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Study: Head Start's impact fades

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A **study** by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services seems to indicate that we've spent quite a lot of money on a program with very little impact. The study looks at Head Start, the early education program that began in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty. Researchers studied 5,000 3-year-old and 4-year-old children, randomly assigning them to either a Head Start group or a control group that had access to other early childhood programs. They found that Head Start makes a little difference at the beginning, but the impact fades:

Providing access to Head Start has a positive impact on children's preschool experiences. ...

However, the advantages children gained during their Head Start and age 4 years yielded only a few statistically significant differences in outcomes at the end of 1st grade for the sample as a whole.

The Cato Institute **argued last year** that early childhood government programs are more costly than effective. Yet Cato notes that \$5 billion of the stimulus package went to Early Head Start, Head Start and other early education programs.

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