

Minute of Listening

Pilot II Evaluation: Executive Summary

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A report prepared for Sound and Music

Executive Summary

What is Minute of Listening?

Minute of Listening is a project devised by Sound and Music to make available 60 seconds of new sound or music to the classroom every day for children to hear and discuss. Minute of Listening sets out to:

- enable every primary school child to experience the richness and diversity the world of music and sound has to offer
- promote a culture of curious, active and reflective listening in schools
- introduce music and sound as a stimulus for analytical thinking and imaginative enquiry
- create a daily opportunity for experiential learning and conceptual exploration

Piloting Minute of Listening

Following a successful small scale pilot in 2011, a second pilot of Minute of Listening was delivered in 80 primary schools in Cornwall and Oxfordshire and the London boroughs of Enfield, Lambeth and Westminster between January and March 2012.¹ About 20,000 children aged 3 to 11 participated. One secondary school in Oxfordshire also took part through mixed-age tutor groups. SAM worked in partnership with local authority music and arts services to set up the pilot. The music and arts services or their partners recruited schools and facilitated training for teachers taking part in Minute of Listening.

What did the evaluation show?

The evaluation indicated that the second pilot of Minute of Listening was very successful in meeting its aims. Evidence was gathered from teachers, children and delivery partners and showed a very high level of satisfaction.

'MOL has broadened the children's experience of sound and music. It has developed their interest and inspired dance and music making activities. It has introduced many unfamiliar sounds and instruments. It has given them the opportunity to talk about the unfamiliar, share their views and ideas'. Teacher, West Lea SEN School, Enfield

Despite the wide range of age groups testing it out, nearly 8 out of 10 teachers said it was perfectly pitched for their pupils. Most groups listened in their classrooms and over half listened every day throughout the pilot, with very little drop-off. Children enjoyed taking part, especially the element of surprise and discovery built into the design of the software.

'We have loved using the Minute of Listening software and every year group that I have shown it to, always asks at the beginning of the lesson: 'Are we doing Minute of Listening today?!' When the response is yes, I hear a loud 'YESSSSSS' from the class!'

Teacher, Newquay Junior Academy, Cornwall

Many teachers listened to the daily sound for the first time with their class and did no preparation or extension activities. This was identified as a strength of the project – teachers welcomed a new and

¹ <http://soundandmusic.org/projects/minute-listening>

simple tool that could be used to focus children's attention, especially at transitional moments such as after assembly or playtimes.

Impact on learning and teaching

Despite its simplicity, teachers identified that Minute of Listening had noticeable impact on children's skills and behaviours, and on their own teaching practice. These included improving listening skills, increasing the ability to talk about music and sound, exercising creativity and imagination and forming opinions and sharing.

'We use 'think, pair, share.' They listen to the other person's view and repeat what their partner has said – this makes them listen carefully.'

Year 3 teacher, St Jude's Church of England Primary School, Lambeth

'In my class we come up with different ideas. It's interesting to hear what other people say.'

Year 6 pupil, Galliard School, Enfield

'It was cool music. It sounded like a jungle so we were very surprised it was sugar. It is very clever that sugar and coke-cans can make such a fascinating noise!'

Response from Mithian Primary School, Cornwall

Academic educational research provides a strong rationale for Minute of Listening. In primary education it is important to foster listening skills and provide a format for discovery, debate and conversational interaction. Supporting both convergent and divergent thinking encourages creativity. Minute of Listening was able to create a positive environment for learning, provide stimuli for a broad range of subjects and topics and give teachers more confidence to teach the arts, particularly music.

'It has given me new starting points for literacy, music and dance. The creative ideas that come from listening to sounds and using those sounds as a stimulus for drama, creative writing and drawing is a fantastic way to develop imaginative skills.'

Key stage 1 teacher, St Barnabas Primary, Oxfordshire

'It has made me rethink ways of questioning children when listening to other resources.'

Year 2 teacher, St Saviour's Church of England Primary, Lambeth

Practical issues

Overall teachers found the software very easy to use. Attending a training session was the most effective method of preparation for the project. When surveyed, 90% of teachers said they would want to take part in Minute of Listening again.

At a time of decreased arts funding, it may be necessary for SAM to charge schools for the project in the future. Whilst many teachers didn't know if their school would pay to take part, the most popular charging structure amongst those surveyed was a yearly subscription option, charged at a small fixed cost. There may also be a nominal fee for attending teacher training sessions.

Building on the extremely positive response to the project, SAM is now committed to developing Minute of Listening in order to make it accessible to more schools around the country. A partnership approach that continues the relationships built up with music and arts services (now Music Hubs) may be the best way forward, supported by fund raising from trusts and foundations.