

Bring a Principal to Your Head Start Program

Dr. Bergeron: Happy October, Head Start. I can't believe I'm saying that. Fall is here. The beginning of the school year is well underway by now. And we've got some great October news in this month's vlog for you.

We're going to get started, of course, with our love note. And I've got a good one. So I want to send a love note out to a group of people. And I hope folks will share this beyond this video to those folks. Dr. Gill, who is a superintendent; Teresa Keck is a principal; the Head Start director is Katie Saukhausen; and the Policy chair is Teresa Lopez. And this is Henry Clay Elementary, just outside Richmond, Virginia. I had the pleasure of visiting there; I think it might have been the second day of school, which, you know, is always a little bit more stressful. But, wow, what an incredible visit. I even had the just wonderful experience of visiting a music classroom; The teacher's name, Mr. Horn and I played together for the children. He played the piano; I played the guitar; it was really awesome. And he is just doing wonderful things with those children around music.

The school overall is just so, the Head Start is just so integrated right into the school building and that's very much due to the superintendent who is a big proponent of early childhood. So, it was wonderful to visit a place where you could just feel the support and see how Head Start was integrated into the programming. And it was just great. So, I want to call them out. Love note out there to Henry Clay Elementary in Virginia.

Alright, this month we're going to talk about "Bring a Principal to Head Start Month." Where this is the second annual, "Bring a Principal to Head Start Month." We started this last year and got some amazing pictures of principals and superintendents and other folks in the school system coming into the Head Start center and reading to children and taking a tour. And we want to encourage more folks to do that this year.

I think in the year since we started that last year, which was really the launch of this concerted effort to connect with the public schools, we have made such incredible progress with public schools, from our national relationship with the AASA, the Association for Superintendents, NAESP, which is the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and NSBA, the National School Board Association. And then, CCSSO, which is the Association of State School Officers; so that might be your state superintendent or your chief of schools or whatever they're called in the state. All four of those associations have established some kind of relationship, pretty significant relationship, with Head Start. We hope we're starting to see that trickle down.

And then, of course, on the ground, what we've done is like "Bring a Principal to Head Start Month." And what that does is we're encouraging you to have every single one of your site directors, site leaders to reach out the receiving elementary school and that school system and invite those folks into the center, start creating that relationship or enrich the one that already is there.

And we want those pictures. And this year, unlike last year, we have Twitter! Woo! Hoo! Well, we have Twitter. But I have Twitter. And if you don't know, it's OHS_Director and if you're not following, follow that Twitter account. And then, hashtag LeadersInSchoolReadiness. Any of those school pictures hashtag LeadersInSchoolReadiness. We'll bring all of them to one space. And if you don't have Twitter, start an account. Everyone should have Twitter and we should all be connected. We want to see those pictures and really promote this online.

Make sure, if you're taking a picture and you're posting it on Twitter to show that you've brought a principle in, make sure to tag the school system that you're including, so that their community can see Head Start active. And tag the other organizations in the community that need to see that Head Start is connected to the schools. This is how we're going to get this message out there and some highlighted things that we want to be promoting between Head Start in the schools.

I've got four biggies; one is data sharing; two is shared professional development. Three is aligning curriculum making sure that what you're teaching in terms of reading, and math, and even social emotional is aligned and moves up into the elementary school. That's what's good for kids. It's what's good for teachers.

We need to get more of that going and then coordinated enrollment is the biggie and I know that that's a heavy-lift and it's not something you're going to control per se, but maybe you could influence, in terms of making sure that we are getting some kind of coordination around enrollment, so that Head Start eligible families know what Head Start can do and that you can work with the school system to make sure every seat is filled and as many children are getting services as possible.

And what can you do this month to better those relationships: inviting folks in, having an event, going to the elementary school and meeting with folks there, going to a school board meeting, maybe announcing this event at a school board meeting and really promoting Head Start in the community and that positive relationship that we hope you're forming with the school system.

Alrighty, and a couple of monthly reminders. So, we've got the Leaders and School Readiness hashtag, which goes right along with "Bring Your Principal to Head Start Month," but we also have "Home at Head Start," which we are continuing. That's hashtag Home at Head Start anything around homelessness and ensuring that we are reaching those children and their families as they are our most vulnerable children and we want to make sure that they know that they have a home at Head Start.

And now if you didn't know already, I want to show you this and I think I'll provide you a link too. But I just wanted to make sure you knew this existed. I fell upon this and thought gosh that's just a great resource. If you are an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and you haven't checked this out, or if you have maybe years ago and you haven't reminded yourself and your staff. I would pull this back out and do a really great review.

It's got some great tips in it on how to enrich and create good relationships, and alignment and all of those things kind of a lot of the things we're talking about with public schools except with your child care that is your partner in that process, which is even more important since you're actually working together on a regular basis.

So, check out that resource, if you didn't know already; remind yourself if you did. And then remember: Head Start is access to the American dream; go make dreams happen.