

## May 2019 Vlog

Dr. Deborah Bergeron: Hello, Head Start community. I cannot believe it but it is May which means the end of the school year is in front of us. I'm sure all of you are so busy. I am excited to bring you my May vlog today.

We've got a lot of stuff to talk about but of course first we will start with a love note. I had so many. And so, I picked this one kind of randomly. I've read a lot of really good monitoring reports lately and so many creative ideas that – that you all have that you implement that really help people. But the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians had issues with dental care, and they knew that their families and their children were really struggling with oral health and everything around it. So, they hired a registered dental hygienist, and they partnered with Grand Ronde Dental Clinic and started doing a lot of rescreening and preventative care. And as a result of a year of very intensive work in this area and partnering, of course, with this dental office, they had a decrease of dental referrals from 13 percent to only 4 percent. And the dental office actually did some metrics and – and came up with a savings of about \$10,000 per referral that they – that they didn't make. So, that's a pretty significant monetary savings. Of course the biggest savings comes with having healthy teeth because we know this can be a really major health issue and often ignored. So, we really appreciate the work that they did. Way to go.

All right, so I don't have a single topic today. This is going to be a little bit of a hodgepodge because I had so many things I wanted to talk about. So, first of all I have to do a Home At Head Start update because you guys have done an incredible job reaching out to homeless families, training your staff using the ECLKC modules which has just been so much fun to see. And you know, when I've seen people when I've been out and about, not only are you completing the training but people will say to me, "I thought I knew everything" and that training really helped me." So, it's nice to know we didn't just check a box, that you actually got something out of it. And way to go showing the video to your Policy Councils. I heard from parents; I saw pictures. And it was really fun to see Policy Council meeting on a particular topic. I felt like I was with you which I think is – is just a good feeling to me. And it sounds like it really had a good impact on folks. And I hope that what you see from this is an empowerment of our parents to get out in the community and be that – that voice for homeless families, folks who are struggling, and get them to connect with you at Head Start. So, I'm looking forward to that.

And we're continuing to receive a lot of pictures from folks who are training. Of course, it's not too late if you didn't do it yet. Go ahead, get your staff, get everybody trained on those eight modules and send us a picture. I'm happy to look at them and to have them. I actually hang pictures around my office. So, those will be printed and hanging. And also just a reminder that ACF as a whole is holding homeless forums in every region. I had the good fortune of going up to Boston and attending that forum and they've been really helpful. So, keep your eye out in your region. And if you have a forum close by or regardless hopefully you can reach out and get some information as to what results. A lot of people coming together around how to really support the homeless population.

And I also got to attend Family Promise, their annual conference, which was a pleasure. I've talked a lot about Family Promise primarily because they are just a natural partner. Everyone should know if you have a Family Promise affiliate in your vicinity and you should connect with them. They provide emergency housing to homeless families, they do a lot with them while they're in their care. And certainly, partnering with Head Start is a natural. If there's a young child in the family they can reach out, get the child enrolled. I also encouraged them to go to the ECLKC – ECLKC, and use our lessons, and tap into some of the professional development that we have because, you know, they aren't creating formal preschool environments but certainly if you have children around you you want to be able to – to support them. And maybe that's another way you could partner with your Family – local Family Promise.

But it was a great conference. Super caring population of people and really networking with the community.

So, I think they're a natural partner. I encourage you to reach out. And then, of course, I got to see Sesame Street again. They – Sesame Street was at Family Promise, and Kama was there, and we got to connect and talk about Lily. And so, I just want to remind you about Sesame Street in communities, and if you're looking for some fun resources around homelessness – or really many topics – but homelessness in this case, particularly, I think, for your parents and your families, you might check that out if you haven't done so already. So, way to go on really focusing on this topic and seeing what we can do to tackle it. It is not an effort that ever ends but let's just remember that these are the families, these are the children that Head Start is really meant to serve so keep them in the forefront.

