which they were impacted by their reactions to failure. Even though the teachers saw some student success with their lessons at first, their lack of continued success (which was reinforced during the LSG meetings and in their written reflections) closely resembled Diener and Dwecks' (1978) theories regarding impacts on motivation. When a learning goal is met with a perception of failure, there is a decline in performance (which can take the form of a decrease in participation) (Diener & Dweck, 1978). In effect, because the teachers did not appear to see the value of the performance goal (listening instruction) or feel they were adequately qualified to teach listening, they developed a type of helplessness. Allington and Wamsley (2007) assert there are no quick fixes in literacy instruction and good literacy instruction simply takes a great deal of time; furthermore, preventive instruction is more industrious than remediation practices. This appears to be meaningful with regard to listening instruction.

Methodological Critique

Formative and design experiments serve as a useful tool to bridge the gap between educational practices and research (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). This type of research

methodology allowed educators to employ real-world research practices within the classroom environment. This, along with guided, authentic instructional practices, can create a research atmosphere more conducive to orchestrating interactions that may facilitate real change in educational pedagogies for listening instruction.

The qualitative design used in this study served to put the participants at ease. Maxwell (2005) emphasizes that research questions should be created so that a crosswalk between the researchers' needs and the functional needs of educators is created. The F&DE experiment (Reinking & Bradley, 2008) combined with the JEPD (Zepeda, 2015) allowed the participants to engage in collaborative discussions and planning to help them be their own agents of change (Dewey, 1933). Being a part of the learning process is essential to initiate a change in practice (Kennedy, 2016; Zepeda, 2015).

The JEPD used in this study was designed to engage the participants in using a common and familiar teaching context (read alouds) to teach listening strategies. Although the participants were comfortable and confident with the read aloud format, it was clear that they needed more information and practice about teaching listening skills. Based on the findings from this study, I would suggest that engaging participants in professional development opportunities to develop their pedagogy about listening would improve their ability to implement listening practices before using the format of a JEPD (Zepeda, 2015). Engaging participants in activities that included modeling, guided practice, and independent practice were necessary. More scaffolds were needed to build their listening literacy skills before they could confidently learn to teach listening skills to their students.

Missed Opportunities

There are always some missed opportunities when supporting teachers in learning about and implementing a change in practice. In this study, one missed opportunity was that of employing specific modeling of the expected intervention in the context of the LSG meetings. Although they practiced the DS prior to implementing it, it would have been helpful for me to model reading aloud with the participants while engaging them in learning about the listening strategies (Funk & Funk, 1989) that it was hoped they would implement. We discussed the strategies for conducting the read alouds but because listening instruction was such an unfamiliar construct for them, but it may be that they needed more modeling on how to teach listening skills. The participants also needed to engage in practicing the intervention with each other to become more confident with their ability.

Unpacking the components of WBL would have benefited the participants. Unpacking would have required that the group actively participate in understanding all the components of WBL. Creating engaging experiences for participant exploration about differences between the behavioral and cognitive expectations for listening was needed to help educators understand that listening skills are about much more than just behavior. The participants already understood how students listened with their eyes, ears, and hands. This confirmed for them that behavioral aspects of listening were important. I feel that the participants needed more structure during the LSG meetings to provide them with more practices to learning about listening before implementing the read alouds. I needed to provide the participants with time to develop their own listening pedagogies before asking them to teach others. For example, the participants needed more time to engage in activities that helped expand their knowledge of listening practices and strategies.

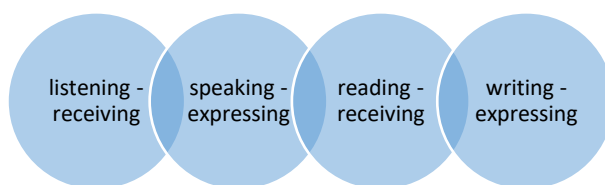
Implications for Literacy Instruction

WBL strategies were a motivating hook for the participants to use with their students for providing a basis for their listening expectations. Building upon this ‘hook’ could help participants distinguish between the observable and behavioral components of WBL. The next step would be to unpack the cognitive components of listening by creating connections with the heart (aesthetic) and the brain (efferent) (Rosenblatt, 1978) for the participants to explore. Determining opportunities for aesthetic and efferent listening would allow for more cognitive implications in listening instruction that could increase buy-in for teaching listening skills by placing them solidly as essential literacy skills. For instance, if ‘listening with the heart’ and ‘listening with the brain’ were separated from the observed behaviors teachers routinely used, there would be occasions to create metacognitive opportunities for participants to engage in understanding aesthetic and efferent listening experiences. Boekaerts and Simons (1993) explain that individuals think metacognitively by first being conscious of their own cognitive abilities and then using their cognition to engage in critical thinking or reflection about their learning. Providing teachers with opportunities to engage students in showing their thinking about how they listen aesthetically or efferently could provide the basis for genuine valuing of listening instruction in classrooms.

