



VIRGINIA HEAD START ASSOCIATION

DIRECTORS CONFERENCE



Anchored in Purpose During Times of Change

June 16-18, 2026 ★ VA Beach

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

<p>9:30 am - 11:30 am</p>	<p>Sheraton VA Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 3501 Atlantic Ave, VA Beach, 23451 Registration Opens; Breakfast on Your Own Visit Exhibitors Tues. & Wed. Raffle Drawing Wed. 4:30</p>
<p>11:30 am - 12:30 pm</p>	<p>Directors Conference Begins - Buffet Luncheon Announcements - Dawn Ault</p>
<p>12:30 pm - 2:00 pm</p> <p>Dr. Prerna Richards Together We Grow</p>	<p>The Leadership Voyage: Anchored in Purpose During Times of Change</p> <p>The early childhood education system today feels like an emergency room. Leaders and educators are exhausted, operating in crisis mode, and focused on triage rather than healing. In this powerful and reflective keynote, leaders are invited to pause, step back, and embark on a personal leadership voyage; one that is anchored in purpose and prepares them for meaningful, sustainable change.</p> <p>Grounded in human psychology and neuroscience, this session explores the different types of stress impacting educators and leaders, how stress shapes brain states, and why behavior, adult and child alike, is often a reflection of unmet needs rather than lack of effort or commitment. Participants will deepen their understanding of how stress influences decision-making, relationships, and leadership presence.</p> <p>Through storytelling, metaphor, and practical insight, leaders will reflect on their own leadership identity and discover that the tools they need to lead with confidence, clarity, and compassion already exist within them. This session challenges leaders to move beyond enabling behaviors and instead empower their teams, all while building capacity, resilience, and trust rather than dependency.</p> <p>This keynote is both a mirror and a compass, helping leaders reconnect to their purpose, strengthen self-awareness, and step forward ready to lead change, without burning themselves or their teams out.</p> <p>Participants will leave with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A deeper understanding of stress, brain states, and behavior Insight into how leadership presence impacts team regulation and resilience A redefined view of empowerment vs. enabling A renewed sense of purpose and confidence as a leader
<p>2:00 – 2:15 pm</p>	<p>Break – iced tea and soft drinks provided</p>



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<p>2:15 – 4:00</p> <p>Dr. Prerna Richards Together We Grow</p>	<p>Changing Perspectives, Changing Practice: Compassionate Coaching for Lasting Impact</p> <p>Coaching “challenging” teachers can feel frustrating, draining, and at times deeply personal, especially when leaders are already carrying the weight of systemic stress. This interactive breakout session reframes resistance and disengagement through the lens of brain states, mindset, and emotional safety, offering leaders a new way forward.</p> <p>Building on the themes of the keynote, participants will learn compassionate coaching strategies that move beyond compliance and correction toward connection, accountability, and growth. Leaders will explore how shifting perspective, from “fixing” to “coaching,” can radically change outcomes for both educators and teams.</p> <p>This session equips leaders with practical coaching tools, language, and strategies to support teachers without rescuing, enabling, or burning themselves out. The focus is on transformation; changing not just what leaders do, but who they are as coaches and leaders.</p> <p>Participants will leave with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new lens for understanding challenging teacher behavior Coaching strategies that build trust while maintaining accountability Language that supports reflection, ownership, and growth Increased confidence in coaching conversations Tools to shift mindset, identity, and leadership impact
<p>Happy Hour!</p>	<p>Time & Details TBA Join us to socialize with colleagues. Come enjoy this time of fellowship and networking.</p>

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

<p>7:30 am to 8:30 am</p>	<p>Buffet Breakfast - Ocean Grand Foyer, enjoy networking with colleagues</p>
<p>8:30 am to 10:00 am</p> <p>Dr. Teri DeLucca Impact Early Education</p>	<p>Radical Personal Leadership: How Self-Awareness and Clear Standards Build Accountability, Confidence, and Stronger Teams</p> <p>Strong leadership doesn’t start with policies or performance plans, it starts with how we lead ourselves. When leaders and teams lack self-awareness, operate on autopilot, and don’t have clear expectations for behavior, communication becomes tense, accountability feels personal, and hard conversations are often avoided.</p> <p>This session explores Radical Personal Leadership as the foundation for healthy teams and strong culture. Participants will learn how stress, emotional triggers,</p>



