

Lending an Ear

It's a bit of a coincidence, but there is a lot of talk about listening in this issue of *Pédagogie collégiale*. It's also a happy coincidence, since this autumn, we are launching our new Dialogue¹ section, which seeks to sow the seeds of listening in order to reap the rewards of meaningful speech. Poetic, isn't it? And above all, indispensable.

More than just hearing, listening requires a readiness of the ear, but also an attentive presence of the body and mind. This is active listening, which can be summarized as the ability to make yourself available to the other person and to really listen. Not only is active listening an essential skill in daily life, but it is also an integral part of any learning process.

While the merits of "good listening skills" are often touted in education, the conceptual and didactic underpinnings are sparser than for other communication skills – such as speaking, reading or writing. Yet these theoretical foundations and codes are relatively simple to decipher –

- being attentive to the other person
- looking at the other person
- being interested in their ideas
- interpreting and using non-verbal cues
- thinking and trying to understand what they are saying
- reformulating and clarifying ideas
- asking relevant questions
- identifying connections between the words exchanged (Dumais, 2012)

– but more difficult to implement, especially in the current context.

That is because the 21st-century human has a lot to say, about everything, all the time. They seem to have forgotten the "sound of silence" (to quote a well-known American folk duo), which would benefit from being more present. "It is difficult to be silent today, which prevents us from listening to the inner speech that calms and soothes. Society enjoins us to accept

¹ The Dialogue section creates constructive encounters between two people from different backgrounds who discuss sensitive or complex topics. To learn more about this section (and others), visit the AQPC website: aqpcqc.ca/fr/soumission-darticle

noise in order to be part of the whole, rather than to listen to ourselves" (Corbin, 2018). Let's take a few moments to silently meditate on the wise words of this French historian. But let's strive, above all, to take some time for the explicit teaching of active listening strategies. Perhaps this will improve the ambient level of listening and facilitate dialogue.

Speaking of dialogue, in the very first article of what we hope will be a long and fruitful series, a teacher and a college graduate thoughtfully discuss thinking through images. They toss the ball back and forth, not to score or make a point, but simply to enjoy the exchange. Some authors tackle the topic of listening head-on, as in the account of a teacher's pedagogical podcast motivated by exceptional circumstances. Others do so in a more subtle fashion, as in the research article reporting on the realities and needs of adult college students, or in the vibrant opinion piece calling for continued listening to those who crave innovation and reflexivity. In both cases, there are two points of convergence: a desire and a duty to listen, which give rise to great humanity.

In closing, we encourage you to send us the words you would like to see in *Pédagogie collégiale* over the next year: your own articles, of course, but also suggestions for topics to address, reflections to deepen, and people to meet.

We, too, are lending an ear, and we are truly listening to you. —



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References

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- DUMAIS, C. "L'enseignement explicite de stratégies d'écoute," *Québec français*, n° 164, Winter 2012, p.57-58.