



## HEAD START WORKS

### *Research Clearly Demonstrates That America's Comprehensive Early Education/Health Program Is Effective, Generates Long-Term Benefits*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.//October 16, 2008//**A wide range of recent research shows that Head Start -- the nation's premier early childhood and health program now serving about 1 million children and their low-income families each year -- yields major, long-term benefits for the children and families in the program and the communities in which they live, according to the National Head Start Association (NHSA).

Last night, Presidential candidate John McCain asserted that the gains children made from attending Head Start disappear by the time these children reach third grade. NHSA officials pointed out that this statement was based on a nearly 40-year-old study conducted by the Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University in 1969. Subsequent analysis by Dr. Steven Barnett at the National Institute for Early Education Research and other researchers have found that this cross-sectional study was methodologically flawed and that Head Start has long-term favorable impacts (Barnett, 2003; Campbell and Erlbacher, 1970).

Additionally, more reliable and much more current research demonstrates that Head Start delivers long-term educational, health, economic, and law enforcement benefits:

- An analysis of reliable studies have revealed that Head Start children have higher achievement test scores and high school graduation rates and lower rates of grade repetition and special education than comparable children who did not participate in Head Start (Barnett, 2003; Ludwig and Miller, 2007).
- Head Start reduced mortality rates for children aged 5- to 9-years-old from causes that could have been affected by their participation in Head Start when they were 3- and 4-years-old (Ludwig and Miller, 2007).
- The preliminary results of a longitudinal study of more than 600 Head Start graduates in San Bernardino County, California, showed that society receives nearly \$9 in benefits for every \$1 dollar invested in these Head Start children. These benefits were projected and include increased earnings, employment, and family stability, and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education (Meier, 2004).
- Head Start benefits its children and society-at-large by reducing crime and its costs to crime victims (Fight Crime Invest in Kids, 2004; Garces, Thomas, and Currie, 2002).

Founded in 1965, Head Start has been described as “the most important social and educational investment in children, families, and communities that the United States has ever undertaken.” Head Start -- the nation’s premier early childhood and health program now serving about 1 million children and their low-income families each year -- is a comprehensive school readiness program that helps to reduce the achievement gap in the classroom. Head Start’s parent Policy Councils and family support services empower low-income white, African American, Hispanic and other children and families to gain skills needed to move out of poverty and pursue the American dream.

On September 24, 2008, America’s Head Start leaders recognized the 25 millionth child to be enrolled in Head Start. At that time, NHSA Board Chairperson Ron Herndon, who also is the director of the Albina Head Start program (Portland, OR), said: **“Head Start has helped to launch 25 million American children and their families onto a life of achievement in the classroom and in the community. This is a true success story for the federal government and for our nation in terms of creating opportunity and hope where none existed before. Not only has Head Start served as the laboratory for pre-kindergarten and early education in the United States, but it will continue to be the cornerstone for pre-K/early ed for the United States as we look ahead to changes under a new Congress and President in 2009.”**

The Head Start program was reauthorized in 2007, but it must be provided at least \$1.3 billion in additional funds to maintain the high quality of its services and implement the many new mandates set out in reauthorization.

### **ABOUT NHSA**

The National Head Start Association (<http://www.nhsa.org>) is a private not-for-profit membership organization dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of Head Start children and their families. It represents more than 1 million children, 200,000 staff and 2,600 Head Start programs in the United States. The Association provides support for the entire Head Start community by advocating for policies that strengthen services to Head Start children and their families; by providing extensive training and professional development to Head Start staff; and by developing and disseminating research, information, and resources that enrich Head Start program delivery.

**CONTACT:** Ailis Aaron Wolf, (703) 276-3265 or [aawolf@hastingsgroup.com](mailto:aawolf@hastingsgroup.com).