A more balanced approach is needed in literacy instruction in classrooms. Literacy skills are reciprocally related for students when they are learning (Gee, 2015; Lundsteen 1979). Furthermore, both Gee and Lundsteen posit that, sometimes reading remediation should not be the first approach for students who are reading below grade level. Many of these students might need listening instruction. After students begin to learn to decode print, academic success is more closely related to oral vocabulary at age five and the number of words they heard in their home

before attending school (Dickenson & Newman, 2006; Gee, 2015; Hart & Risely 1995). Regarding students who do not have well developed emergent literacy skills that include oral language skills as a solid literacy foundation, Gee (2015) states, “the child is cheated out of necessary developmental stages and the necessary foundation of literacy in oral language” (p. 68). It is essential that educators understand the interconnectedness between the literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Figure 4 shows the general interconnectivity of literacy skills in that reading and listening skills require students’ ability to decode (receiving) whereas speaking and writing necessitate that students use encoding (expressing) skills (Lundsteen, 1979).

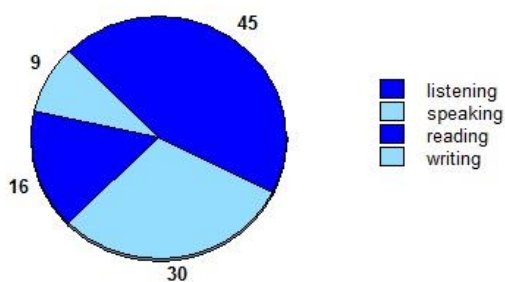
Figure 4. *Literacy Development*



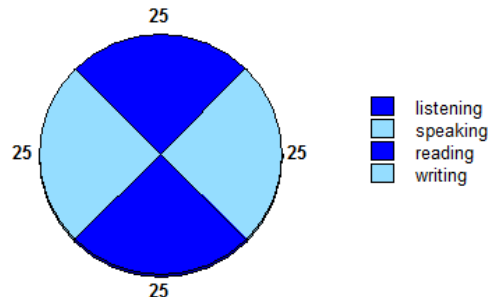
Listening enhances all the other literacy skills; thus, I recommend the development and implementation of a truly balanced literacy approach to listening instruction. Previous research (Jalongo, 2008; Nichols, 1957) provides a disjointed literacy curriculum in which much of instruction requires students to listen but does not offer them with the instruction that teaches them the how, why, when, where, and what of listening. Figure 5 depicts the imbalance of literacy instruction currently implemented in schools; a more balanced literacy approach is suggested for improving students’ literacy needs. The data from the research conducted by Rankin (1928) exemplify the literacy approaches in most classrooms, nearly a century later. Working from this research, I propose a more balanced approach - not just to time spent on literacy tasks, but also to time spent *teaching* literacy skills across reading, writing, speaking, and listening domains.

Figure 5. *Literacy Instruction Models*

Current Literacy Expectations



Balanced Literacy Approach



Implications for Teacher Education

Most teacher education programs currently do not provide listening instructional practices for pre-service teachers. Implementing modeling could be an effective strategy for delivering instruction (Graham, et al, 2011; Schuman & Relihan, 1990). Presenting pre-service teachers with instructional practices for improving student listening as part of their preparatory literacy instruction is a critical first step in creating a new generation of teachers who will be prepared to teach listening skills. This would also necessitate providing pre-service teachers with the opportunities to self-assess their own listening capabilities. Professional development programs that allow teachers to explore listening instruction. Practices, including opportunities for teachers to learn to listen to each other, become more aware of their own listening habits, and to self-assess their listening abilities are necessary in understanding that good listeners make good speakers, good listeners make good readers, and good listeners make good writers (Gee, 2015; Lundsteen, 1979) could enable teachers to make more concrete connections for listening instruction and this might increase the chance of genuine teacher buy-in to the concept of teaching listening. Listening instruction should be included in the context of teacher education programs to permit preservice teachers to understand why and how to teach listening skills before they begin their teaching careers. This could facilitate an understanding of the teachers' responsibility to

model and engage students in positive communication where listening and speaking are more effectively taught (Jalongo, 2008) in a balanced literacy environment.

Implications for Further Research

Although this study was implemented in the context of read alouds so that participants could specifically focus on listening literacy, these expectations and strategies should transition into other content areas. Using read alouds as a beginning point for instruction that ultimately transitions into other content areas could allow students more scenarios for practicing effective listening skills (Carvery & Gould, 2003). Scaffolding students' experiences with emerging listening literacy is an essential role of the classroom teacher (Pentimonti & Justice, (2009).

McPherson (2008) posits that the basic expectations for listening are merely the beginning of teaching a student to listen. Direct teaching of listening is only one component for a change in students' listening skills. The learning environment and the teachers' role are crucial for improving students listening abilities. Duker (1971) reported that teachers' modeling of good listening for their students is one of the most important components for producing a change in listening pedagogies. It is important that teachers be provided with the resources needed to delineate between hearing and listening skills for themselves and their students, as well as methods to understanding what barriers need to be overcome to facilitate a change in listening pedagogies (Bond, 2012).

