

Office of Head Start 50th Anniversary: Ann Linehan on Families

Ann Linehan: We have not talked enough about — we talked a lot about the children. Again in my experience as a director, seeing the transformation of parents, we haven't done a good job at capturing that and telling that story, particularly from a research perspective or data perspective, but you see the transformations in parents.

And I always tell the story, I mean this is — I can remember a parent who came to that first parent meeting and she was so nervous, and she had a very very challenging background, and she brought a little pencil case, just like children do in school too, and she kept writing down things during the meeting. Since finally I went up to her and I said, "What are you doing? And she said, "When I don't understand a word I write it down and I go home, and look it up in the dictionary."

I mean that's a little vignette but those are very powerful moments, and that woman went on to testify in front of Congress, like four years later. So I just — it is also, it's a family, it's a two-generational program with the first — we are the first two-generational program, and it is the children and the family.