

Resetting for the Coming Year

Dr. Bergeron: Happy summer, Head Start! Can't believe summer is already here. So, this is gonna be our summer vlog. And I've got lots of information for you. I hope your summer is off to a great start. We, of course, want to start with our love note. We have a special love note this vlog.

I am going to shout out Ms. Brenda Alvarez-Laguna. She is from RMCA Head Start in Florida. And she was this year's valedictorian at Mulberry Senior High School. So, 12 years ago, 13, 14 years ago, she was an RMCA Head Start child and last week, two weeks ago, she was the valedictorian and gave her speech. And I got to watch it on video and it was wonderful. So, a big shout out to RMCA for all the hard work they did to lay that foundation. And that's what we do every day here at Head Start.

So, let's get started. So, our topic this time around is just summer. Time to reset. And so, I wanted to go through a bunch of things with you. What—what is it like in the summer to reset? I used to always kind of giggle when I was teaching and when I was a principal, and people would see me in the summer and say, "Oh, you get two months off." And you never do. You're always getting ready for the next year. Whatever—Whether you're a teacher, or an administrator, a director, whatever you're always thinking ahead: "What do I need to get ready?" So, I know that's where you guys are. So, let's talk about some things.

I've got some priorities that I want to just highlight for you and a couple of "just mentions." Of course, it's a great time in the summer to re-energize staff. Whether you send out an article, or a good book, or something—a video to think about. It's always good to—to have a touchpoint during the summer with your staff. Get them to thinking about maybe a new priority, or—something you that really want to focus on for the upcoming school year.

And I thought it would be fun on Twitter to share some of these things. So, let's use the hashtag—hashtag "HSMotivators." So, if you've got some really fun ideas about how to motivate your staff over the summer or things you're doing you're doing for pre-service. Share them. it's really fun to network and share those things and like to steal ideas from each other.

Also, don't forget to include your parents in this process. Get them excited about a new school year. Energize your—your parents, and get them to rally around the idea of the newness of the new school year which summer kind of preps us for. So, those are just a couple of pointers.

Now, priorities that seem to be rising to the top here that I just want to highlight is the home at Head Start campaign which we started in January. That is not something that really ever ends. We'll continue to do it. We encourage you to share your stories with us. Continue to train your staff on the modules that are on ECLKC. Particularly as you bring new staff on for the new school year, make sure that's part of your pre-service.

A focus on homeless children has got to be something that we maintain here at Head Start. They really are the population we should be serving. Those families need us the most. They are often the most difficult to find. And certainly can be challenging to keep because of the

transient nature of their lives but it's our duty to do that. So, please continue to focus on the homeless population.

And again, share out with me on Twitter, or email, or however you chose to, what you're doing so that I can highlight it, know about it, visit you if I'm in town. Those are things I really do like to be connected to.

Also, leadership—something we're working really hard on here at the Office of Head Start. We've had a couple of meetings. We've got a work group working on the focus on leadership at the site level. So, we continue to work on that. Stay tuned for more information.

In the meantime, what you could be doing is really thinking about what leadership looks like at—at your sites. And my sort of mantra around this is that there needs to be a single person who owns all of that. You can have folks who are in charge of specific topics and—or siloed areas, but there should be a single leader in each location who is responsible for everything that goes on there. So, that's something you're gonna hear more about as the school year comes around this year. And, of course, the connections with public schools is really my big push.

And I'm filming this prior, but by the time you get this, we will have had our second meeting with the public school systems. We did the first one last July. This one is the end of June. And it's bigger and better. Because what we've done is brought 12 school systems together along with their feeder Head Starts and we're having them develop collaboration plans for the 2019–2020 school year. And we're going to highlight these and feature them for everybody in the field, to try support your efforts to make good connections to your public schools. Some of you already have really great relationships. Maybe you can take it to the next level.

And let me give you—highlight the things I think are the really important levers we should be working on. The first one is universal enrollment. I think it's really important. We've got some pocketed areas throughout the country who have done this. They have come up with a single enrollment system for all of early ed in a community. At the very least, we'd like to see Head Start and the school system participating in a single enrollment stream.

What we see when we do that is an increase in enrollment. So, a reduction in empty seats, and a better alignment with what families need and the services that they're getting. If families are going all over, trying to fill out different applications, not sure where they're going to end up, it's a much less organized process. And they often end up in a program maybe that isn't suiting their needs, as well as Head Start might. So, working together with your school systems in partnership to do that enrollment, I think is really, really important. If you're already doing that, please share with me. Email me. Let me know that you've got a universal enrollment system in your community. I'm trying to get around to see as many of those as I can. There aren't many. But there are a few and they're going a great job.

