

## Starting the Program Year Strong

Dr. Deborah Bergeron: Hello, Head Start. It is my favorite time of year: back to school. We get to start a new school year. It's the most exciting time. Lots of potential in the air. So, we're going to talk a little bit about back to school today.

Let's start with our love note though. I've got a good one. Pro Action of Steuben and Yates County in New York, has done some incredible collaboration with their LEA. They have worked together to create a universal enrollment system, birth to 5, all of the programs going into a single application. And through that process they actually work together to figure out where the family and child would best be served.

For example, if a family really needs child care, Head Start might be a better answer, because they've got extended care; it's easily accessible. If a child has a severe disability that the LEA might be better capable of serving on a day-to-day basis, they might recommend that the child go to the LEA. And then, of course, ultimately, they sit down with a parent; they go through all the options and it's ultimately the parent's decision.

But the bottom line is this process has become a streamlined, truly collaborative process and what has occurred as a result is both now have a waiting list. Whereas before they both had open seats.

So, I have been saying over and over that I really believe cooperation with the school system in terms of universal enrollment is the way to go. And I'm gonna keep saying it. And I'll hold up these people as examples of how wonderful that's working. And just think if you're cooperating at the get-go when a parent is enrolling imagine all the other things that will come out that relationship that you built during that process. So, way to go Pro Action of Steuben and Yates County in New York!

Alright, back to school is our topic today. And what I thought I would do is touch on some K-12 collaborate efforts that we're making--kind of give you an update; remind you of some resources that you want to know are out there, and just kinda have a fun back-to-school celebration here.

So, let's start off by just talking about ECLKC and how much, how many valuable resources there are on ECLKC, for you to use with your teachers, for your teachers to use directly if you want, or for your parents to use--all of your staff. There is so information. In fact, I recently did a webinar focusing on instruction, and as we were talking about all the resources it's almost like sometimes there are so many resources, folks don't even bother going.

But I highly encourage you to check out ECKLC. Look for--there are 15-minute mini-lessons and lots of things you can tap into to really enrich your programming. A lot of folks really worked hard on all of that and it's something that I think that is under-utilized. So, I'm really gonna encourage you to turn over a new leaf.

If you are not actively using ECKLC on a regular basis and start to do that. And, you know you might even find yourself saving some dollars, because there a lot of resources there that are free that you may be paying for. So, check it out. I'm going refer back to a little bit of that in a minute.

And speaking of instruction: you may or may not know that I did something kind of different this year. And asked to identify all the programs that are going to actually have class monitoring. We pulled those folks together and offered a very specific webinar around instruction, the instruction demand in class. Specifically, looking at how to do a better job asking questions, higher order thinking, those kinds of things. And we offered the webinar in August; we had a great showing. Now, the webinar was recorded. It is on the ECLKC. And I'll give you the link here. Anybody can go access it. It's valuable for anyone.

But what we're trying to do is to see if we take folks who we know are going to be monitored do some focus professional development, can we really support better instruction in the classroom and if we can do that--ultimately, that's our goal. At the end of the day, good instruction is the key to just about everything. If we have solid instruction in the classroom, you're going to see incidents of behavior decrease, the climate in your building is going to be much more positive.

You know I talked last month about ARFF, the Achievement, Respect, Freedom and Fun that I believe in. And that achievement piece, that instructional practice goes with that achievement. And when teachers are successful their energy is higher, they're more positive and it's almost something that gets exponentially better. That success has to be there. We can't just make people feel good, we have to actually be doing good work that we actually know is working and when that's happening, we really get empowered.

So, I highly encourage you, if you haven't already seen the webinar to check it out. What we basically did is took ECLKC resources around instruction, particularly concept development, and we bundled them, to try to make it easier for you to actually use them. So, hopefully you're going to find that's the case. Give us some feedback. We want to be here to make sure that you're getting what you need, so I'd appreciate that. So, let's see if we can boost our instructional practices, here, a real focus on that.

And then, the other piece that I wanted to just touch on is #HomeAtHeadStart is still under way. What was meant to be just a short campaign, we are probably going to keep it going as long as we can. Because we found that a focus on enrolling and outreach to homeless community was something that really paid off. We saw more folks getting trained on working with homeless families. And we definitely saw an increase in the enrollment in homeless families. And we think this is our job. This is the population that needs us the most. And so, I really encourage you to continue that effort.

If you were doing something cutting edge and creative last year to really delve into this work, I encourage you to take it up a notch. If you haven't really thought about what you can do very intentionally around reaching out to the homeless community, I encourage you, again, to go to ECLKC. I'll provide some resources here in this vlog. There's a lot of information there that will help you.

And certainly, partnership is really the answer. Creating relationships throughout your community with other organizations and really plugging in. And as I said last year, I think the Policy Council, your parents are key in this process. You know we did that special training just for them. And I plan to do more of that this year. But I think that it's really important to give them this piece; let them own it; they know families in the community. They're the ones with

their eyes to the ground, and can really give you that liaison that link to that community. So, I encourage you to continue this work, and we'll keep tabs on it and I'll report back out to you.

