

Bridging the Gap: The Extended School Year (ESY)

An Informative and Interactive Skit

Written By: Timothy A. Adams and Lynne Arnold

Narrated By: Timothy A. Adams

Starring

Lynne Arnold

Tami Duncan

Becky Estepp

Diane Gallant

Mike Giammetteo

Moira Giammetteo

Preceded by a Presentation and Brief Overview of the IEP Process

Followed by a Question/Answer and Discussion Session

CHARACTERS:

Suzanne Gilmour (mother): LYNNE ARNOLD

Anne Bomhard (School Psychologist): MOIRA GIAMMATTEO

Sandy Rodriguez (Speech Therapist): DIANE GALLANT

Sally Winters (Occupational Therapist): TAMI DUNCAN

Robert Gates (School Principal): HANS GILLINGER

Pauline Nuñez (Special Day Class Teacher): BECKY ESTEPP

Frank Hoffman (Resource Teacher): MIKE GIAMMETTO

Narrator/Commentator: TIMOTHY A. ADAMS

SCENE: Washington Elementary School, Valley Unified School District

TIME: Present

SETTING: An elementary school classroom; two small tables pushed together in the center of the classroom. The IEP Team members are gathered around the improvised conference table to discuss Seth Gilmour, 9 years old. The school principal begins by passing out an IEP meeting agenda.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:

DAD: Mike Gilmour, plumbing contractor. Unable to leave work to attend the IEP.

MOM: Suzanne Gilmour, administrative assistant at large accounting firm.

Mike and Suzanne Gilmour have been married for 20 years. They have four children, daughter who is 15 years old, twin boys who are 13 years old, and Seth who is 9 years old with autism.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST: Anne Bomhard has worked for many local school districts for nearly 25 years. She wants parents to “accept” the autism diagnosis and realize their child’s limits.

SPEECH THERAPIST: Sandy Rodriguez has just returned from her three-month maternity leave. She feels that Seth has reached his potential in speech and will be able to maintain his speech skills over the summer.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST: Sally Winters is new to Valley Unified. She is very enthusiastic but intimidated by her colleagues on the IEP Team.

WASHINGTON PRINCIPAL: Robert Gates has recently been promoted to his first position as principal. He is young, arrogant and out to prove that he knows more about special education than anyone else on the IEP Team.

TEACHER: Pauline Nuñez has been teaching for more than 10 years. She is very inflexible about having to modify her classroom curriculum for children with special needs.

RESOURCE TEACHER: Frank Hoffman; although Frank has only recently begun working with children with autism, he is now considered to be the district's "autism specialist." He has been providing resource services to special education students for more than 20 years.

ACT I

Robert Gates: Good morning! [passes a stack of IEP Agenda to his left]. I see that Mrs. Gilmour brought doughnuts and coffee, thank you Mrs. Gilmour. We're here to discuss Seth's summer program, am I correct?

District IEP Team Members [Mumbling...yes...yep...that's right]

Robert Gates: Well Mrs. Gilmour, as you recall, at Seth's last IEP meeting held in October, the District determined Seth's eligibility for Extended School Year or ESY. We're now in May, and in that time, Valley Unified has made great strides with its summer program. We've got some wonderful things to offer now...and right here at Washington Elementary! I'm happy to announce that several of our fellow IEP Team members have been working hard to develop a model Extended School Year program for all of our autistic students. I'd especially like to thank our school psychologist, Anne Bomhard [Looks at Anne and nods] for providing so much insight into what every autistic child needs to keep them engaged over the summer.

Anne Bomhard: [blushing] Well...uh, thank you, Mr. Gates.

Robert Gates: Okay, moving on, let's unveil what Valley Unified considers its *flagship* summer program. We'll start with our school psychologist, Anne Bomhart...Anne.

Anne Bomhard: Yes, Mr. Gates, we've all worked very hard to put together what we feel is a program that can address the needs of all our kids on the autism spectrum. But, of course, we're here to talk about Seth, so here's what we're offering. We have developed 3 autism specific classrooms, one for pre-school students 3-4 years, another for Kindergarten to 2nd grade and a third for 3rd through 5th grade students. Seth is 9 years old so he'd be placed in the 3rd to 5th grade class. The class will run for 6 weeks, 4 days per week, 4 hours per day shortly after the end of the regular school year with an approximate one week break between the regular school year and ESY. The really good news is that Seth already knows his teacher, because this class will be team taught with Pauline Nuñez. Mrs. Nuñez will be teaching the class with one of our Washington special day class teachers, Mrs. Tyler. I feel that the two of them will do a superb job. Mrs. Gilmour, do you have any questions?



