



 COMMENTARY EARLY EDUCATION

## New Focus on Diversity in Head Start

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Today the Department of Health and Human Services released [proposed changes to its Head Start Performance Standards](#) that for the first time encourage socioeconomic integration in Head Start classrooms. The summary of the proposed rules highlights several several changes that are designed:

Under the new rules, Head Start programs are explicitly allowed to enroll over-income families (who would pay a fee to attend), and programs are required to consider whether socioeconomically diverse enrollment would be appropriate for their program as part of their planning process.

This is exciting news, with the potential to strengthen outcomes for Head Start children.

Preschool classroom diversity is related to program quality. As a [report](#) released this April by The Century Foundation and the [Poverty & Race Research Action Council](#) explains:

The idea that Head Start would be a stronger program by enrolling children of different economic backgrounds is not a new one. As I explained in a recent [blog post](#),

So far, this vision for an integrated Head Start has not been realized, but the proposed rules published today are an important step in that direction.