Literacy Statistics

The literacy crisis today is as pervasive and alarming as it was in 1971 when Sesame Workshop created the first version of *The Electric Company*. We know that if struggling readers don't get the literacy help they need by the end of second grade, they are in danger of never catching up.

- Overall 27% of public school 4th graders score BELOW basic levels on reading exams.[1]
  - By demographic:
    - 54% of African American fourth graders read below grade level
    - 51% of Hispanic/Latino fourth graders read below grade level
    - 49% of American Indian fourth graders read below grade level
    - 24% of Asian American fourth graders read below grade level
    - 23 % of Caucasian fourth graders read below grade level

- During the critical early years of cognitive development, many impoverished children lack opportunities to build their literacy skills. They generally hear **30 million fewer words** by age three than their more privileged peers do (due to a limited experience of being spoken or read aloud to). When these disadvantaged children start kindergarten, they are already well behind their more affluent peers in terms of vocabulary knowledge. Without effective intervention, this "literacy gap" grows wider as years pass.[2]

- 1st graders who are not on grade level by the end of the year have a **1 in 10** chance of ever achieving grade level reading proficiency.[3]

- The first three grades are the time to learn basic literary skills. When children enter the fourth grade, they are expected to use these skills to tackle information that is new to them. In other words, in grades one, two and three children are expected to learn to read. After that, they read to learn unfamiliar and more difficult content. This is one reason why we often hear teachers talk about "the fourth grade wall" – an obstacle too formidable for many kids to scale.[4]

- In 2003, as many as five percent of adults over the age of 16 (11 million adults) were non-literate in English, 14 percent (30 million) were below basic in literacy, and another 29 percent (63 million) possessed only basic literacy skills.[5]

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[1] U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.
[2] Hart, B. and Risley, T., The 30 Million Word Gap. American Educator, Spring 2003.
[3] Katz, Linda. 2000. Children's Literacy Initiative. *Importance of Investing in Literacy*. http://www.cliontheweb.org/investing1.html
[4] U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.
[5] U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

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