

SERP Stories – Season 2 Trailer: The Fix That Doesn't Fit

Dr. Kala Jones (Host, SERP Literacy Specialist) (00:08):

[clock ticking, sound of keyboard typing] Somewhere in America right now, a kid is completing a reading assessment.[keyboard typing] And by the time she's done, a number's going to follow her, not just this year, for years.[Keyboard typing] Here's some stats you might know. Reading scores for the nation's eighth graders just hit their lowest point in more than 30 years. A third of them are reading below what researchers call basic, meaning they can't reliably identify a main idea or follow the order of events in a story. What you probably haven't heard is why. And it's not because nobody's trying to fix it. [elementary students participating in lesson, school bell, high school hallway] For 20 years, this country has poured its money, its politics, its attention into the earliest grades. Fixing reading by third grade, the thinking goes, and everything after takes care of itself, except it doesn't because the fix for a seven-year-old doesn't automatically work for a 14-year-old. And when a teenager falls through, there's almost nothing built to catch them.

Kala(01:13):

[high school hallway] I'm Dr. Kala Jones, and I spent my career in the space between research in the classroom as a high school educator, a college advisor, and now at the SERP Institute, working on an intervention built for adolescents who've cycled through years of instruction without the support that would've actually worked for them. [music] This season, I'm going state by state to find out how a policy written in a Capitol building ends up affecting whether a 14-year-old believes she can read at all. In Mississippi, we'll hear about the fourth graders behind the Mississippi miracle and why adolescent literacy requires a different chapter. [teacher leading a lesson and students repeating, window unit AC hum]. In Florida, my home state will go inside a system where a single test score can hold a kid back a grade and ask what that pressure does to whether a struggling reader ever falls in love with the book. [Test proctor, clock ticking]

Kala (02:06):

In New York, we'll sit with teachers handed a script and told not to deviate and ask what gets lost when the curriculum doesn't leave room for who's actually in the room.[subway rumble, student voices] In Wisconsin, we'll watch a state legislature outlaw an instructional practice overnight and ask what happens when the law changes before the money does.[gavel strike, overlapping student voices, music] And I'll talk to researchers spending their careers trying to answer one question, what does it actually take for an older reader, not a five-year-old, but a 15-year-old to catch their stride? [children laughing] Because it can be done. We've seen it done. This season on SERP Stories, not a story about kids who can't read, a story about a system

that decided a long time ago which kids were worth the investment to catch up and what's it going to take to change that math. [music] SERP Stories, season two, coming this fall.