Whistle for Willie

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ABOUT THE STORY
Peter desperately wants to summon his dog, Willie, by whistling – but he can’t whistle. It is only after he has tried, and tried again that Peter finally realizes his greatest wish.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR
Both popular and prolific, Ezra Jack Keats is one of America’s best-known creators of children’s books. Peter, the little boy in Whistle for Willie, appears in several of Mr. Keats’ other books and was first introduced in The Snowy Day, which won the Caldecott Medal.

INTRODUCING THE STORY
Remind children that when they where very small, they learned to walk by practicing and practicing some more. Ask them what else they learned to do by themselves. Encourage volunteers to describe their efforts. Then tell them that this book is about Peter, a little boy who learns to do something by himself.

READING ACTIVITIES
Comprehension/Thinking Skills
a. “When Peter went inside the cartoon, what did he want to do?”
b. “When Peter went into his house, why did he put on his father’s hat?”
c. “What was the pretending game Peter and his mother played?”
d. “Where was Peter when he whistled the first time?”
e. “How do you think Peter felt when he tried to whistle but couldn’t?” (Draw conclusions)
f. “Why do you think Peter felt when he finally whistled?” (Make inferences)

Vocabulary
Write these words from the story on the chalkboard. Review with the children the definitions of noun and verb. Ask volunteers to define each word and then tell if it is a noun or verb.

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CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Whistling a Happy Tune
Ask children to practice whistling a tune they have sung in a classroom or in music. Volunteers can whistle their tunes for the group, and the others can try to identify the tune that is whistled.

Science: Dog Breeds
Willie is a kind of dog-called dachshund. Ask children to find information on their favorite breed of dog. Children can write down information on the breed they have chosen and report on what they have learned to the group.

Health: Step-by-Step
Point out to children that Peter learned to whistle by working hard at it and practicing. Have them think of something they have learned to do, such as ride a bike, fix a meal, or train a pet. Ask them to write a paragraph of instructions, telling step by step exactly how to do the activity. Encourage them to put the steps in the proper order and to be sure they have included all the necessary steps. Collect the paragraphs in a booklet titled “How To Do Anything”.

Language Arts: Matching Contractions
Print on small cards the following contractions from the story and on the other cards the two words each contraction stands for. Each child can pick a card. Have children match each contraction card with the card that has the appropriate pair of words by finding the classmate holding the matching card.

INTERNET ACTIVITY
Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Wonderful Dachshunds
Ask children to use the keyword dachshunds to find websites about these funny little dogs. Many of the sites include photographs of the owners’ dogs. Children can print out a photo of a dog they especially like. Collect all the pictures in a book of dachshund photos.