

# Revisiting Head Start as a Cornerstone for Early Learning & Development: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

November 4, 2025

Moderator and Panelists Bios

## MODERATOR

**Lori Masseur**  
**Early Learning Director**  
**Read On Arizona**



As director of early learning, Lori Masseur guides Read On Arizona's collaborative work on several strategic priorities related to improving school readiness, early literacy, and systems-building efforts in our state, including: data integration, expanding effective literacy practices, and building educator capacity for early learning professionals. Lori has more than 20 years of experience in early childhood education, most recently as part of the Arizona Department of Education's early childhood education team, supporting the work of teachers and administrators in providing high-quality educational opportunities for children from birth to age 8. She served in various capacities over her eight years at ADE, including deputy associate superintendent of early childhood education and director of the Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office. Lori also helped develop Arizona's successful Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant application and served on the advisory committee for Child Care in 35 States: What We Know and Don't Know from the Bipartisan Policy Center.

## PANELISTS

**Deborah Bergeron, Ph.D.**  
**Deputy Director, Community Engagement and Innovation**  
**The Academy at the National Head Start Association**  
**Former Director, Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**



Dr. Deborah Bergeron currently serves as one of the National Head Start Association's deputy directors, focusing primarily on supporting the over 250,000 Head Start staff that serve over 700,000 children across the country. Prior to this role she was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and also represented the Office of Head Start (OHS) as its director. Known as "Dr. B" to former students and teachers, she has spent three decades in pre-K–12 public education as a classroom teacher and school administrator. Since joining OHS in April 2018, Dr. B has used her experience as an elementary principal and her strong background in pre-K–12 instructional leadership to provide unique insights into how Head Start programs can support our most vulnerable children in becoming school ready. She has focused her energy on improving the relationship between Head Start programs and the public school system.

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Dr. B continues to work at both the national level and with education influencers at the state and local levels to affect change. Dr. Bergeron holds a bachelor's degree from Texas State University. She earned a master's in education leadership and doctorate in education policy from George Mason University.

**Eve DelReal, Ph.D.**

**Director of Early Head Start and Head Start Southwest Human Development, Phoenix  
President, Arizona Head Start Association**



Eve Del Real serves as the Head Start Director for Southwest Human Development and President of the Arizona Head Start Association (AZHSA). With over 25 years of leadership in early childhood and public administration, she has dedicated her career to building high-performing systems that improve outcomes for children, families, and communities. At Southwest Human Development, the largest nonprofit in Arizona serving children birth to five, Eve leads an evidence-based model of Head Start services that integrates policy, practice, and partnerships to strengthen family outcomes and expand workforce capacity. As AZHSA President, she provides statewide strategic leadership, enhancing collaboration among state agencies and higher education institutions to advance equitable early learning policies. Previously, as Assistant Director of Maricopa County Human Services, she led a Head Start program that earned national recognition for its Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership model. She also served in public office with the City of Los Angeles and was honored by the California State Assembly as Woman of Action for her impact on children and families. Eve is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Public Administration, focusing on policy innovation and systems leadership. She remains a passionate advocate for high-quality, equitable social service programs that empower families and strengthen communities statewide.

**Yvette Sanchez Fuentes**

**Senior Vice President, Government Relations and Research, Start Early  
Former Director, Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**



Yvette Sanchez Fuentes leads the organization's national strategy to advance both Start Early policy agenda and strengthen partnerships with peer organizations and federal agency staff. She also oversees the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, one of four National Centers that develop evidence-based best practices for Early Head Start and Head Start programs across the country. A nationally recognized early childhood expert, Yvette has been influential in driving effective policy and practice change in areas of Head Start, child care and the workforce through intentional engagement of stakeholders. Yvette has dedicated her professional career to understanding how policy, research and implementation impact lifelong outcomes for young children and their families struggling with adversities (low-income households, migrant and seasonal farm workers, immigrant communities, American Indian and Alaska Native populations and dual language learners). Prior to joining Start Early, she served as Director of the Office of Head Start, a Presidential Political Appointee, where she shepherded sweeping reforms including the release of the Head Start Roadmap and the

creation and rollout of the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework. She also steered the launch of a pilot program that allowed spending flexibility for creating additional early learning programs, which led to the implementation of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. Yvette began her career at Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo, Inc. She received her B.A. in liberal arts from California State Polytechnic University.



**Bernadine Futrell, Ph.D.**  
**Senior Fellow, Institute for Educational Leadership**  
**Former Director, Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Dr. Bernadine Futrell is a results-driven education leader, advocate, and changemaker committed to ensuring that every community has well-resourced and supported schools. Dr. Futrell served in the Biden-Harris Administration as Director of the Office of Head Start at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she led the nationwide reopening of

Head Start programs during the pandemic and spearheaded policy changes to expand program eligibility. She later served as Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, overseeing discretionary grants and championing efforts to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments. Prior to her federal service, Dr. Futrell developed and led leadership programs at the National Head Start Association (NHSA) and AASA, The School Superintendents Association. She is the co-author of *ConnectED Leaders* and serves on the Board of Visitors for Howard University's School of Education. Deeply committed to community impact, Dr. Futrell and her husband, former Delegate Michael Futrell, co-founded *Make the Future*, an initiative focused on improving academic outcomes by mobilizing community resources. They have two children and serve as Young Adult Pastors. Dr. Futrell holds a Ph.D. and a master's degree in education policy and psychology from George Mason University and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University. She brings a powerful combination of expertise, vision, and heart to her work.

**Carrie Gillispie, Ed.D.**  
**Project Director, Early Development & Disability**  
**New America**



Carrie Gillispie is an Early Development & Disability project director with the Education Policy program at New America. Her work focuses on equity in education for early learners and students with disabilities. Before joining New America, Gillispie was a senior associate at The Education Trust, where she led work on early childhood education and race and disability equity. She holds an Ed.D. in Special Education and Disability Studies from The George Washington University, an M.Ed. in School Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a B.A. in English

from Bates College.