

# A RENEWED HEAD START: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR LATINO CHILDREN

By Erika Beltran and Amy Goldwasser\*

## INTRODUCTION

On December 12, 2007, President Bush signed into law the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-134), the first reauthorization of the nation's premier early childhood education program in nearly a decade. Latino<sup>†</sup> children and families had a lot at stake in the reauthorization of this law. Research shows that Latino children enter school less prepared to learn than their White peers. Therefore, access to high-quality early childhood education programs has the potential to close the academic achievement gap. As such, the reauthorization of Head Start plays an important role in a broader effort to enhance Latino educational attainment.

Given the rapid growth of the Latino population and the changing demographics of young children throughout the country, Head Start must be able to effectively serve Hispanic children and families if it is to be successful. Fortunately, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle recognized the importance of ensuring that Head Start services meet the needs of Latino children. As a result, provisions were included in the new law which will help to ensure that Latino and limited-English-proficient (LEP)<sup>‡</sup> children—the vast majority of whom are Latino—fully benefit from

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† The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

‡ The term "limited English proficient" is applied to those who were not born in the United States and whose native language is not English; or who come from an environment where a language other than English is dominant. It is important to note that other academic terms such as English language learner or dual language learner are similar in meaning and often refer to the same population of children.

Head Start services. The purpose of this white paper is to highlight these provisions which, if well implemented, could significantly improve services for Latino children. Specifically, this paper:

- Provides an overview of issues related to Latinos' and LEPs' access to high-quality Head Start programs and services
- Discusses how these challenges are addressed in the new legislation
- Recommends strategies for effective implementation to best meet the needs of Hispanic children

### CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Latino children are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population, accounting for almost one-quarter of children under the age of five (approximately 5.5 million children). By 2050, population growth among Latino children is expected to dramatically increase by 146% and outpace the population growth of White and Black children. These changing demographics are evident in schools and early childhood programs throughout our nation. In 2005, Latinos accounted for more than 10.9 million students enrolled in prekindergarten through the 12th grade, representing approximately 20% of public school enrollment. Almost half (45%) of Latino students are English language learners, most of whom are enrolled in the early grades—prekindergarten through the third grade. Clearly, the success of our public school system depends on the educational success of Latino students.

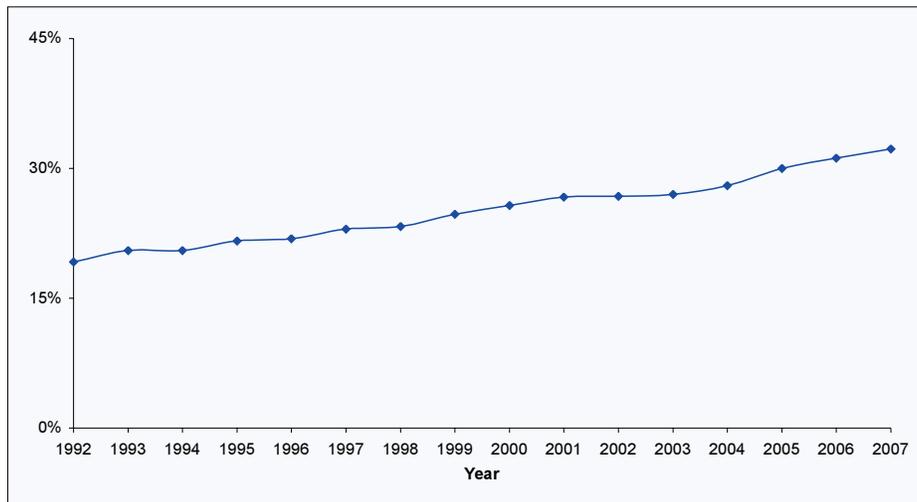
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Race and Hispanic Origin in 2004, Population Profile of the United States*. Conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Washington, DC, January 2006; Melissa Lizarin, *Improving Assessment and Accountability for English Language Learners in the No Child Left Behind Act* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2006).

## BARRIERS TO HEAD START FOR LATINO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Historically, Latinos have been underrepresented in Head Start; however, their participation rates are steadily increasing. As the figure on page 3 indicates, between 1992 and 2007 the percent of Latino children in Head Start grew from about 19% to 32%, an increase of more than 10%.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this steady progress, participation in Head Start remains a challenge for many Latino children. A lack of resources to expand the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs has thwarted the participation of hundreds of thousands of Latino children who are eligible. Additionally, Latino participation is a challenge in areas of the country where Latinos have not traditionally lived, such as the Southeast and Midwest. The following section discusses these challenges in greater detail and describes the new opportunities for expansion through the reauthorization.