And speaking of K-12, of course, I'm continuing to try to increase that work and really that reach to the LEA, to the public school community. And it isn't just about transitions; it's not just about having a visit to the Kindergarten classroom, or some of the things that we do.

Transitional activities are really important. But what I'm talking about is a lot deeper. And it's creating very long lasting deep relationships with the school systems. And you probably already know that in the summer, we did a--we were in the midst of a collaboration project.

We brought 13 Head Starts and there are 13 school systems to Arizona. And we worked on some plans for the 19-20 school year. And some of the things you can expect to see: Number 1: Some of these folks are gonna be out demonstrating what they're doing. In fact, in October, we're gonna have our very first group from Ohio travelling with me to go present their plan to CCSSO which is the Council of Chief State School Officers. So, these are folks who have direct impact on the public schools at the state level. So, that's pretty exciting to have Head Start to be held up, a specific program on the ground we're holding them up as an example. We hope to do more of this throughout the school year.

And then again in February AASA, the Superintendents Association will be having their annual conference. And we're going to bring two or three of these folks who have really seen success to that group, so we can demonstrate how this works. If you are doing some really good work with your local school system, please let me know. I want to know about it. I'd love to meet with you, see what you're doing. Again, hold up what's working, so that other folks can learn from that.

The other thing you can expect is we will be disseminating an infographic about Head Start to every school board in the country, through the National School Board Association. And there are 14,000 of them. And my hope is we are communicating with kind of a different angle of the school system. This is the body that makes policy and budget decisions in school systems. They don't usually have that really deep knowledge of every little thing that's going on in a school system. They work at a higher level.

So, a lot of folks might have Head Starts in their school system and not really be sure of how that fits in. So, I think educating the school boards about what Head Start does. How Head Start can be a monetary benefit to a school system is something that I really want them to understand. So, we're going to start with sort of an infographic, maybe do some speaking at some of their meetings. So, be aware of that.

And as I've said before, I encourage you to go to school board meetings. There's public comment. You can sign up. Make sure you're organized and planned. Practice your speech. They're timed. And if you go over, they'll cut you off. So, make sure that you're very well prepared that you can go to a school board, hold your program up as an example, brag about the things that you've been doing, and make sure the school board is aware you are there. and that you are preparing children for their school system. I think that's really important.

And then, the other thing is that through the wonderful work of DTL, they have created a video that sort of models what we've been talking about in terms of relationships with school

systems. And I'm providing that link to you here. I encourage you to use it in whatever capacity makes sense for your organization. It is a wonderful overview of how Head Start can work with school systems. There are great clips of kids in there and teachers and principals and Head Start directors. It just shows everything and it's a great piece. So, if you've got an opportunity to do something in conjunction with a school system and you can use this as a springboard; it's yours to use. Please use it.

I'm going to use it as I travel. And we want to make it available to everybody, so that we can get it out there. And hopefully give ourselves a little boost, in terms of just again bringing that relationship between Head Start and the school system together. So, pretty excited.

I was thinking even like maybe a PTA meeting. Wouldn't it be fun to go to a PTA meeting and maybe get 10 minutes of their meeting time, show the video, talk about your Head Start and start to kind of make relationships in that way. There are a lot of opportunities. And you guys are so creative, I'm sure you'll come up with more.

So, that's the info for this vlog. And if you didn't already know it: October is "Head Start Awareness Month" and "National Elementary Principals Month." Now, last year, we kind of quickly put together "Bring Your Principals to Head Start Month" in October to kind of bring both of those things together. This year we're going to do it again. Only now we have some time to plan and I'm excited about that. NAESP, the National Association of Elementary School Principals is on board; they're ready to go promote it. And, of course, we are too.

And the great news is this year I have Twitter, Yay! So, what you can do is to start dropping the seeds in your school system with your principals, that you'd like them to plan to come in in October. Maybe, get that date set now. It's nice to do those things ahead of time. And decide what you want to do. Last year, we had lots of principals reading to kids, touring buildings, participating maybe in an activity or whatever. But it's a great opportunity for your principal to be in your space. And see your children, your classrooms, meet your teachers and see your program. Build those relationships on your territory. Take pictures, video, whatever you can do. And then let's get some stuff on Twitter and start sharing that out, so that we can really expose this effort to create these relationships and strengthen what we're doing. So, I'm really looking forward to that. And I'm dropping that seed now in September, so you'll start making those plans.

So, that's it for now. I hope--I know by the time you're seeing this you've already started school. So, I hope it was the best first day ever. First day of school is the best. I love it. And I'm looking forward to seeing lots of you this year. I'm already on the road. So, I'll have my guitar in-hand. We'll do some singing. And don't forget: Head Start is access to the American Dream. Go make dreams happen.