Suzanne Gilmour: Well yes, it sounds like you're proposing that Seth be placed in a special education class. Seth is not in a special education class right now. He's in a regular education class with aide support. I didn't hear anything about typical peers, will there be any?

Anne Bomhard: We don't have any classes for regular education students during the summertime, so it's really not possible for us to have any typical peers in that classroom.

Suzanne Gilmour: [Looking somewhat distressed]. I've never really seen the class you're offering, so I guess it's hard for me to give opinions as to its appropriateness for Seth.

Anne Bomhard: You just have to trust us on this. You know us well. We have Seth's best interests at heart. We've worked with Seth for about 6 years now. We wouldn't offer to put him in an environment we knew was harmful. I know he's

done well in the regular education class during the school year but it's just not something we can offer to Seth during the summer. In fact, we don't offer regular education classes to any of our regular ed or special education students during the summertime.

Suzanne Gilmour: [Looking disappointed] I suppose you're right. I guess it's not fair for Seth to get something other students don't have.



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Robert Gates: Mrs. Gilmour, in addition to the classroom program, our Resource Specialist, Frank Hoffman will be available to provide support to Seth's classroom teachers during that 6 week period. I'll let Frank talk a little bit about his role.

Frank Hoffman: As you know, because Seth is in a regular education classroom setting during the school year, my role is to support Seth. However, because Seth is in a more structured classroom with two teachers, I won't really have to be involved as much. Seth will not need to see me twice a week for 40 minutes. Instead I'm going to "collaborate" with Seth's summer school teachers, Mrs. Tyler and Mrs. Nuñez. I'll be available if they need me but I'm confident Seth will do just fine in their class.

Suzanne Gilmour: Okay, well, I...I guess that's fine but Seth really depends upon your expertise during the week. I've seen him make great progress during the school year in math and reading comprehension. I just worried that he's going to fall behind...perhaps lose skills. In fact, more importantly, Seth is so close to meeting his all of his math goals for the year. I'm afraid that if he doesn't have Mr. Hoffman's support, we'll lose that opportunity. That happened last summer, we were so close to meeting about 60 % of Seth's academic goals...we took the summer off and it took almost 6 months to get back to the spot where Seth was at the end of the prior school year.

Frank Hoffman: You know...[interrupted by Robert Gates]

Robert Gates: Mrs. Gilmour, we all recognize that Seth has done phenomenally well this past school year, but the purpose of a summer program for a student with an IEP isn't really to maintain that progress but to prevent significant regression. That's why the district has spent so much time putting together a program that built

for kids with autism and Seth's a great match for our program. I'm sorry, Frank, did you have something else to say? . . . I think I may have cut you off.

Frank Hoffman: [Pensive] No, not really. It's true we've seen tremendous gains, but Valley has put such a great program in place for the summer.
[pauses . . . doubtful tone] You know. . . he'll be fine. If we have too, we'll just work extra hard in the fall.



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Robert Gates: Well, we've mentioned her name but haven't really heard from our classroom teacher yet . . . Mrs. Nuñez . . .

Pauline Nuñez: Hello everyone. You all know my philosophy . . . equality is the key for every child. You don't want to give any student in the class the impression that another student gets "special treatment". You also don't want to single anyone out. With that said, our motto for the summer school program is "keep it simple". We don't really have a lot of time to work . . . only a 4 hour day. We've got a lot to do in 4 hours so we're really going to have to cut down on the "sensory breaks". Besides, I think they're kind of disruptive. [As she speaks, she slowly turns to look at the Occupational Therapist, Sally Winters with a half smile/smirk].

Sally Winters: [Looking sheepish] Well.. uh, okay. I guess we'll have to rethink Seth's sensory diet.

Suzanne Gilmour: I have a concern, we've noticed that Seth has lots of trouble staying on task if he doesn't get his sensory breaks. I'm not clear on this. Mrs. Winters, we spent the better part of the last IEP meeting adjusting Seth's sensory diet, why would we change it?

Sally Winters: [Looking Nervous] Well, um, Mrs. Nuñez had mentioned that she was concerned about one child being singled out.

Suzanne Gilmour: Okay, I can see how that may make sense for in a regular education setting, but I thought you were proposing a special class for Seth during the summer?

Pauline Nuñez: Mrs. Gilmour, our model or method here is to ensure that our kids are not made to feel like they stand out and having Seth leave the room, even for brief period of time to participate in sensory type activities doesn't help him "fit in". Do you understand, I just don't want to single him or any child out.

Suzanne Gilmour: [Slightly Indignant] Well, no... I don't agree with that.