### LATINO HEAD START ENROLLMENT (EXCLUDING PUERTO RICO) 1992-2007



Source: Early Head Start Program Information Reports, 1992-2006 (Washington, DC: Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1996-2006), <http://www.pirweb.net/> (accessed May 2008).

### Access to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

Far too many children of farmworkers are prevented from accessing MSHS services. According to a 2001 congressionally mandated study, MSHS programs serve a mere 19% of eligible children on average.<sup>2</sup> According to the same study, only 10% (4,987 of 46,972) of eligible children in California—the largest agricultural state in the U.S.—have access to MSHS services.<sup>3</sup> These low rates of participation can be mainly attributed to a lack of funding for MSHS expansion. Prior to the 2007 reauthorization, MSHS was funded out of a 13% set-aside of the overall Head Start appropriation. This set-aside also included the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Program, services to children with disabilities, and technical assistance and training. With the exception of a mandated percentage for training and technical assistance, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had discretion to allocate funding to the remaining programs within the set-aside. Unfortunately, under this formula, MSHS programs received less than 4% of the funds appropriated annually from 1997 to 2006.

The lack of consistent and reliable data has also made it difficult to expand the MSHS program. The transitory nature of migrant farmworkers makes gathering accurate demographic information difficult, and most estimates run the risk of undercounting this vulnerable population. Moreover, currently there is not a mechanism for gathering data on the number of children who qualify for MSHS services. This makes it difficult to show the need and demand for MSHS services and justify funding increases.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 provides a framework for expanding MSHS in several important ways. The new law shifts the discretion of MSHS funding from the HHS Secretary to a funding formula that prioritizes MSHS expansion. Under this new structure, if Head Start funding is sufficient to cover cost of living adjustments (COLA), MSHS programs have the potential to receive as much as \$10 million annually for expansion, with a \$50 million maximum over a five-year period. If Head Start is not funded enough to cover the full COLA, a graduated plan will fund partial cost of living expenses and MSHS expansion funding. In the event that Head Start funding is not sufficient to fund 50% of COLA, MSHS programs will not benefit from expansion dollars.

In addition, the law addresses data challenges by mandating the creation of a new mechanism that accurately determines the number of eligible children compared to the number actually served. Finally, the legislation requires that the HHS Secretary develop a plan to identify and alleviate enrollment barriers to MSHS programs.

### MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START (MSHS)

MSHS offers unique programs that provide seamless early childhood education services to children of farmworkers from birth to age five. Children in these families are often at an educational disadvantage due to high rates of mobility and limited access to educational services in geographically isolated areas. These families also tend to work extremely long hours, creating even more challenges in finding appropriate early care and education services for their young children. When the children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers do not attend programs like MSHS, they are at risk of being brought into the fields where they are exposed to hazardous pesticides, dangerous farm equipment, and harsh weather.

MSHS programs respond directly to these challenges and ensure that children are in safe, nurturing environments that foster their preparedness for the first day of school. For example, Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) in Florida does not operate in accordance with the school-year calendar. Instead, RCMA opens its doors from November through May, seven days a week, to accommodate the harvest seasons. During this time, farmworker families arrive in Florida to harvest tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, eggplant, and radishes. Barbara Mainster, Executive Director of RCMA, explains the importance of MSHS services:

“A safe and secure food supply, with fresh vegetables grown in this country, is important for all of us who live in the U.S. In order to have that, many crops still need to be harvested by hand, which is both hard work and requires skill, as well as a willingness to do it. [Farm]work is one of the most dangerous work places and one in which the presence of children used to be common, which is not acceptable. Children need to be cared for in safe, secure, and appropriately stimulating environments in order for them to develop to their full potential...and enter school ready to succeed.”

### Access to Early Head Start

Latino children face challenges in the earliest years of life which impact their preparedness for the first day of school. More than one-quarter of Latino children live in linguistically isolated households, and more than 50% of Latino infants and toddlers live in homes with incomes below 150% of the federal poverty level.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Latino children are less likely than their non-Latino counterparts to have access to reading activities and resources. Early Head Start (EHS), which provides high-quality child development and family support to children from birth to three years old and pregnant mothers, can play a significant role in improving the school readiness and healthy development of young Latino children.

