

## Head Start a vital program for kids

By: Suzanne Snell DeBeers – March 12, 2013

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Why deprive children? Recent Post-Crescent cartoons, Mallard Fillmore by Bruce Tinsley and a political cartoon by Lisa Benson, made negative statements about Head Start. Timely, as our Congress considers spending cuts.

Media Matters refers to recent articles that include “cherry-picked facts” from the Health and Human Services’ report on Head Start. Could this be to promote their ideology? The article also states that Health and Human Services study and other studies show the program has a positive impact early and later in life.

A search for “Head Start doesn’t work” listed information from Fox News, the Heritage Foundations and Cato Institute, all representing a conservative agenda. The Fox News piece refers to the cost and suggests that it would be “far better to let these kids take their ‘share’ of Head Start funding to private preschools of their choosing.” Would a low-income family be able to augment the remainder of fees or even be accepted for enrollment?

Googling “Head Start news” brought links to the New York Times, Chicago Tribune and Reuters. The Times piece concluded that while I.Q. may fade over time, scores on achievement tests were maintained, repeating grades and special education was decreased, and high school graduation rates were increased. Most importantly, behavior seemed to improve, thus reducing crime.

The Tribune article reports that the United Way of Lake County released a study that confirmed programs for low-income preschoolers prepared them for kindergarten. The Reuters blog concludes that the HHS study shows better parental involvement and more appropriate discipline.

As a community volunteer who spends three afternoons a week in a Head Start classroom, I see how the children thrive. What will happen when thousands of children are cut from the program? Guess children are an easy target since they can’t vote.