Robert Gates: As the facilitator, I'm going ask that we table this discussion for now. We only have 2 hours for the IEP meeting and I want to make sure that we get through as much as we possibly can in that time. We still have to discuss the other services that will be available to Seth during the summer. Let's move on to our speech therapist, Sandy Rodriguez. Mrs. Rodriguez just returned from maternity leave. How's the new little one?



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Sandy Rodriguez: Oh, thanks for asking. He's doing wonderful but let's talk about Seth. Mrs. Gilmour you should be proud of Seth. He's done so well in speech for the past two years. He's met almost all of his goals. Actually, since my return two weeks ago, I've also been collaborating with Mrs. Nuñez and Mrs. Tyler, the summer classroom teachers to ensure that "language" is a big part of the summer class program. I have the utmost confidence in the summer class model and because the class Seth would be participating in during the summer is "Language Based", I'm not recommending any direct speech services. Besides, I think every kid needs a break, we don't want to burn Seth out. We can't expect him to perform 11 months out of the year.

Suzanne Gilmour: Wait, Wait, Wait, we've always continued Seth's speech services over the summer, at least for the 6 weeks of ESY. This really concerns me. I agree that Seth has made great progress, but remember when we stopped speech for two weeks during the winter break—we saw regression in his expressive language skills and his echolalia increased. Besides, out of no where, I'm starting to see a stuttering issue arise. We can't stop now!

Sandy Rodriguez: Okay, well, how does this sound, I can be available on an "as needed" basis to provide consultation to the classroom teacher. Mr. Gates, can we write that into the IEP.

Robert Gates: Well yes, of course. How much time are you recommending?

Sandy Rodriguez: I think 30 minutes per month should do it. What do you think Mrs. Nuñez?

Pauline Nuñez: Oh, 30 minutes a month is just fine but I don't even think we'll need that much time.

Robert Gates: Then why don't I go ahead and write in the IEP as "up to" 30 minutes per month as needed.

Suzanne Gilmour: You know, I'm extremely worried about Seth not having any direct speech therapy during the summer. He's never gone without speech services for such a long period of time. I just don't want him to lose skills like he did during the winter holidays.

Sandy Rodriguez: Mrs. Gilmour, let me assure you that I'll be right there working closely with Seth's teachers to make sure that Seth is okay. If I see any problems or loss of skills, I will call you to discuss.

[THE IEP TEAM SPENDS THE NEXT 30 MINUTES IN DISCUSSION]



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Sandy Rodriguez: [Finishes her conversation with Mrs. Nuñez about taking the summer off to be with her family and the new baby]

Robert Gates: [INTERUPTS Mrs. Rodriguez talking about her summer plans and attempts to redirect the IEP Team] Okay, let me bring us back. We need to finish this IEP because I know that everyone at the table has other appointments and Mrs. Nuñez needs to get back to her classroom. She only has a sub for 2 hours and we have no other general ed teachers who could attend this IEP today. We've heard a little from our new Occupational Therapist, Sally Winters but we really didn't get into your recommendation. Mrs. Winters!

Sally Winters: Well, I see Seth 2 times per week for 30 minutes. We're working on fine motor and sensory issues. I see a great deal of progress as well and I'd like to continue with some services for the summer.

Robert Gates: Okay, remember that the law says that the school district's obligation isn't to maintain progress but to prevent regression, so the question the team needs to consider is whether going without Occupational Therapy for the summer is going to result in severe regression. So, will Seth regress if he doesn't receive direct occupational therapy over the summer?

Sally Winter: [Thinking hard] Well, I don't really have any data on regression for Seth. The only information that I have regarding a break in service so far is during spring break where he didn't receive any services for a week. He seemed okay after a week, but I'm just not sure [Looks at Mr. Gates nervously and confused].

Robert Gates: Well, here's an idea. What about some consultation with the teacher and parents.

Sally Winters: [Thinks Hard]. Hmm, well. I'm just not comfortable saying that Seth shouldn't have any OT service. [Regains her confidence] well, let's do 1 session, 30 minutes and see how that goes.

Robert Gates: That sounds good and you know, if he regresses, we'll have some baseline data for next year.

[Everyone on the IEP Team except for Mom nods and agrees]

Suzanne Gilmour: [Distressed] It just seems like we're whittling Seth's program down to nothing.

Robert Gates: Mrs. Gilmour, we understand your concern, but the professionals around this table have given their opinions. We really think this summer program is a great opportunity for Seth. Let's move forward, okay.

Suzanne Gilmour: [Tired] I'm not happy but I suppose you know Seth well. After all, I'm the parent, not an educational expert. I'll have to rely on you. Please don't let Seth down.

Robert Gates: Oh, no Mrs. Gilmour, we have Seth's best interest at heart.

[THE MEETING CONCLUDES AND MR. GATES FINISHES WRITING THE SERVICES IN THE IEP]



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