

THE **POWER** OF HEAD START



Head Start transforms the lives of children and families. These personal stories from parents, staff, and graduates highlight its profound impact. Here's just one example of the many Head Start success stories.

Fast Fact

In California,

60,549

**Head Start parents are
Employed, in School, or
in Job Training**

2023 Program Information Report
National Head Start Profile CA.pdf (nhsa.org)
Accessed December 6, 2024



Story submitted by: Joyce, Head Start parent and teacher/curriculum coach

In 1987, I lived in a small community called Orange Cove, California. It was mostly made up of farm workers, and I was one of them, picking oranges in the fields. To be able to work, I needed to enroll my son in preschool, so I signed him up for the Orange Cove Head Start EOC Program.

Eventually, I became a single parent of two children and moved to Reedley, California, where I worked in fruit packing houses. By then, my oldest son was in elementary school, and I wanted to enroll my second son, who was three, in Head Start. Although there was a waiting list, my son qualified for home visits from educators. They would come to our home, work on skills with my child, and teach me how to support his learning. The more I saw, the more I liked.

As I became more involved with Head Start, my desire to be part of this community grew. I was on Section 8 housing assistance, and Fresno Housing Authorities had a "Self-Sufficiency" program. It helped low-income families like mine, who were on aid, to set educational goals. They paid for my child care so I could go to school. I enrolled in Reedley College and began my journey by taking child development courses. With determination and the support of those around me, I earned enough credits to apply for a preschool teaching position at Migrant Head Start, a seasonal job from April to October. As a single parent, I worked part-time and went to school part-time. I held onto the encouragement that my son's Head Start teacher had given me when she saw my potential as a parent volunteer.

I started as a Migrant Head Start teacher, and today, I'm a Head Start teacher and curriculum coach. While there isn't a lot of money in this field, I'm here to make a difference in the lives of families, children, and now, teachers. I love sharing my experiences and knowledge, and I'm passionate about helping parents, children, and staff grow in their understanding of the Head Start program.

The Head Start community made me feel valued, and it's because of them that I am who I am today. They helped me see something in myself that I hadn't noticed before. They inspired and empowered me to become a self-sufficient educator in the early childhood field.

We build up our families so they and their children can have better lives, better education, and better opportunities—things that lower-income families often don't get the chance to experience. Head Start is a successful program because it works!



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- JOYCE