

ILLUSTRATING THE GAP IN 3RD GRADE READING EXERCISE

Time: 5-8 minutes

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how the gap in 3rd grade reading grows as children have or do not have: 1) access to high quality preschool programs, 2) regular preschool and school attendance and 3) summer learning opportunities.

Instructions:

1) Ask for three volunteers from the audience

2) Instruct the three volunteers to stand next to each other. Ask for their names.

- » Ask Volunteer A to take 8 steps back. Announce Volunteer A represents the child who starts school a year behind because of an incoming gap school readiness. Share that Volunteer A is a year behind because s/he didn't have a chance to participate in a high quality preschool experience. This child's parents also didn't have resources to offer a literacy rich early learning environment at home.
- » Ask Volunteer B to take 4 steps back. They attended preschool - but they only went half of the time. In fact, this child was kicked out of preschool after having poor attendance. So they didn't get the full benefit of the experience.
- » Volunteer C gets to stay right at the line. Having attended a high quality preschool program, he/she is entering kindergarten ready to learn.

3) Ask all three volunteers to walk forward 8 steps to represent a year of learning in Kindergarten.

- » After they finish taking the steps, ask Volunteer A and B to both walk back 2 steps because they were chronically absent for the year (Each step represents approximately a month of lost learning. Explain that the 2 steps reflect both the amount of time the student actually missed - and an additional month because of the disruption that caused in their learning. Explain that neither learned the habit of attending regularly since Volunteer A never went to preschool and Volunteer B didn't develop the habit of attendance in preschool.
- » Ask Volunteer A to take another 2 steps back because they didn't have any supports to support literacy over the summer so they are experiencing a summer reading loss of 2 months.)
- » Volunteer C stays in place because s/he had satisfactory attendance and had enriching experiences over the summer so s/he experienced no summer learning loss.

4) Ask all three volunteers to walk forward another 8 steps to represent what they would have learned in 1st grade.

- » Ask Volunteer A and B to walk back 2 steps for chronic absence
- » Ask Volunteer A to take 2 steps back for summer reading loss.
- » Again, Volunteer C maintains her position due to satisfactory attendance and summer supports.

5) Final Comments to the Audience:

The picture of the widening gap is quite clear. What helps children read is that they are surrounded by a literacy rich early learning environment. This illustrates how what happens in preschool, in school and the summer does or does not contribute to a child having sufficient time to get to reading at grade level by the end of third grade.