



DR. EL BROWN

# Head Start Strong

MOVING INTO  
2026



Before the doors open, the work has already begun. A bus driver is up before the sun, making sure children arrive safely. In the kitchen, meals are being prepared so little bodies are nourished and ready to learn. Classrooms are cleaned and cared for so children enter spaces that feel calm and welcoming. Home visitors are moving through neighborhoods with care and respect. Family advocates are holding stories with the same care they give their own families. Teachers are counting heads, giving hugs, guiding learning, and making hundreds of small decisions that shape a child's day. Directors and supervisors are planning, budgeting, problem-solving, and supporting teams—creating environments where staff can grow and children and families can thrive. This is the work that keeps everything moving. This is Head Start. This is the work that carried children and families through a year of uncertainty. It is the steady showing up. The quiet consistency. The daily decisions that moved families forward, even when the ground felt unsteady.

For that, there is deep gratitude. Gratitude for staying. Gratitude for adapting. Gratitude for continuing to care—day after day—when the work asked more than expected. 2025 brought moments that required strength, patience, and trust. And here you are. The work held. The relationships held. The commitment held. Because of that, 2025 can remain where it belongs—behind us. What comes next is a new year approached with a fresh perspective, shaped by what has already been proven possible together. Head Start serves more than 700,000 children each year. And they are our future. When a classroom is cleaned and prepared, space is being made for future teachers, principals, and policymakers. When meals are warmed in the kitchen, future doctors, engineers, and entrepreneurs are being nourished. When a bus rolls before sunrise, future social workers, city planners, and community leaders are being carried safely into their day.

When a home visit happens, trust is being built with future advocates, counselors, and legislators. When budgets are planned and teams are supported, centers are being sustained for future scientists, artists, business owners, and members of Congress. You hold our future in the palm of your hands. And you stayed. You adapted. You kept showing up for children and families. 2025 asked a lot. And you met it. As we move into 2026, this is a moment to offer yourself grace—to honor the care you give and the heart you bring to this work every day. You understand the assignment. You weathered the storm. And you continue to do heart work with children and families. May this year be one where you pause when needed, support one another fully, and move forward knowing that what you are doing is important, necessary, and deeply valued. Together, we are Head Start Strong.

*Dr. El Brown*

## About The Author

Dr. El Brown is an engagement strategist, speaker, and writer who partners with early childhood organizations to help agencies build and sustain mission-aligned teams and top-notch villages that effectively support children and families.