

Everything we know about early childhood has changed since Head Start ^[1]

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Source: The Atlantic

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 Apr 2014

AVAILABILITY

Article from The Atlantic ^[2] magazine examines the history and legacy of Head Start and other US interventions to help children in poverty.

For other perspectives on this issue see:

- Improving the odds for America's children: Future directions in policy and practice ^[3] (Harvard University Press)
- Recipe for children's success spelled out by expert panelists ^[4] (Harvard Gazette):

"Early education cannot do its job when a parent is in poverty," added Arloc Sherman, senior researcher at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

- Starting Strong 2: Early childhood education and care ^[5] (OECD), pp. 33-36: Acting against child poverty and educational disadvantage

"Uncertain results from 'intervention' programmes point to the conclusion that young children have great difficulties in recovering from a poor start. For this reason, the Nordic model of preventing child poverty through upstream fiscal, social and family policies merits more attention."

EXCERPTS

In 1912, a teacher in the one-room schoolhouse outside Stonewall, Texas, made a decision that would ultimately lead to billions of dollars in federal investment, volumes of research, and ongoing, decades-long debate about the value of early childhood education.

The teacher agreed to admit a 4-year-old boy who would go on to become President Lyndon Johnson.

As president, Johnson elevated the work of reducing poverty to a national priority-and giving the nation's poor children early opportunities to learn ranked among his top policy goals. "You have to understand that Johnson had been a teacher," says Joseph Califano Jr., a Johnson adviser and former secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "He was well aware of the vast differences in the way a Mexican-American child typically grew up in South Texas and a white, wealthy child lived on the Upper East side of Manhattan."

The result was a nationwide focus on early childhood and efforts to level the playing field for less-affluent children-particularly in urban areas so that poor children would no longer arrive at school with learning deficits. Ambitious policy programs like the Great Society and the War on Poverty led to experimental interventions like Head Start and Sesame Street. 50 years later, we have a much better understanding of the childhood skills and environments that can lead to success later in life. Even so, many questions remain shrouded in dispute and debate.

...Read full article online at [TheAtlantic.com](https://theatlantic.com) ^[2]

Region: United States ^[6]

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