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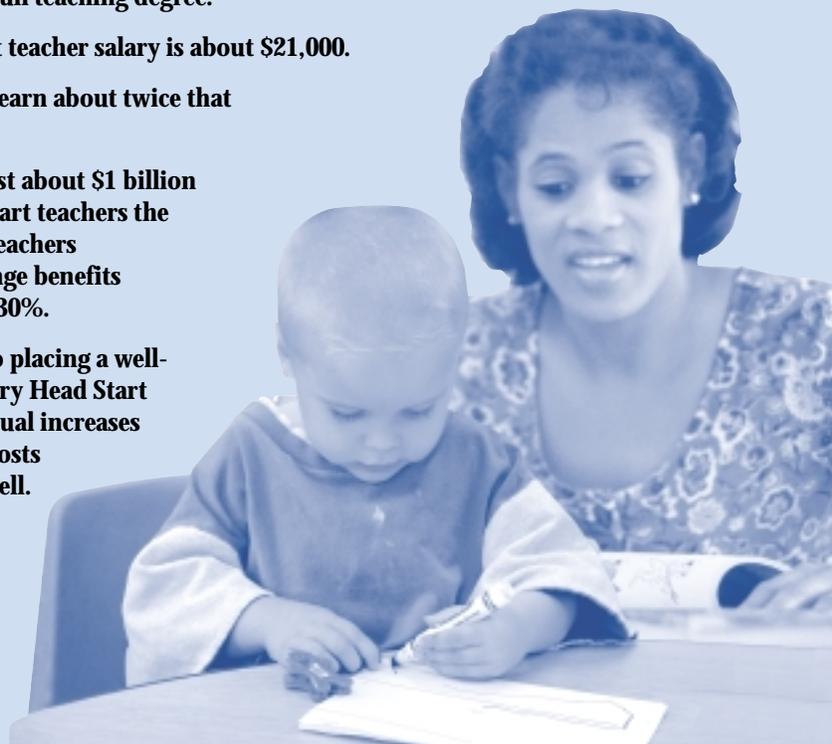
Investing in Head Start Teachers

Efforts to improve the effectiveness of Head Start must begin with teachers. Research shows that preschool produces the strongest effects when teachers are well qualified. Preschool teachers with a BA degree in early childhood education are the most effective, yet most Head Start preschool teachers don't hold even the minimum teaching degrees required to teach kindergarten. Moreover, Head Start teachers are paid less than half the salary of a kindergarten teacher, making it impossible for Head Start to hire and retain equally qualified teachers

The cost to put a well-qualified teacher in every Head Start classroom, phased-in over an eight-year period, would range from \$177 million in the first year to \$1.4 billion in year eight, or less than a rounding error in the projected federal budget. By the time the figures reach their highest level in the eighth year, the cost represents less than 1/1000th of the federal budget.

What We Know

- **Better-educated preschool teachers with specialized training are most effective.**
- **Head Start employs about 50,000 teachers, but more than 70 percent lack a full teaching degree.**
- **The average Head Start teacher salary is about \$21,000.**
- **Public school teachers earn about twice that much, \$43,000.**
- **Ultimately, it would cost about \$1 billion per year to pay Head Start teachers the same as kindergarten teachers (\$20,000 x 50,000). Fringe benefits would add another 20-30%.**
- **Practical approaches to placing a well-qualified teacher in every Head Start classroom require gradual increases over time. As a result, costs increase gradually as well.**



Cost of Placing a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Head Start Classroom

Many practical judgments must be made in designing a plan requiring BA level teachers in Head Start: how fast to proceed, how much to rely on existing teachers, how and when new pay scales will be implemented. Recognizing that plans can vary, we estimate the cost of one approach that requires all Head Start teachers have a BA within 8 years. The estimate uses data from the 2001-02 Program Information Report (PIR), together with the following assumptions:

- The total number of classroom teachers required is 50,000 (from the PIR we estimate 47,238 classroom teachers in 2001-02).
- The percentage of teachers with a BA or higher degree is 29%; with an AA degree - 23%, a Child Development Associates (CDA) or State Credential - 35%, and those with no degree or CDA is 13%.
- Head Start adds 5% new teachers with a BA each year through turnover in less qualified teachers.

- After 4 years, 25% of Head Start teachers with AA's acquire BA's in each of the next 4 years.
- After 6 years, 1500 Head Start teachers with less than an AA degree acquire a BA in the next two years.
- The average salary for a teacher with a BA rises to \$30,000 in year 1 and rises by \$2000 each year for the next 7 years.
- The average salary for a teacher with a graduate degree rises to \$36,000 in year 1 and rises by \$2,000 each year for the next 7 years.
- Fringe benefits add 25% to the cost of total compensation.
- Inflation adds 2% per year to nominal costs.

Our estimates do not include any additional costs of assisting Head Start teachers without BAs to attend college. Such a policy would capitalize on the strengths of the

existing teaching force. Its cost would depend on how many Head Start teachers choose to pursue a BA, their current levels of education, college completion rates, and whether the program pays for tuition only or reimburses students for such other costs as fees, books, and transportation. A very modest tuition reimbursement program for teachers who already have AAs could cost less than \$100 million over 5 years. A very broad program enrolling all teachers without a BA could cost more than \$500 million over 5 years.



Table 2. Estimated Compensation Costs of BA Requirement for All Head Start over 8 Years

| | Annual Cost of Teachers Salary | Annual Cost of Teachers Salary and Fringe Benefits | Cumulative Cost of Teachers Salary and Fringe Benefits |
|--------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Year 1 | \$140,958,683 | \$176,198,354 | \$176,198,354 |
| Year 2 | \$184,968,633 | \$231,210,791 | \$407,409,144 |
| Year 3 | \$240,993,907 | \$301,242,383 | \$708,651,528 |
| Year 4 | \$356,730,305 | \$445,912,882 | \$1,154,564,410 |
| Year 5 | \$500,255,069 | \$625,318,836 | \$1,779,883,245 |
| Year 6 | \$672,879,076 | \$841,098,846 | \$2,620,982,091 |
| Year 7 | \$907,127,752 | \$1,133,909,690 | \$3,754,891,781 |
| Year 8 | \$1,121,082,141 | \$1,401,352,676 | \$5,156,244,457 |