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Government study finds Head Start “costly failure”

January 18, 2010 @ [Michael Hampton](#) → [No Comments](#)

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With literally nothing to show for the \$100 billion it has wasted so far, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services wants even more money to “strengthen” Head Start, a preschool program its own study finds is a failure.

The [study](#), which was ordered by Congress in 1998 and finally released Wednesday, showed that by the first grade, any advantages children had received from Head Start had vanished.

“Research clearly shows that Head Start positively impacts the school readiness of low-income children,” HHS secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a [statement](#). “Now we must increase its effectiveness and continue to provide the support

that our children, from birth to eight, need to prepare to succeed later in school and in life.”

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That news release revealed part of the truth: “The study showed that at the end of one program year, access to Head Start positively influenced children’s school readiness. When measured again at the end of kindergarten and first grade, however, the Head Start children and the control group children were at the same level on many of the measures studied.”

The rest of the story was in footnote 99, buried over halfway through the 420-page report.

“A certain number of apparently significant results are to be expected merely by chance, and the probability of these false positives grows in proportion to the number of tests you report,” [explained](#) Andrew Coulson, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute. Applying any of a number of statistical correction methods, he said, causes the results to be correctly read as statistically insignificant at best, and at worst, “these marginal results would be savagely beaten, buried in concrete, and dropped into the Mariana Trench.”

“These results make it clear that we need to build a more coordinated system of early care and education, and to focus on key improvements to teaching and learning in the early grades,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in the same statement.

“There are other government education programs whose effects actually grow substantially over time, and that are comparatively economical,” Coulson [wrote](#), such as the Washington, D.C., school voucher program, in which students showed significant educational gains over those not in the program, and at [a quarter of the cost](#) of a student who remained in a public school. [Congress refused to reauthorize](#) the program.

“Will they now redirect their efforts to the support of programs whose benefits for disadvantaged children actually grow in magnitude the longer kids stay in school, or will they continue to push for programs like Head Start that have been proven costly failures?”

Three guesses on that one.

Clearly the powers that be want children in government schools, whatever the cost, and even if the children would be better served by a program proven less expensive with better results. Even if the bureaucrats have no [ulterior motives](#), which [isn’t terribly likely](#), this isn’t good for your children, and alone is enough to justify removing them from public school any way you can.

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