

Head Start: Increased percentage of teachers nationwide have required degrees, but better information on classroom teachers' qualifications needed ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available in print for order (see SOURCE) and online for download.

- Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from report: The 1998 Head Start Act mandated that 50 percent of all Head Start teachers nationwide have a minimum of an associate degree in early childhood education, or, in a related field with preschool teaching experience, by September 30, 2003. This law also required that each classroom in center-based programs (those that primarily provide services in classroom settings) without such a degreed teacher have a teacher with a Child Development Associate credential or an equivalent state certificate. In preparation for the reauthorization of Head Start in fiscal year 2003, GAO was asked to examine: (1) the extent to which Head Start has met legislative mandates concerning teacher qualifications; (2) whether Head Start teachers' salaries have increased and enabled grantees to attract and retain teachers with degrees; and (3) the extent to which degree and other programs in early childhood education are available for Head Start teachers and if grantees have taken steps to enhance access to them. GAO recommends that the Secretary of Health and Human Services require that Administration for Children and Families (ACF), at least annually, collect data from Head Start grantees and report to the Secretary on whether each classroom in Head Start centers has at least one teacher with at least the minimum credentials required by law. Head Start appears to have met the requirements of the 1998 mandate for teacher qualifications by increasing the number of teachers with at least an associate degree in early childhood education or a related field to 52 percent in 2002. However, the number of classrooms in Head Start centers that did not have at least one teacher with at least minimum credentials was not known because ACF does not require that grantees specifically report such data in their annual PIR. Head Start grantees and ACF regional officials we contacted said the quality improvement funds used to pay for teacher training and to increase the level of teacher salaries were the key to success in increasing the numbers of teachers with degrees. In addition, the agreements worked out with colleges to provide easily accessible early childhood education courses were seen as a factor in increasing the number of teachers with degrees.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: economics ^[4]

quality ^[5]

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