

# Head start renewal: A program that works for vulnerable children [US] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

There's not much that Congress and President Bush agree on these days. So the unanimity surrounding the reauthorization of Head Start says much about the worth of the preschool program. And, that, in turn, should help fuel the movement for states to expand and enhance education in childhood's critical early years.

This month, both the House and Senate gave overwhelming, bipartisan support to renewing Head Start, and Mr. Bush is expected to sign the measure. Head Start has come a long way from its roots as a summer program for the disadvantaged as part of President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty. It has since helped more than 24 million children develop the social and learning skills they need to be ready to start school, and it also has provided vital health services. The reauthorization, the first since 1998, includes important changes such as expanding access to more families and improving coordination with states for a better transition of children into school. Some changes didn't go as far as we would have liked; a boost in teacher qualifications was made a goal instead of a requirement, for instance.

...

Head Start's record of success and research showing the importance of learning in the early years have spawned a popular movement to provide quality preschool to all 4-year-olds regardless of family income. Universal pre-kindergarten is a staple of the presidential campaign, and states across the country are looking at ways they can add early-childhood seats. There's no question as to the benefits, but providing quality programs is extraordinarily expensive, and it's crucial that local jurisdictions make wise use of limited resources.

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- reprinted from the Washington Post

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[3]</sup>

affordability <sup>[4]</sup>

quality <sup>[5]</sup>

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