Conclusion

Listening research has been conducted for almost 100 years with consistent recommendations to include specific listening instruction for students. One of the reasons that this has not been accomplished is due to the myriad of definitions for listening, a lack of listening assessments, and the belief that listening is a naturally learned behavior. Further research is

needed to provide solutions to these barriers. Bealle, et al. (2008) summarizes that by understanding the practices that are needed to help younger students become better listeners we can also improve listening instruction that will carry over into the educational career of students and eventually provide them with effective skills for adulthood.

Listening competency requires teachers to explicitly *teach* skills rather than just *telling* students to listen. This is a new perspective for many teachers. Bodie (2007), Field (1998), and Vandergrift (2004) all theorize that listening can be considered both a process and a product. When teachers understand the requirements of the process of listening and provide a clear purpose for communication they can provide teachable opportunities for good listening practice. Creating opportunities for improving listening pedagogies can help teachers to know “why and how they listen, as well as the influences that affect their listening, and it provides them with the tools for improvement” (Thompson, et al., 2004, p. 239).

Research is needed for listening instruction that addresses the significant implications of meeting the needs of practicing teachers. Refining students listening abilities can improve student achievement but methods for implementing listening strategies has been controversial due to the lack of studies with primary-aged students. As teachers become more aware of the implications for teaching listening through actively engaging in research studies such as this, their awareness can generate the impetus needed to incorporate listening instructional practices.

Listening has been overlooked in teacher preparation programs (Graham, Santos, and Vanderplank, 2011). This neglect creates a challenge for investigating how teachers address the listening instruction in their classrooms. Siegel (2105) details the need to expand listening studies to include teachers as research participants. There is also a need to understand how teachers presently interpret listening in their classrooms and how this understanding informs

their choices for instruction (Siegel, 2014). On the flip side of this, teachers need to understand the importance of listening to their students as well. Children's conversations provide the communication of their learning. Students who feel they are heard and valued are likely not only to develop more positive teacher-student interactions, but also to improve academically (Barksdale & Triplett, 2010).

Facilitating teachers' professional development in the context of high-stakes testing and smart-goal teacher evaluations dictates finesse combined with practical solutions. Because teachers can produce learning results for their students without specifically implementing listening instruction, teacher buy-in is complicated. The responsibilities of teachers are a challenge to any researcher working to illustrate a change in teacher pedagogies. As Duffy (1982) reported, teachers are the stimulus for choreographing a change in practice. "When you are up to your ass in alligators, it's difficult to remember that your original objective was to drain the swamp" (Duffy, 1982, p. 358). Probably the most significant challenge of this study centered on the alligators that teachers encounter every day. Although the participants valued listening and became more aware of the need to model and teach listening; they could not justify spending the time required for teaching *just* listening skills.

The literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing shape our interactions with the world. The first step in making listening instruction navigable for classroom teachers is organizing a comprehensive plan for listening instruction in which these skills are balanced. Further research must include both pre-service and practicing teachers. Additionally, this research should encourage teachers to improve their own listening skills so that they are empowered to imagine and then implement new possibilities for their literacy instruction.

Listening is a new content area for teachers, therefore they need to understand not only the content but also the instructional strategies for the content before incorporating this literacy skill in their own teaching practice. In the future, my research study design will provide teachers with opportunities to develop their listening skills. Teachers, as they become better, more effective listeners, may move beyond conceptualizing listening as a management skill, and envision listening as an essential component of literacy instruction. It begins with teachers—and so must I.

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Appendix A: Study Timeline

Dates	Actions Taken	Data Collected
Phase One		
Dec. 2015/Jan. 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit IRB <input type="checkbox"/> Meet with teachers and <input type="checkbox"/> review components of the study Consent forms	<input type="checkbox"/> IRB Consent <input type="checkbox"/> List of possible teacher participants School demographic data. <input type="checkbox"/> Signed Informed Consent Forms
Phase Two		
Jan. 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with participants and conduct pre-intervention questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal teacher demographic data (i.e. experience, etc.), <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires
Phase Three		
Jan. 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> *LSG first meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Article discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Listening perceptions discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodological Files Pre- <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaire Data
Phase Four		
Jan. – March 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> First teacher observations <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly LSG meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly ongoing transcription of data <input type="checkbox"/> Member checking of transcriptions Intervention implemented	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodological Files <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher observations <input type="checkbox"/> Reflective Journals <input type="checkbox"/> Transcriptions of data
Phase Five		
March 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Final LSG meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Second teacher observation <input type="checkbox"/> Post questionnaire <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion - summary	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodological Files <input type="checkbox"/> Researcher Journal Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher observations <input type="checkbox"/> Transcriptions of data <input type="checkbox"/> Post Questionnaire data
Phase Six		
March –April 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Compile Data & Analyze Results	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodological Files <input type="checkbox"/> Researcher Journal Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher observations <input type="checkbox"/> Transcriptions of data <input type="checkbox"/> Post Questionnaire data