The next thing I want to talk – going to pivot topics, and touch on the public school connection because you know I've been working really hard on that. And I really wanted to update you with what's going on. So, we've got some super exciting things happening.

First of all, I've been very involved with AASA, which is the National Association for Superintendents. So, they have virtually all of the superintendents in the country, and there are about 14,000 school systems in the U.S, so a pretty good network. And I've been attending some of their meetings on early childhood and letting them know about Head Start. And we came up with a wonderful event that we're going to be holding in June. We are asking school systems to apply. We'll be selecting 10 to 12 school systems who are going to create teams, including the superintendent. We're going to grab the Head Start in the community and bring all of you together for a day of work and come up with a '19 '20 – 2019, 2020 school year plan for improving the connection between Head Start and the public school system. And I couldn't be more excited because this is going to be kinda like a demonstration project. We're going to have them go back, implement their plan, then come back in the Spring, tell us how it went. And so, we're kind of planting these seeds throughout the country of – of what works. And then hopefully, they can be used as – as exemplars and support.

So, I'm very excited about that. And I've been doing a lot of messaging to these folks. And what I've been telling them is the things that I see that would really make a difference are, number one, some kind of universal enrollment for early education so that parents aren't enrolling in five or six different programs. One application, and then you figure where they should go. And that way Head Start gets – gets the children who should be in Head Start, and they're not sitting over a state pre-K classroom whether – state pre-K has a waiting list, which makes no sense. So, if you're talking to your school system that's a huge priority for me.

The second one is sharing data. I think we have to get to a point where we are sharing data with the school systems so they know how our children are doing, they can find out how they're doing as they enter kindergarten, and they can – they can do some tracking ongoing. It's important for us to know what we're doing well and where we need to improve. And also, perhaps, aligning some of those assessments so that we know our children are ready. And then, collaborating around p – professional development. I've been talking a lot about this because I think this is a really great lever that we can use to create really good connections with the school systems.

So, if you're doing a training on conscious discipline, for example, call the school system and see if their kindergarten teachers want to come. So, that now you're training together on the same material. If they're doing a training on a reading program, or a math program, or whatever, and they have some extra space, maybe your teachers can go and train with the school system. Getting that communication to be a little bit more fluid, creating some alignment, and – and really just creating really good relationships with the people who are going to work with these children I think is so important. So, if

you're doing other things please share them with me. I want to hear what – what's going on in your community. If you've already seen really good examples of what I'm talking about, let me know. I have seen several throughout the country as I've been traveling which is very encouraging. But I want to get to a point where it's kind of the expected and not the exception. So, those are my two big topics for today.

But I actually saved my biggest topic for the "If you didn't already know it," section of my vlog. And so if you didn't already know I have my own Twitter! It has taken me three months but the director of the Office of Head Start now has her own Twitter account. And this is important to me. It might sound like not a big deal, but it is a big deal. We are going to start a social media push. And we're going to use Twitter to do it. So, my hope is to use my Twitter account to connect with you on a regular basis. I want to see what you're doing. I can't get on an airplane and go to every single center, but I can definitely connect with you. I want you to see what I'm doing. And, you know, that might just be drinking the – my cup of coffee on a train coming to work, or whatever. I'm going to share that with you. And it'll so – be in real time, so it will be more meaningful than – than the monthly vlog can really do. I found in my last experience in public schools that Twitter was a really great tool. We used it for a number of different things.

Number 1: Promoting my school. I used it to brag about my students and my teachers all the time. I would encourage you use – that you do the same.

Number 2: We used it to connect teachers throughout the school system on things.

Number 3: Teachers, once they were on, used it to connect with teachers really worldwide to share professional development ideas, fun ideas for the classroom. And it became kind of this virtual network of professional development daily, ongoing. And, of course, that's – that's what teachers really use Twitter for still. I'm still connected and I see it all the time. And we want your parents to start to buy into this, too, and create a Twitter account if it's just to follow you and to connect with other parents. I think this is another way that we can make sure that Head Start is out there and present. And we don't just want this to be a Head Start-only community, we want you to link with your community, your philanthropist, your other non-profits so that you can create a virtual presence and people know that you're there.

