



## Washington's distorted priorities

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The Cato Institute spotted a disconnect between what works in education and what gets federal money.

A study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows that most of the benefits of Head Start programs for low-income children disappear by the end of their first-grade year. Even the few benefits that seem to linger are minimal at best, the study noted.

"We have spent more than \$100 billion on the program ... and HHS's own research shows that its results diminish to essentially nothing by the end of the first grade," writes Andrew Coulson, director of Cato's Center for Educational Freedom.

But while Head Start has gotten more money, Congress is ending funding for a voucher program that let poor students in disastrous public schools in Washington, D.C., attend better private schools. Though a voucher costs only a fraction of what it costs to educate a student in D.C.'s public schools, voucher students have pulled as much as two grade levels ahead of their public school peers in the all-important subject of reading.

Under our Constitution, education is a job for state and local governments and for parents, not the federal government. But if Washington must get involved, shouldn't it focus its dollars on programs that work?

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