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	<p>and nervous-system responses influence their team’s response to personality clashes, miscommunication, and challenging moments and will learn why Standards of Behavior are essential for setting clear, professional expectations that remove ambiguity and reduce anxiety. By clarifying “how we show up” for one another, leaders gain greater confidence in communication, hard conversations and feedback, and learn how to hold teams accountable without damaging trust or connection.</p> <p>Participants will leave with strategies to communicate clearly, connect authentically, and address issues directly (with less fear, less drama, and more consistency), through the lenses of brain science, emotional intelligence, and practical leadership tools.</p>
<p>10:00 am - 10:15 am</p>	<p>Break, coffee and tea provided</p>
<p>10:15 am – 12:00 pm</p> <p>Dr. Teri DeLucca</p> <p>Impact Early Education</p>	<p>Unshakable Culture: How Self-Aware, Regulated Leaders Create Teams That Thrive, Even Under Pressure</p> <p>Culture isn’t defined by what’s written on the wall; it’s shaped by how leaders show up every day and respond in the small moments. Stress, turnover, staffing shortages, and behavior challenges can quickly destabilize even the strongest teams. The difference between a culture that crumbles and one that holds steady is leadership self-awareness, emotional regulation, and intentional communication.</p> <p>This powerful session gives leaders a clear, actionable framework for building a culture that remains grounded, connected, and resilient, even in high-stress seasons. Participants will explore how organizational climate is influenced by leadership behavior, stress ownership, communication patterns, and emotional safety. Drawing from organizational psychology, brain science, personality research, and real-world ECE leadership experience, this session shows leaders how to interrupt unhealthy patterns, ensure the right culture drivers are in place, and helps them create conditions where staff feel supported, accountable, and motivated to stay.</p> <p>Participants will leave with tools to strengthen trust, reduce burnout, navigate conflict with confidence, and create daily rhythms and leadership practices that anchor your early childhood center in clarity and consistency.</p>
<p>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</p>	<p>Boxed Lunch – feel free to take outside to enjoy the ocean air</p>



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<p>1:00 pm - 2:00 pm</p> <p>Dr. Camille Kelly Prince William Co Schools Preschool Supervisor</p>	<p>Judgement to Compassion and the Power of Grace</p> <p>How do we rebuild trust bridges when they are broken with families? Our (conscious and subconscious) perceptions and judgements as educators can impact how we connect with families and children. Participants will engage in discussions about why judgement is dangerous and unfair and how we can rebuild trust once it has been lost because all families deserve the benefit of grace.</p> <p>Participants will leave with a renewed sense of how judgment builds walls, trust builds bridges, grace opens doors, relationships are resilient, repair is possible, and the way back... begins with awareness.</p>
<p>2:00 pm – 3:15 pm</p> <p>Dr. Dana Eckman Subject Matter Expert Teaching Strategies</p>	<p><u>Chaos to Calm: Big Feelings that Challenge Us in the Classroom</u></p> <p>Through reflection, discussion, and classroom scenarios let’s explore the ultimate behavior blueprint for joyful classrooms. Discover how the classroom environment and teacher-child interactions influence behavior. Explore social-emotional strategies to proactively support children’s regulation and engagement. Positive guidance helps young children develop the emotional regulation, confidence, and social skills they need to navigate big feelings and everyday classroom challenges. In this session, participants explore how adult regulation, intentional language, clear expectations, and supportive strategies work together to create safe, responsive learning environments.</p> <p>Participants will leave with practical approaches to validating feelings, modeling calm, offering choices, and teaching skills that support children’s growing independence. We will learn how to use six supportive steps to respond to challenging behavior with calm and intention.</p>
<p>3:15 - 3:30 pm</p>	<p>Break – iced tea and soft drinks provided</p>
<p>3:30-4:30 pm</p> <p>Annabel Bergeron Academy+ Success Associate The Academy at NHSA</p>	<p>Speed Dating Professional Development-Style</p> <p>Who says PD planning can’t be fun?!?! Join NHSA’s Academy+ Success Association, Annabel Bergeron, as she engages attendees in a journey of PD discovery. After leading the group through exploring unique and innovative PD options, Annabel will help attendees identify their 2026-2027 top PD priorities. Get ahead of your PD planning, learn about all the possibilities and network to create stronger relationships around professional development planning!</p> <p>Participants will leave with ideas for their major professional development needs and strategies for innovative ways to meet those needs, including how VAHSA and NHSA can support.</p>
<p>4:30 pm</p>	<p>RAFFLE Prize Drawing! Thank you to our Corporate Partners for the Prizes. Must be present to win.</p>



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Thursday, June 18, 2026

7:30 am – 8:15 am	Continental Breakfast - Ocean Grand Foyer
8:15 am - 9:45 am Tommy Sheridan, Deputy Director, NHSA Feel free to bring your breakfast in the ballroom with you.	The Current National Head Start Landscape Back by popular demand every year, Tommy will provide NHSA updates, updates on the President’s Budget Proposal, Budget Appropriations, ongoing issues, time for Q & A etc. Participants will leave with the latest NHSA updates as Head Start moves forward during all the changes under the current administration. We will engage in discussions around strategies to ensure our programs operate effectively and continue to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.
9:45 am – 10:00 am	Stretch / Coffee Break
10:00 am – 11:00 am Erik Johnson, VACAP President & CEO Shikee Franklin, HLSC Lead Consultant	Head Start Learning Collaborative (HSLC) This statewide effort is led by the Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) to protect, unify and strengthen Virginia’s Head Start programs through an early childhood focused collaboration of leadership from Virginia Head Start Participants will leave with a clearer understanding about how and why the HSLC is working to increase visibility with the Governor’s Administration to maximize Head Start’s role in early childhood systems and economic mobility.
11:00 – 12:00	Closing Speaker, TBA, elected officials have been invited Closing Comments, Dawn Ault & Taundwa Jeffries

Conference Evaluation

The conference evaluation will be emailed to you at the conclusion of the conference. Please fill out by deadline Friday, June 26th to receive your certificate of training hours.

Special thank you to our Gold Partner,
and conference sponsor, Teaching Strategies