So, here we go, all right that's enough background. This is your job. I'm going to give you five steps that I want you to follow, and you're actually going to get an email about this, too. So hope – you may have already gotten the email by the time you see this vlog, but regardless here are your five steps.

Number 1: Your program needs a Twitter. Now, if you have a – if you're a large grantee I'm not, you know, you're large grantee might need a Twitter. But I'm talking about the Head Start needs it's own – it's own identity. And depending on how large you are, you may have several Head Start centers, and they might need their own Twitter accounts locally so that they can be their own voice. That's something you'll have to figure out. But the Head Start program needs an identity, so it needs a Twitter account. Once you have that established, if you don't already have one, sign up. It will not take you three months to get one, it will be easy. And then we need you to follow "OHS\_Director." I'll put that here in this vlog. I'm going to put all of these instructions in here. And that's following me. And then, you're also going follow "HeadStartgov." Which is following the Head Start office.

So, that'll give you access to more technical information. That'll be really helpful. But also, follow community members. Follow other Head Start programs in the area or nationwide, for that matter. Local receiving schools have Twitter. I guarantee it. You need to be following them. The school system, the – the principal might have his or her own account, the Kindergarten teachers. Anyway you can network is great. School board members – great to connect with school board members so they can see

what you're doing. Any – any professional education oriented, early ed, early care-oriented folks are who you want to be following. This is not a personal social account for you to post your week at the beach with your family. This is professional networking.

Number 3: You're going to get your parents onboard. This will be a heavy lift because I don't think parents are always on Twitter. I think that is less of a social media they use. But we're going to arm them with this way of connecting as a professional parent, as a – an advocate. Again, this is not social connection where, you know, you're sharing recipes, et cetera. You want to encourage that they are going to be the professional face. This is their advocate face that they're going to put on Twitter so that they can be connected, as well. Especially Policy Council. And as you get your folks on – onboard, you want to begin tweeting regularly. You probably need to tweet somewhere in the neighborhood of three to five times a week. Your page has to kind of be active or folks won't continue to follow you.

So, that's important. And it does take a little bit of effort. It'll take a little bit of remembering at first but once you get in the habit, it's not tough. And – and you have bragging rights to your own program, so now you can do that on a regular basis. Just remember, I know you know this but I'm going to say it anyway. Make sure you have photo releases for all those children that you might post pictures of, and as well that you have permission from your staff. You don't want to put pictures of anybody online that you don't have permission to do so. And be mindful of what you post. It should be professional, it should be positive, and that you don't like or retweet anything that you don't 100 percent support, and that your program can support. So, be mindful of that. You have to put a little bit of thought into it. And I think what you'll find is this is going to be a way for you to just network. It's one more way to promote what you're doing, to network, to share ideas. I get ideas all the time off of my professional Twitter just for doing things here at the office.

So, I encourage you to get this started. Now, here's my goal, my personal goal – that – that "OHS\_Director" account. I want 100,000 followers by August. Now, that's a very lofty goal I think. Except that we have 1,600 programs, 250,000 staff, and a million parents. Certainly in that mix somewhere I can get 100,000 followers.

Now, I'm just going to look at this really quickly. Let me see where I am. I just launched this last week. So, where are we. 221. Okay, I've got a ways to go. I'm going to need your help. I can't do this without you. And I'm hoping that if we can bring 100,000 people into this one space that we can make some real magic happen. The communication we can have, the sharing, the positive energy, I think is going to be really exciting.

So, are you ready? If you're ready, on your mark, get set, go! All right. Let's get started!

And remember, Head Start is access to the American dream. Let's go make dreams happen.