

Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 Conference Report Summary

The Conference Report builds on Head Start's success to help more children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life by:

- ✓ **Improving Teacher and Classroom Quality**
- ✓ **Strengthening the Focus on School Readiness**
- ✓ **Expanding Access**
- ✓ **Increasing Accountability**
- ✓ **Boosting Coordination**
- ✓ **Strengthening Comprehensive Services**

Improves Teacher and Classroom Quality

- Increases teacher qualifications - half of teachers nationwide will have a B.A. by 2013
- Increases targeting of new money toward improving teacher salaries and supporting professional development
- Implements a classroom observation tool to support best practices
- Requires programs to develop career ladders and annual professional development plans for full-time staff
- Strengthens the current training and technical assistance system by ensuring that only qualified entities provide training and technical assistance and by creating a state-based system that better meets the needs of local programs
- Enhances the capacity of classroom staff to better meet the needs of children with disabilities

Strengthens Focus on School Readiness

- Requires the Secretary to re-evaluate and update the current early learning standards and use of assessments using the best available science
- Requires the use of best practices to support children's emerging literacy and vocabulary growth in curricula, assessments, and professional development
- Improves professional development and classroom practices related to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development
- Suspends and terminates further use of the badly flawed National Reporting System
- Increases funding for moving more programs to full-day and full-year
- Aligns Head Start performance standards with State early learning standards

Expands Access

- Provides greater flexibility to serve children whose family income is between 100-130% of the poverty line, while ensuring that the neediest children remain the program's top priority
- Authorizes \$7.35 billion for fiscal year 2008, \$7.65 billion for fiscal year 2009, and \$7.99 billion for fiscal year 2010 and such sums thereafter – allowing tens of thousands more children access to the program.
- Prioritizes expansion for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Indian Head Start
- Prioritizes expansion for Early Head Start so more children can receive Head Start during the years when their brains are growing the fastest
- Ensures more participation of homeless children by removing barriers to their enrollment
- Enhances opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in Head Start programs
- Allows programs to convert preschool slots to serve children birth through age 3

Tightens Accountability

- Requires programs failing to provide a high quality early education program to re compete for their grant using an application review process developed by an expert panel which will consider multiple measures of program data
- Allows the Secretary to more quickly de-fund bad programs
- Strengthens the triennial review process by requiring it to evaluate program strengths and weaknesses, improving the quality of the review team, requiring inclusion of a detailed fiscal management protocol, and requiring follow-up site visits of deficient programs
- Requires the active participation of the governing board, including defining the board's responsibilities and authority, and prohibits persons with a conflict of interest from serving on the board
- Maintains a shared governance structure that empowers parents and facilitates checks and balances

Boosts Coordination

- Improves coordination between Head Start and local child care programs to better meet the needs of working families
- Strengthens Head Start's linkages with IDEA, state health, mental health, and family services
- Increases coordination with state pre-k programs so that resources and planning efforts are shared and efficiencies are gained to better serve the families in the community
- Strengthens the State Head Start collaboration offices to promote better coordination between Head Start programs and other State and local early childhood services
- Provides funds for State Advisory Councils to enhance early childhood program quality and coordination

Stronger Comprehensive Services

- Places greater emphasis on early identification of child and family mental health needs, including maternal depression and directing them to appropriate services
- Requires programs to implement research-based best practices for family service workers and targets quality improvement dollars to decrease family service worker caseloads