

## How Head Start Has Changed

[Title]

Female Speaker 1: Some of the differences that I noticed was that they refer to the family engagement piece -- we call it that now-- but more parent involvement. And so, I think in our program, we've done a lot of work around engaging parents and not just coming in and volunteering in the classrooms, but what can you do at home? We've also engaged our families in family literacy nights, where they're able to get materials and books, and how do you work with your children at home, and how do you read to them at home, and how do you ask intentional questions? And so that's been a really big piece and it does spill over into our volunteerism in the classroom.

One of the other things that I saw, too, as far as parent involvement is, really, how do you engage Early Head Start? I didn't really see a lot of that, but I think Early Head Start has grown over the years, and not just in the center-based setting but in a home-based setting. Within my program we have both. And in the home-based setting, we work a lot with pregnant moms. And so getting them to understand the importance of prenatal care and how they can prepare for their babies when they come in, and then, how does that tie into the literacy and the learning that the children are going to have once they come into the center-based setting. And so, I think it's really, really important to meet the parents where they are, whether that's in Head Start or Early Head Start, and help them understand that they are their child's first teacher, and that starts before they actually get here.

Female Speaker 2: Another thing I heard was around handicapped children. And so we do see that change where there's different terminology now and a different way -- certainly, the conclusion was important and we saw that in the video -- how does it look in your program?

Female Speaker 3: Well, inclusion is something that happens every day. And when we do our written plans and when we design our program, we think of inclusion. And we think of how can we set up our classrooms and the resources and materials that we provide for our children and the families. For example, one of the things that we're doing in our agency, in Riverside County Office of Education, we collaborate with the Special Education Department and we host an annual -- it's called Fiesta Educativa, and it's an educational focus, where we bring families that have children with special needs.

And the conference is focused on them and their needs. And so they feel part of a community and they feel that they can come together with other families and talk about special needs. And all the workshops are focused on different areas that the families deal with every day. So, I didn't see that in the film, but we're doing a lot of things differently now.

Female Speaker 4: Something that I noticed in the video is something that has remained the same over all these years that Head Start's been in existence is the importance of helping families understand their self-worth, and respecting each individual, which I think is one of Head Start's core values. Maybe, not in so many words, but I think that idea is the same. And something that our program does is -- the video also mentioned about employment opportunities for parents, and something that we've been really successful in. In fact, about 30 percent of our employment base -- either former or current Head Start parents, and I'm not sure that that's any different from most programs across the country.

But we developed a parent substitute aid program, where parents who are interested in becoming short-term substitutes day-to-day, on an as-needed daily basis, can fill in for either teachers or assistant teachers. They go through a six-week training program, which includes on-the-job volunteerism, classroom preparation, kind of like a mini college course in child development and classroom practices. And they also get to brush up on interviewing skills and resume writing. And it's just really has turned into a great thing that helps parents really feel valued. They're seen as a member of our staff. And that's extremely empowering.

Female Speaker 2: The video showed a lot of urban settings. So, I wondered how your programs look and do they look different than the video?

Female Speaker 4: Most of our county is actually fairly rural. We struggle to keep bus routes under an hour. I'll just be honest about that. And, you know, the needs of each community -- we're expected to treat each community differently, and certainly there's a difference in how you need to address the rural population as opposed to urban.

Female Speaker 3: In our county, we have a mixture of urban setting, rural setting. We have areas where we have migrant families also that reside in the area. So, it's a mixture of things. It's not just the urban setting, and that's something that we differ now. Such a large county, that it's just a wide variety of settings.