

**STATE SCHOOLS CHIEF JACK O'CONNELL ON REAUTHORIZATION OF
FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM**



SACRAMENTO - State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell commented today on the reauthorization of the federal Head Start program that was signed into law by President Bush following a bipartisan agreement in Congress. The program is designed to provide high-quality early education and developmental services to low-income children aged birth to entry into elementary school.

"We are happy about the reauthorization and that Congress had come to a strong bipartisan agreement to reauthorize Head Start after four years of debate," said O'Connell. "Research shows the first five years of children's lives and early experiences have a profound influence on their cognitive development, making reauthorization of this program critical to their future academic success. As California continues to explore how to make quality preschool available to all children, Head Start remains an important partner and part of the answer to improving education for all."

The Improving Head Start Act of 2007 commits funds to serve up to 125,000 more children over the next five years. Educational aspects, services, and resources will also be upgraded. Head Start began as a federal program in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" campaign. The program was reauthorized many times since then, but had expired in 2003 until today's reauthorization.

Head Start is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Before the reauthorization, the program was funded at more than \$6.8 billion and served more than 909,000 low-income children and families nationwide. The program is child-centered, family-focused, comprehensive, and community-based. Head Start services are designed to address developmental goals for children, employment and self-sufficiency goals for adults, and support for parents in their work and child-caring roles.

Head Start is a direct federal-to-local program administered by more than 1,600 locally based public or private organizations, called "grantees," across the country. Because of this type of funding, Head Start programs work with Collaboration Offices at the state level.

California's Head Start program is the largest in the nation. In 2006, more than 106,000 California children were served by Head Start with a program budget of more than \$822 million. California's Head Start programs are administered through a system of grantees and delegate agencies. The majority of these agencies also have contracts with the California Department of Education to administer general child care and/or state preschool programs. Many of the programs are located at the same site.