

## December Vlog

Dr. Deborah Bergeron: Happy December, Head Start community. In light of the holidays, this month's vlog is going to be dedicated to celebration and gift giving. So, let's get started.

Let's start with our celebrations. Every month, I start with a love note. This month, we're going to have two in light of celebrations. The first one is going to go out to Mark Lackey from CCS Early Learning in Wasilla, Alaska. I had the absolute honor of visiting CCS back in October. And I really want to highlight Mark's ability to reach out to the community and create an incredible network of partnerships for his organization, and his children, and families. I had the opportunity to meet with every single one of his partnerships. And there must have been 20 folks around the table, got to talk to each one of them, and, and for his efforts and his ability to create these incredible relationships with the community, he has managed to get support from every corner of a possible resource that could exist. And for that CCS is that much stronger. And of course, the real recipient are the children in his program and their families. So, way to go, Mark. I hope everyone else out there is looking to see how the community can come together to make their Head Start programs stronger. That's really what we're all about.

My second celebration is going to be a shout-out to the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency. And as you know, in October, we did Bring Your Principal to Head Start Month, and I got lots of great pictures. We did the #leadersandschoolreadiness on twitter and on Facebook. And we saw a lot of really great things happening. But Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency, 29 principals visited 22 of their classrooms. They really took this to heart. And I got to see pictures and a great video with every single one of these school leaders, sitting on a floor, reading to Head Start children. And all I could think of with every single picture is, "That's another relationship. That's another relationship." And the real reason for this campaign is because it's these relationships that are going to strengthen the Head Start program and really benefit the children who are sitting around reading with those principals. When they show up to that elementary school, they won't be strangers. And more talking between teachers at the, at the elementary school and within the Head Start program is just going to result in a greater experience for those children. So, way to go Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency for really taking this campaign and, and running with it. We do want you to know, we don't really think there's a Bring Your Principal to Head Start Month. We really should be doing this all the time. So, don't let the fact that it's December scare you. Invite those -- Get out and invite those principals into your classrooms, and those superintendents. Let them meet your children and your teachers, and really have a good appreciation for what you're doing.

Alright. Those are our celebrations, so let's move on. Next, we have a little gift-giving to do. And of course, I'll be giving a gift to you. So, I'm going to start by presenting my package, which is in fact wrapped in a gift that was given to me. This is a weave -- a woven box given to me by Jan Lin, Region IX. Thank you, Jan. Alright. We're going to open our box and see what's in it. What do you we have as our holiday gift?

Paper. What is on this piece of paper? I am giving to you the gift of permission. Alright. Now, let me explain this to you. I'm about seven months into this work. And of course, I learn something new, and those are starting to take shape, and I'm really getting a sense of things. And one of the things I've noticed as I've talked to people who aren't concerned about anything. Doesn't matter what the topic is, is there's this, almost this sense of fear sometimes that exist in Head Start. And I'm sure that it's related to the fact that we're a federal program, and we have lots of regulations, and rules, and things you have to do. And I understand that. But I want to also make sure that our structure isn't getting in the way of you being successful with children.

Let me tell you a story. In one of my very first teaching jobs in Fairfax County Public Schools here in Northern Virginia. And if you're not familiar Fairfax County, it is a huge school system. One of the largest in the nation. And at the time, the superintendent was Bud Spillane. He's a pretty well-known superintendent. And it was a big school system. I never met him face to face. But every year he would get on a closed-captioned TV screen. That dates it for you. And he would message out to teachers, and then, this probably wasn't that unusual for a superintendent to do. But he had a way of reaching teachers that I think was different. And I say that only because about 30 years later, I still remember this. And I only worked for Fairfax County for three years. So.

His message to teachers was permission. Fairfax County, like the federal government, is a big bureaucracy. It's big. It has to have structure in place, or it couldn't run. But within that structure, Bud Tulane told his teachers to think big and take risks. And, and do what you know is best for kids. And it all worked out. And I really felt like that message changed me as a teacher and as an educator, and I appreciated it very much. He wasn't telling me go out, break the rules, don't worry about it. That, that wasn't the message. The message was within the framework that we give you, you have a lot of room to be creative, and thoughtful, and energetic. And don't be afraid to do that. And if you're nervous about a decision, look into it if you need to. So that's my message to you. My gift to you for the holidays is permission. It's permission to think big. It's permission to take a risk. It's permission to think outside the box of what you've been doing year after year because somehow you think that's the way it should be done. What can you do to really raise your program to the next level outside of what you typically thought needs to be done with Head Start? It's within that creative thinking that, that child-oriented, kid-oriented thinking that great things happen.

So, I hope you'll take this gift to heart, and, and I would caveat to say if you want to do something, or if you feel that you're being held back because of regulation, reach out to your program specialist and talk to them. And if you feel like you're just hitting a brick wall time, after time, after time, my gift to you is to contact me if you need to. I am happy to talk to anybody about issues they think they're having, they're holding them back. My goal is to give you space to grow, to do the very best you can be. And I know in order to do that for children, we are in the kid-growth business, the child-growing business. You don't do that in a box. You have to do that in a space that, that's malleable and, and creative, and thoughtful. So, I hope that something will take to heart, and really see that as a gift for this holiday season.

So, as we close out, I'd like to share with you -- if you didn't know already -- and I thought this month I would share something I've mentioned before, but I really highlight this time with my experience from, from being a high school administrator. You know, I want you to go out there and find a high school that's closest to your building, and call that principal, or guidance counselor, or front office person. Doesn't matter. And ask them for the names of all of the sponsors or clubs that require community service. Some that come to mind are National Honor Society, Beta Club, Key Club, sometimes schools just for graduation requirements are now requirement -- requiring service hours. I want you to connect with those high schools and bring those teenagers into your organization as it is appropriate to do so, so they can volunteer, and learn about Head Start, and learn about what you're doing, grow from that experience. And also, you benefit from getting teenagers involved, as well. There's a lot of work that teenagers can do to give back. They often are the very best when they're being asked to be responsible. And, you know, a lot of Head Start organizations are stretched and they need help with little things. These are things teenagers might be able to do to help you out.

So, I encourage you to look into that. Find out which high schools are close by. Kids can easily get to your organization. There may be some really cool things you can do with your local high schools, particularly as it relates to service hours, and get some of the cream of the crop in your building, and give them some really good experiences.

So, that's my holiday vlog, December 2018. We're all ready for 2019, which is just around the corner. I wish you the very healthiest, and happiest, and restful holiday. I hope you get to spend time with families and friends, and relax, and reflect, and do all the wonderful things that the holidays allow us to do.

Happy holidays, and Happy New Year to everyone at Head Start.

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