

## ILLUSTRATING THE GAP IN THIRD GRADE READING

### Purpose:

Illustrate how the gap in third grade reading grows between children who have and do not have:

1. access to high quality preschool programs,
2. regular preschool and school attendance and
3. summer learning opportunities.

### Activity:

*(Approximately 5-8 minutes)*

Ask for three volunteers from the audience.

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

Ask Volunteer A to take 8 steps back.

- Explain that Volunteer A represents the child who starts school a year behind because of an incoming gap in 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.

- The attended preschool – but they only went half of the time. In fact, this child was kicked out of preschool after having poor attendance. So s/he 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, s/he is entering kindergarten ready to learn.

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

- After they finish taking the steps, ask Volunteers 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 students 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.

- This is because s/he 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.

- This is because s/he had satisfactory attendance and had enriching experiences over the summer so s/he experienced no summer learning loss.

Ask all three volunteers to walk forward another 8 steps to represent what they would have learned in 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

#### Final Comments:

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.

Exercise developed by Attendance Works ([www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org))

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