The second thing is data sharing—a big push on my end to get Head Start children as soon as they're enrolled to have whatever that you call the state testing identifier in your state. Every state has an ID number that kids get when they enroll in the school system. I believe that we should be working our systems, integrating our systems so that children get that when they become a Head Start child. That's still a government program.

And we need to know what work we're doing that works really well and where we need to grow. And we can't know that if we're not following those children. And we want to know not only how they're doing in third grade, but how many of them become valedictorians, like our friend in Florida did just a month ago. So, it's really important that we—that we work on that data sharing piece. To start, maybe all you're doing is working with your school system So, that you share data and you might be doing it manually. At least it's a start. So, do what you can. Again, let me know.

The third thing is collaborative professional development. I'm a really strong believe that when teachers train together, their relationships that they build during that process—those are relationships that are just so valuable. So, I would encourage you, as Head Start folks, to invite Kindergarten and first grade teachers, maybe even the state pre-K teachers, like pre-K to first grade to any training you're doing that you think might be relevant to their—to what they need. And then hopefully, you'll start to see the schools loop you in to their trainings. It certainly would be good for your teachers to be training in the reading method that they're using in the pre-K, K-1 school that—that—to—to which—to where your children will be going because you can better prepare them if you know where they're going to end up. So, that collaborative training, the partnership in terms of professional development throughout the school year to me is a really big lever.

And then finally, what I'd love to see is some of you reaching out to your schools to see if you can stretch the comprehensive services beyond Head Start. Could you create a partnership—I'm seeing this in a couple of very unique school systems who are really going out on the edge, and I'm really excited about it—I would love to see the public schools embrace the comprehensive services that Head Start provides. I think it's this piece—I call it the secret sauce—and I think that really they could use up through twelfth grade, but we'll start with maybe with pre-K through third grade.

So, maybe through partnerships, maybe through a special grant. Maybe there's some way that you can share—how you—it's not just a wraparound service. We kind of use that phrase generically. What Head Start does is embedded support, and it isn't just having access to something, it's inviting parents into the process and making them part of the entire school process, from learning to read to socialization, to health—everything. And if we can influence the public schools in that way and try to show how this creates an opportunity for more success in terms of student achievement—which I believe—I think it'd be really cool. So, that's kind of—that's a big one. But if you think you want to embark on that let me know. I'd love to come see.

So, those are my four big levers. But I'm sure there are lots of other ways that you are collaborating with the K-12 system. And—and I encourage you to continue to do that. And I'll say it again: Share. Share. Share. I want to know. I don't know unless you tell me.

And in—that's a great segway into my "If You Didn't Already Know It." If you didn't already know it, I'm on Twitter. You probably do because I talk about it all the time. And in May, I surpassed my 1,000 follower mark. I'm looking for 5,000 followers by the time school starts. Can we do that? I don't know. That's a big ask. Let me tell you how it's gonna happen. It's not gonna happen just by having all of our Head Start programs follow me. What I want to see is a

true integrated social network here with this account, and that includes all of your staff and all of your parents who are parent leaders and involved and want to be part of this network. It also, includes your board. It includes any of your program partners. So, if you're braided funding through different organizations. We need to get all together so that we can share with the community what we do outside of our own walls. We're great about sharing within our circles. But we need to get outside and let folks know what Head Start does.

Public schools—you want to follow all of your public schools and the system itself, and see if you can encourage them to follow you, as well. So, if we can get networked in that way—I think 5,000 followers should be pretty easy. So, please if you don't have Twitter yet, create an account. Encourage your programs, your—depending on how you're structured. We need every layer there. So, that we have true integration in terms of our communication.

I want to do some shout outs here. Alright. I've got Penquist—Penquist Cap. They're following me—way to go. Carrie Reynolds, in El Dorado, Arizona, she's the social media coordinator for Early Head Start and Head Start. Love to see your posts. Kristy Lewis from Kentucky. She's the director of Paducah Head Start Preschool. Thank you, very much for following. Christina LaChance, director in—director of Early Childhood and Family Initiatives from New Hampshire. Love seeing what you're posting. And the ECPPS Family and Community Center from North Carolina. Glad to have you on board. So, we've got—they're growing every day. So, get out there. Let's get connected. And let the world know what Head Start is doing. Because remember Head Start is access to the American dream. Go make dreams happen.