

Our Nation can help to cure these social ills if once again, as in the past, we pledge our continuing stewardship of our greatest wealth—our young people.

I recommend a 12-point program for the children and youth of America. With the help of the Congress, we can—

1. Preserve the hope and opportunity of Headstart by a "Follow-Through" program in the early grades.
2. Strengthen Headstart by extending its reach to younger children.
3. Begin a pilot lunch program to reach preschool children who now lack proper nourishment.
4. Create child and parent centers in areas of acute poverty to provide modern and comprehensive family and child development services.
5. Help the States train specialists—now in critically short supply—to deal with problems of children and youth.
6. Strengthen and modernize programs providing aid for children in poor families.
7. Increase social security payments for 3 million children, whose support has been cut off by the death, disability, or retirement of their parents.
8. Expand our programs for early diagnosis and treatment of children with handicaps.
9. Carry forward our attack on mental retardation, which afflicts more than 125,000 children each year.
10. Launch a new pilot program of dental care for children.
11. Help States and communities across the Nation plan and operate programs to prevent juvenile delinquents from becoming adult delinquents.
12. Enrich the summer months for needy boys and girls.

STRENGTHENING HEADSTART

Headstart—a preschool program for poor children—has passed its first trials with flying colors. Tested in practice the past 2 years, it has proven worthy of its promise.

Through this program, hope has entered the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and their parents who need it the most.

The child whose only horizons were the crowded rooms of a tenement discovered new worlds of curiosity, of companionship, of creative effort. Volunteer workers gave thousands of hours to help launch poor children on the path toward self-discovery, stimulating them to enjoy books for the first time, watching them sense the excitement of learning.

Today Headstart reaches into three out of every four counties where poverty is heavily concentrated and into every one of the 50 States.

It is bringing more than education to children. Over half the youngsters are receiving needed dental and medical treatment. Hearing defects, poor vision, anemia, and damaged hearts are being discovered and treated.

In short, for poor children and their parents, Headstart has replaced the conviction of failure with the hope of success.

The achievements of Headstart must not be allowed to fade. For we have learned another truth which should have been self-evident—that poverty's handicaps cannot be easily erased or ignored when the door of first grade opens to the Headstart child.