

LEARNING TO READ WELL-AT ALL COSTS

Nothing predicts the success or failure of an individual or a community like the ability of children to read well by the third grade, and poverty makes that goal especially hard to reach.

This bit of common sense is supported by study after study. Children who are from low income households are three times more likely than their peers not to graduate, and those who aren't reading at grade level by the third grade are six times more likely not to reach graduation and go on to success.



LaChandra Johnson, a Marvell-Elaine school social worker and a mother of three, reads to children in the reading proficiency program.

That is why Boys Girls Adults Community Development Center is partnering with the Marvell-Elaine elementary school in the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Community Solution Initiative, "Marvell-Elaine Reads," Louis Bennett, the BGACDC youth coordinator, said.

Marvell-Elaine Reads, a partnership between BGACDC, the Marvell-Elaine Elementary School, and parent and community volunteers, seeks through instruction, tutoring, counseling and outreach to sharply raise children's reading levels and to address the problems of chronic absenteeism and summer learning loss. BGACDC places Reading Corps interns in the classrooms to assist teachers and recruits volunteers to work with teachers and parents both on reading and in detecting a child's chronic absenteeism and remedying it.

"We can't have an impact on closing the achievement gap, reducing the dropout rate or breaking the cycle of poverty unless we make sure all our children - 100 percent of them - learn to read proficiently," Bennett said. "We just cannot afford to fail."



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