In 2002, a congressionally mandated evaluation of EHS found that Latino children receiving EHS services improved in cognitive and language development. The evaluation also found that Latino parents receiving EHS services were more likely to read to their children daily than those who did not. This is the most rigorous study to date examining the effects of high-quality early learning programs for Latino children under the age of three.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, EHS is not available to the vast majority of eligible families, including Latinos. Much like MSHS, insufficient funding restricts the reach of EHS programs. Although EHS has been praised for its success, Congress and the Administration have not expanded funding to make it accessible to more children. Data indicate that EHS has only been expanded by approximately 6,000 children per year, a total of 57,000 over the course of ten years (1997–2006).<sup>6</sup> Current estimates suggest that EHS is serving only 3% of all eligible infants and toddlers in the country, making the need for increased funding all the more critical.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, NCLR estimates that a mere 3% of eligible Latino infants and toddlers are served by the program.

The new law is intended to expand the EHS program in two key ways. First, after COLA expenses are met and \$10 million is set aside for MSHS, EHS is eligible to receive half of all new funding made available for program expansion. Second, the new law provides Head Start centers with the option and flexibility to convert spaces dedicated to serving preschool-age children into slots for infants and toddlers. By documenting that three- and four-year-old children have adequate access to Head Start services—and that there is a demand for services for younger children—programs can redirect their resources to cater to infants' and toddlers' needs.

### Access in Emerging Communities

While national participation rates show that Latinos enjoy greater access to Head Start services, their low enrollment remains a concern in certain communities. During the last 15 years, states in the Midwest and Southeast have experienced rapid increases in the Latino population, including families with very young children.<sup>8</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that Head Start programs in these communities may have a difficult time enrolling new populations. The reasons for this are complex; however, the lack of staff who speak multiple languages and a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach to new populations are among some of the challenges.

The Head Start reauthorization legislation takes steps to ensure that all children have equitable access to Head Start, including those in emerging Latino communities. Most importantly, the law improves monitoring the community needs assessments that Head Start grantees prepare on a triannual basis. Needs assessments include demographic characteristics regarding Head Start-eligible children in a grantee's target area. Although Head Start agencies have been required to conduct community needs assessments in the past, federal reviews did not verify whether the populations of children identified were actually served. Under the new law, for example, if a grantee's community needs assessment reflects that its target area has experienced growth in the Latino population, federal reviewers would take into account the extent to which Latino families are enrolled in the program. It is also important to note that the new legislation requires Head Start agencies to employ culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach strategies to underserved populations and prioritizes technical assistance funds to enhance Head Start programs' ability to reach LEP families effectively. These resources are targeted specifically to communities that have experienced a large increase in the LEP population as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau.

## QUALITY ISSUES FOR LATINO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Head Start has long been revered as our nation's premier early education program for low-income children. Its comprehensive services, strong parental involvement, and high standards have helped to prepare millions of children, including Latinos, for the first day of school. As Head Start serves an increasingly diverse child population, the program must build on this success and provide services that best meet the needs of Latino and LEP children.

A 2008 Office of Head Start study, *Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take? Head Start Dual Language Report*, examined best practices, existing resources, and barriers to improving services to LEP children and families. It found that even though nearly 30% of all children in Head Start classrooms speak a language other than English, programs are underprepared to adequately serve LEP children and families—the vast majority of whom are Latino. This is due in part to having staff with limited expertise in second-language acquisition, instruction, and assessment. The study highlights the need to develop strategies and resources to enhance LEP parent engagement and teacher training.

The findings from this report are troubling for the Head Start community given that most programs serve LEP children. In fact, while some programs serve a higher proportion of LEP children than others, 86% of all Head Start programs serve LEP children and families.<sup>9</sup> As Head Start continues to serve larger numbers of Hispanic and LEP children, the effectiveness of the program overall will be contingent upon how these children fare. Fortunately, as the following sections discuss, the new Head Start legislation includes provisions that aim to improve Head Start quality for Hispanic and LEP children.

**Evaluation of LEP Populations**

In 1998, Congress required that the HHS Secretary conduct a Head Start Impact Study to document the progress of different subgroups of Head Start children over time compared to subgroups of children who do not receive Head Start services. The findings of the Impact Study are critical to identifying areas of improvement for Head Start and prioritizing training and technical assistance resources to Head Start programs. Unfortunately, the study is methodologically flawed, and its implications for Latinos are essentially invalid.

The pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills assessment of Spanish-speaking children is especially troubling. As the table below reveals, 18.9% of three-year-olds and 25.9% of four-year-olds in the study were first evaluated in Spanish and then in English for the post-assessment, making it difficult to appropriately assess progress for these children. To accurately determine what these children know and can do, Spanish-language assessments should have been administered during both the fall and spring. The failure to appropriately assess Spanish-speaking children also skews the overall findings for Latino children. According to the *2006-2007 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR)*, approximately 30%, or 322,126 children, speak a primary language other than English at home.<sup>10</sup>

**HEAD START IMPACT STUDY: LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT BY AGE**

Fall 2003–Spring 2004 Assessments	3-year-old Head Start Group	4-year-old Head Start Group
English–English	75.4%	67.2%
Spanish–English	18.9%	25.9%
Spanish–Spanish	4.3%	5.9%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Head Start Impact Study First Year Findings.” Conducted by the Administration for Children and Families. Washington, DC, June 2005.

Fortunately, the new law provides a basis by which to better understand the experiences and progress of LEP children in Head Start. The law requires that the HHS Secretary conduct a study on the status of LEP children and families participating in Head Start programs. The study will include demographic data, the nature of services provided to LEP children including procedures for assessing language development, and how those methods correlate with student performance. Information will also be collected on Head Start teachers who work with LEP children and their families, including their qualifications, types of training, and professional development. These data will provide valuable information that will help Head Start programs effectively serve LEP children and families.

### **Improved Child Development and Educational Performance Standards**

Head Start is highly regarded for requiring comprehensive child outcomes and high standards for children's progress and accomplishments. Even so, policies regarding services to LEP children have been limited and narrow. Specifically, programs have received few incentives to use instructional strategies and curricula that build on a child's home language. The Outcomes Framework, which is used to guide Head Start's assessment of student progress, explicitly mentions English-language acquisition but does not include guidance to help LEP students make meaningful progress in their native language as well. While the acquisition of the English language is an important outcome for LEP children, the development of a child's proficiency in native language is critical for literacy and other aspects of a child's well-being.<sup>11</sup> Further, the Outcomes Framework provides no direction for teachers and administrators to monitor children's skills, abilities, and knowledge in their native language, despite research that confirms the importance of the home language as the foundation for second-language acquisition.<sup>12</sup>

It is important for Head Start providers to receive more guidance and tools to understand how native language impacts the cognitive and language development of LEP children. The new law requires that performance standards be developed to help LEP students make progress not only in English-language acquisition, but also in literacy, mathematics, and science through culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction. This new provision opens a window of opportunity to provide programs with more expertise and training which will positively shape the development of outcomes and benchmarks for children in each domain, including measuring progress in their native language.

### **Teacher Quality**

Over the years, Head Start has moved toward requiring higher levels of education and degrees for the Head Start workforce. In 1998, the revised Head Start Act set a nationwide goal of 50% of Head Start teachers obtaining an associate's degree (AA). The new law requires that 50% of teachers in Head Start classrooms have at least a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education or a related field by 2013. While there is much research showing that formal education correlates with better-quality classroom environments, policies aimed at requiring Head Start teachers to obtain a formal degree, if not well implemented, could inadvertently undermine services to Latino and LEP children. We know from anecdotal evidence that many Hispanic and other minority teachers have had difficulty meeting the 1998 AA requirement for Head Start teachers due to financial hardship and time constraints. If culturally and linguistically diverse teachers are unable to meet these requirements, the Head Start workforce will become less reflective of the children served. More importantly, fewer teachers will have the language abilities and cultural competence to work effectively with an increasingly diverse child population.

Policies promoting higher levels of training and education must be complemented with sufficient investments in helping Head Start teachers obtain a higher level of education. These investments must include tuition supports, tutoring, English-language classes, college coursework in Spanish, and the development of a career ladder that provides teachers with sufficient time and financial support to successfully complete the new requirements. Moreover, Head Start programs have not been required to collect data on the qualifications of teachers disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and language ability, thus limiting our understanding of how these provisions impact the Head Start workforce. Clearly, maintaining a diverse teacher workforce is critical given the demographics of Head Start children and the program's commitment to culture and language.

