

## **Video Message from Dr. Futrell for the Holidays**

Dr. Bernadine Futrell: Hello, Head Start. I'm Dr. Bernadine Futrell, and I'm the director of OHS. As we approach a new year and close out a year like never before, I have to tell you, thank you. I have to tell you that the work you do is so important. That the commitments you keep and make every day create memories that will last a lifetime for you and the children and families in our Head Start programs.

I know that you have been navigating the winds that have changed since March 2020. In fact, I know that you've done that before 2020, and you continue to. What you've learned and been able to do during this pandemic is impressive. The idea of working with families, the creativity of opening classrooms, and keeping our children safe during a pandemic has been so amazing.

Leading the way in supporting your community with vaccine access, with food distributions, and encouraging health care equity in your communities. You, Head Start programs, have been leading the way in doing that. And as we move with our goals for January, I want you to know that I am celebrating, and I am thankful for the success that each and every one of you have contributed to in terms of moving Head Start forward. Children and families are better because of you. Staff, the people that you work with, the community that you live in is better because of you.

As we approach and close out one year and begin another, thank you. I also need you to know that you are not alone. The Office of Head Start stands ready to support you. Ready to lean into what you have learned during this pandemic so that we can support you, so that we can understand how to tell others. Because this is territory that we're all navigating for the first time.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 continues to surprise us. It continues to show more and more of itself as we try to navigate and grow together. But one thing that is true is that together, the Office of Head Start and all of you, we are going to move Head Start forward. We're going to partner with children and families. We're going to do it with an understanding about what has been effective, what are those effective family and child centered practices that have sustained us through this pandemic, and how can we continue to move forward and doing that in excess.

I wish you all Happy Holidays and Happy New Year. And I want you to know that we are here for you. We support you. We're grateful for you, and we're thankful for you. Thank you, Head Start.