

*Statement for Head Start Report Press Conference
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For Maine to have a prosperous future, our youngest citizens must be given the supports they need to thrive now, so that -- as adults -- they will strengthen our communities and build our economy in the years to come. Head Start is an essential component of this effort.

The early years are the time when the brain is literally building itself from the ground up, in much the way a house is constructed. When children have enriching experiences and relationships—the building blocks of the maturing brain—children get off to a good start, establishing a strong foundation for future development.

When children don't have these experiences, because of illness, violence, neglect or other chronic challenges that produce what is now known as "toxic stress," children suffer—and so does our state. Head Start is a proven antidote to toxic stress, helping to ensure that our children have access to the opportunities that build healthy brain architecture today and thriving communities tomorrow.

Research shows that Head Start:

- Improves school readiness
- Increases educational achievement
- Improves child health
- Reduces the chance a child will turn to crime
- Improves parenting skills and practices
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Head Start benefits vulnerable children, their parents, our local communities and our state. If Moody's Investment Service was to rate Head Start, I'm certain it would receive a Triple A rating as an excellent investment with an assured return. Our initial commitment to Head Start in the 1960's is still reaping returns today in our local communities. You probably have met Head Start alum in your day to day life without even knowing it. For example, I know of a doctor, a dentist, a real estate broker and a former state senator who all attended Head Start when they were young. Head Start programs across the state are currently working hard to ensure that the next generation is prepared to lead our communities and grow our economy in the future.