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Gramling's "The Great Disconnect in Early Childhood Education: The Difference Between What We Know vs. What We Do" (Book Review)

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**The Great Disconnect in Early Childhood Education:
The Difference Between What We Know vs. What We Do,**
by Michael Gramling. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2015. 168 pp. \$24.95;
ISBN 978-1605543993

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Michael Gramling's *The Great Disconnect in Early Childhood Education* is a fascinating read that *almost* makes me wish I had my adult children's preschool years to do over. Gramling specifically critiques the Head Start initiative in the United States that seeks to correct the poor educational experience common to lower-income families. Although he writes to early childhood educators, this book is a must-read for all parents. A major theme, traced throughout, documents research that shows that pre-school children who overhear normal conversation between adults perform much better in school than those who only hear vocabulary aimed at their age and development level. His well-documented research shows correlation and causation between low-income families and impeded educational success; of course, he recognizes there are exceptions to this rule.

Thankfully, Gramling does not leave his readers mourning this dire problem in early childhood education. He suggests one solution to this problem is to expose pre-school children to adult conversation: adult conversation in the sense of complex vocabulary and sentence structure, not explicit or graphic content. From his experience with the Head Start program, he provides many insightful examples and models for adults to use when interacting with pre-schoolers; research shows that religiously teaching to a prescribed set of objectives often leaves children with a limited vocabulary and limited life experiences. To reach their full potential, children must hear guided and informal conversation in play and other life settings. Although written to early childhood educators, this book is also recommend for stay-at-home parents and single parents, who may not experience much adult-to-adult conversation.

Gramling holds a master's degree in human development, but more importantly, has raised five children. On this basis, this well-written, documented and passionate plea to give impoverished students the best start possible is highly recommended to everyone who interacts with young children.