

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



• Janet Ransom, supervisor of the Truancy Intervention Project in the Fulton County Juvenile Center, Atlanta, GA.

• Diane McCarthy, president of Western Maricopa Coalition/Save Kids Partnership, Glendale, AZ.

Topics include: involving parents in truancy prevention and school discipline; making sure students at risk are actively engaged in learning; ensuring students face consistent sanctions for truancy or disciplinary problems; and involving law enforcement and social services in truancy prevention.

How You Can Join the Meeting

You can participate in the Satellite Town Meeting by calling during the live teleconference and asking your questions of the Secretary and the panel.

Your local cable access station might broadcast the town meetings if you ask them to, or you can organize your own downlink site on the night of the program. Local PBS member stations, schools, community colleges and universities, and cable access stations are often willing to serve as downlink sites. Just gather a group of interested community members and join.

The Satellite Town Meeting broadcast is free and unrestricted. Use, duplication and distribution of these materials are encouraged. The program is closed captioned.

—U.S. DEPT. OF EDUCATION
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PARENTS LEARN GOOD LISTENING SKILLS

■(WASHINGTON) Brochures for parents are available from the U.S. Government (see box). Following is a summary of one brochure on listening to the child.

HOW CAN PARENTS MODEL GOOD LISTENING SKILLS? By Carl Smith, Director, ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills Listen Better, Learn More

In one of the Family Circus cartoon strips, the little girl looks up at her father, reading the newspaper, and says, "Daddy, you have to listen to me with your eyes as well as your ears." That statement says almost all there is to say about listening, whether in personal conversations or in learning in school.

Do Listening Skills Affect Learning?

Listening is not a school subject like reading and writing. Many of us seem to feel it comes naturally, and as long as we can listen to directions to find the restroom, nothing

more need be said. The latest studies reveal that listening is a very large part of school learning and is one of our primary means of interacting with other people on a personal basis.

Can Parents Guide Their Children to Better Listening?

According to research on listening skills, being a good listener means focusing attention on the message and reviewing the important information. Parents can model good listening behavior for their children and advise them on ways to listen as an active learner, pick out highlights of a conversation, and ask relevant questions.

Guidelines for Modeling Good Listening Skills

• Be interested and attentive. Children can tell whether they have a parent's interest and attention by the way the parent replies or does not reply.

• Encourage talking. Some children need an invitation to start talking.

• Listen patiently. People think faster than they speak. With limited vocabulary and experience in talking, children often take longer than adults to find the right word.

• Hear children out. Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking.

• Listen to nonverbal messages. Many messages children send are communicated nonverbally—by tone of voice, facial expressions, energy level, posture, or changes in behavior patterns.

Suggestions for Improving Communication with Children

• Be interested. Ask about children's ideas and opinions regularly.

• Avoid dead-end questions. Questions that require a yes or no answer lead a conversation to a dead end.

• Extend conversation. Try to pick up a piece of your child's conversation.

• Share your thoughts.

• Observe signs. Watch the child for signs it is time to end a conversation.

"Let us by all wise and constitutional measures promote intelligence among the people as the best means of preserving our liberties."

James Monroe
first inaugural address
March 4, 1817

• Reflect feelings. A good listener can put themselves in the shoes of others and empathize with the speaker.

• Help clarify and relate experiences.

Why are Parents Important in Building Children's Communications Skills?

Parents play an essential role in building children's communication skills because children spend more time with their parents than any other adult. Children also have a deeper involvement with their parents than with any other adult, and the family as a unit has lifelong contact with its members.

The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them.

More than two dozen brochures for parents are available from the Education Department's "Parent Brochures" homepage at the ACCESS ERIC web site: <http://www.aspensys.com/eric/parent.html>

Paper copies may be ordered by calling 1-800-LET-ERIC.

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ENVIRONMENT

NEW MAPPING, SURVEYING METHODS UNDER STUDY

■(GIT) The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) awarded a contract to complete a study of the surveying and mapping activities of federal civilian agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector last week. The National Academy of Public Administration won the contract. The Academy's study will be a collaborative effort of the BLM, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Forest Service, all of which are funding the study. The study began in early October and is expected to be completed by June 1997.

"As an agency that manages 270 million acres of public lands on behalf of all Americans, the BLM is committed to finding better ways to meet the needs of the land and the people who depend on it," said BLM Acting Director Mike Dombeck.

Neil Suneson, a geologist with the Oklahoma Geological Survey, said the new techniques being studied involve satellite location mapping and sensitive aerial photography with infrared and ultraviolet camera

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