The new law helps mitigate the challenges noted above in two important ways. Foremost, it codifies an existing and successful program which helps Hispanic teachers obtain college degrees in early childhood education or related fields. In 1999, the Head Start Bureau started the Head Start Higher Education Partnership Grants program which supports the development of education and training models between Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and Head Start agencies. The reauthorization gives the HHS Secretary the authority to continue this valuable program and expand it, if new funds become available. In addition, the new law requires the Secretary to collect and report data on classroom instructors' early childhood education credentials disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and language ability. Documenting the progress of teachers' attainment of higher credentials by race and ethnicity will shed light on how teachers are obtaining higher levels of training and whether there are any differences based on their characteristics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Head Start reauthorization includes various provisions that have the potential to improve the program for Latino children. However, proper implementation is key to ensuring successful outcomes for these children. Below are NCLR's recommendations for the implementation of the newly reauthorized Head Start Act.

### Improve Access to Head Start Programs for Latino Children and Families

- **Congress should increase Head Start funding by \$1 billion to provide \$10 million for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start expansion.** The new Head Start funding structure will allow for MSHS expansion only if funding covers the full COLA increase. By providing sufficient funding to cover COLA, MSHS programs would receive \$10 million, making the program available to an additional 1,200 children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers.<sup>13</sup> The HHS Secretary should also establish a systematic process for allowing MSHS programs to respond to available funding opportunities within a sufficient time frame.

- **The HHS Secretary should promote a sound, high-quality Migrant and Seasonal Head Start study by:**
  - ▶ **Issuing a competitive Request For Proposals (RFP) requiring that a qualified applicant have a demonstrated history of conducting relevant evaluation and research as well as experience in providing services to migrant and seasonal farmworker children and families.** The integrity and results of previous studies of the migrant and seasonal farmworker community have been compromised because they have been conducted by groups who have a limited understanding of this unique population. It is therefore critical that the RFP be awarded to groups who have expertise in studying and working with migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
  - ▶ **Ensuring that key stakeholders are consulted in the development of this study in order to accurately account for migrant and seasonal farmworker children.** For example, MSHS providers, region 12 program administrators, the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association, the Department of Labor, the Bureau of Migrant Health, and the Department of Education are each important stakeholders that should be consulted for the development of the study.
- **Congress should increase Head Start funding by \$1 billion to provide for Early Head Start expansion.** Under the new Head Start funding structure, EHS programs are eligible for half of all new expansion funding after funding the full COLA, MSHS, and American Indian and Alaska Native expansions. It is estimated that an overall \$1 billion increase in Head Start funding would provide EHS with an increase of \$190 million, serving an additional 18,000 infants and toddlers.<sup>14</sup>
- **The HHS Secretary should facilitate the Early Head Start conversion option.** Under the new legislation, Head Start programs that opt to convert to EHS slots must first document the need to serve younger children in their community needs assessments and implement EHS performance standards. Given these requirements, the Secretary should provide clear guidance that outlines the expectations for documenting the need and demand for services to infants and toddlers. In addition, programs should receive technical assistance and training to better understand the EHS performance standards.
- **The HHS Secretary should make one-time facilities construction and renovation monies available to programs opting to convert to EHS slots.** As programs begin to convert their slots, many will need additional funding and technical assistance to develop facilities that are specifically tailored to the developmental needs of infants and toddlers.

### **Build the Capacity of Head Start Programs to Identify and Serve LEP Children and Families**

- **The HHS Secretary should create a demonstration grant program that models effective partnerships between Head Start programs and community-based organizations (CBOs) with expertise in serving LEP populations.** Many Head Start programs lack bilingual staff and expertise in serving diverse populations. However, in many cases, CBOs in these communities have developed expertise in working with the LEP community. Partnerships should be encouraged between both to assist Head Start programs in designing activities, such as translation services and effective outreach strategies.
- **HHS should provide technical assistance and monitoring to develop and enhance stronger community needs assessments.** The geographic, cultural, and economic isolation of Latino families, particularly in areas of new growth, makes them significantly harder to identify and reach. As such, Head Start programs should receive technical assistance in developing strategies to identify the demographic characteristics and needs of this new population. In addition, during federal reviews, the demographic data included in community needs assessments should be verified. One approach for doing this is to equip federal monitors with demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure that community needs assessments appropriately reflect the demographic characteristics of a region.

