

Headstart occupies only part of a child's day and ends all too soon. He often returns home to conditions which breed despair. If these forces are not to engulf the child and wipe out the benefits of Headstart, more is required. Follow-Through is essential.

To fulfill the rights of America's children to equal educational opportunity, the benefits of Headstart must be carried through to the early grades.

We must make special efforts to overcome the handicap of poverty by more individual attention, by creative courses, by more teachers trained in child development. This will not be easy. It will require careful planning and the full support of our communities, our schools, and our teachers.

I am requesting appropriations to launch a "Follow-Through" program during the first school grades for children in areas of acute poverty.

The present achievements of Headstart serve as a measure of the distance we must still go:

Three out of four Headstart children participate only in a summer program. The summer months are far too brief to close the gap separating the disadvantaged child from his more fortunate classmate.

Only a small number of 3-year-olds are now being reached. The impact of Headstart will be far more beneficial if it is extended to the earlier years.

Headstart has dramatically exposed the nutritional needs of poverty's children. More than 1.5 million preschoolers are not getting the nourishing food vital to strong and healthy bodies. To build on the experience already gained through Headstart:

I am requesting funds from the Congress and I am directing the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity to—

1. *Strengthen the full year Headstart program.*
2. *Enlarge the number of 3-year-olds who participate in Headstart.*
3. *Explore, through pilot programs, the effectiveness of this program on even younger children.*

I am recommending legislation to authorize a pilot program to provide school lunch benefits to needy preschoolers through Headstart and similar programs.

CHILD AND PARENT CENTERS

There is increasing evidence that a child's potential is shaped in infancy—and even during the prenatal period. Early in life, a child may acquire the scars that will damage his later years at great cost to himself and to society. No serious effort in child development can ignore this critical period.

In every community, we must attack the conditions that dim life's promise. Today, the Federal Government and the States support a wide range of services for needy children and their parents.

But we have fallen short. Many of these services are fragmented. Many do not provide imaginative and inventive programs to develop a child's full potential. Others fail to enlist the adults of the community in enriching the lives of children and thereby enriching their own lives as well.