

Kimberly Johnson: Head Start Changed My Life

[Music]

My name is Kimberly Johnson. I'm a children's author and presenter. I grew up in a small town in North Carolina and I lived there with my grandparents. My grandfather could not read or write, but he wanted to make sure that his children and grandchildren grew up with a great education. They were awesome for my life, but they didn't really know where to turn to for the academic foundation I needed.

Then the Head Start program came to my area. That was the jump start they had hoped for. Head Start was so willing to help in any way they could. More importantly, Head Start understood that success was about more than just the academic piece – they knew that strong leaders were just as valuable as strong learners. My grandparents were the strong leaders in my life, so Head Start worked with my grandparents and helped them foster the confidence they needed to help me learn at home. The amazing thing about Head Start is they know that whole success includes the family.

Those beliefs and values that helped form this program still exist today, and I am so fortunate to be one of the many Head Start graduates who have continued to grow from the seeds that this program planted over 45 years ago. Head Start knows that they can offer children an opportunity that many may never receive in their lifetime. Through the commitment of the program and the dedication of the staff, they help devise plans that can hopefully move children toward their own levels of success.

Head Start didn't judge me or base their caring on where I came from. But what they did see was where I could go. Without Head Start, I'm not sure where my life would be right now. I am so glad that this program believed in me, because they taught me to believe in myself. I am Kimberly Johnson and I am Head Start.

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