### **Improve the Quality of Programs for Latino Children and Families**

- **The HHS Secretary should promote the dissemination and production of a sound, high-quality LEP study by:**
  - ▶ **Awarding the grant through a competitive process to an organization with experience in evaluating children with limited English proficiency.** Past attempts to document the impact of Head Start on Latino and LEP populations have fallen short of providing an accurate picture. It is important that the evaluator have experience in research related to Latino and LEP children and families, particularly as it relates to appropriate measures of assessments and research methods.
  - ▶ **Disseminating findings to Head Start teachers and administrators to inform and advise best practices.** The HHS Secretary should create forums and/or professional development training opportunities to discuss the findings of the study with Head Start teachers and administrators. Disseminating the findings will ensure that the information is best used to inform practices in Head Start classrooms throughout the country.

- **The HHS Secretary should support the provision of research-based instruction and services to Latino and LEP children by:**
  - ▶ **Establishing a National Head Start Dual–Language Learner Clearinghouse.** Currently, there is a dearth of research related to young LEP children, and what does exist goes largely unnoticed. A national Clearinghouse would collect relevant research and best practices to inform the work of Head Start grantees, teachers, parents, administrators, and policymakers.
  - ▶ **Updating the Head Start regulations and guidance to better acknowledge the needs of LEPs.** The new law includes language that signals an intention to provide LEP children with linguistically and culturally appropriate instruction and services, including through the use of native-language instruction. The Head Start Outcomes Framework and Performance Standards should be updated to include indicators of progress in both English and the home language.
  
- **The HHS Secretary should provide resources for training, recruiting, and retaining bilingual and bicultural teachers by:**
  - ▶ **Expanding resources for programs that increase the pool of bilingual teachers, such as Head Start Higher Education Partnership Grants.** Head Start Higher Education Partnership Grants expand opportunities for professional development to Head Start staff and parents. Grants are given to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribally Controlled Land Grant Colleges and Universities.<sup>15</sup> This program should be expanded to increase the number of bilingual teachers meeting the new certification and degree requirements.
  - ▶ **Leveraging quality improvement resources to build the infrastructure and capacity of Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to prepare Head Start teachers.** As the LEP population continues to grow, it is critical that all teachers have a clear understanding of first- and second-language development. The HHS Secretary should award capacity-building grants to IHEs to develop credit-bearing coursework and training opportunities focused on preparing teachers to work with LEPs.
  
- **The HHS Secretary should consider the new disaggregated Head Start workforce data found in Program Information Reports (PIRs) in the risk assessment process and oversight.** The new legislation requires programs to collect and report disaggregated data on the teacher workforce. These data not only will include the demographic characteristics of the workforce, but will also disaggregate information related to the various training and education levels of teachers based on race, ethnicity, and language abilities. The HHS Secretary should include these data as part of the risk assessment process to help programs identify strategies to develop a diverse workforce at every professional level.

## CONCLUSION

As the leader in early education, Head Start has consistently set the standard for high-quality programs for young children. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 has many new provisions that will secure Head Start's distinguished position in the early childhood education arena. As Head Start continues to change, it has become apparent that its success depends on its ability to successfully and effectively serve an increasingly diverse population, including Latino children and families.

The recent reauthorization of the Head Start Act is promising for Hispanics and initiates critical changes that demand new strategies to provide research-based instruction and services. By expanding Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, Congress has ensured that thousands of Latino children will be given the opportunity to enter school ready to learn. Further, the reauthorization will also improve the quality of services provided to Latino and LEP children and their families by developing new research, accountability, and data collection and designing culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional methods.

Despite the legislative success and promising reauthorization of Head Start, there remain two importance challenges: funding and effective implementation. Congress must ensure that sufficient funding is provided for Head Start programs to run high-quality programs and reach more children. The important progress made through reauthorization will be achieved only if Congress is successful in appropriating sufficient funding for this program. Moreover, the Office of Head Start and the next administration will play an essential role in guiding Head Start programs to enhance the quality of services provided to Latino children and their families.

There is much at stake in the success of the renewed Head Start program, and many children and families stand to benefit greatly from these promising new opportunities. All children deserve nothing less than what Head Start has to offer—an opportunity to enter school ready to learn and to succeed.

**ENDNOTES**

- 1 *Early Head Start Program Information Reports, 1992–2006* (Washington, DC: Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1992–2006), <http://www.pirweb.net/> (accessed May 2008).
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- 4 U.S. Census Bureau, *2000 Census*. Washington, DC, October 2006. Data calculated by Donald J. Hernandez for the NCLR Latino Birth-to-Three Project.
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- 13 Calculated by the National Head Start Association Research and Evaluation Department.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Head Start Higher Education Partnerships Homepage, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Head Start, <http://www.hsnrc.org/HiEd2/?zid=52> (accessed June 2008).