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SUPPORTING EARLY LITERACY SKILLS AUDITORILY AND VISUALLY

Topical Session 4

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>> RACHEL BENEDICT: Good morning, everyone. I think we are ready to begin. Good morning. Hi there. Welcome to our presentation. It's called: Supporting Early Literacy Skills, Both Visually as well as Auditorily.

I'm going to give you a quick road map of what we're going to do today. Here's our agenda. We're to going to do some introductions, give you some information about why we're doing what we're doing at Rocky Mountain Deaf School. There's research behind our practice. We'll be discussing what we're doing. What our practices are and the data we're collecting from the students. We have a couple of example videos ‑‑ we have actually a lot of videos of our students and we'll show some of the videos and have discussion of the activities and strategies we're employing at RMDS and hopefully have time for questions and discussion at the end.

So who are we? We all work at the Rocky Mountain Deaf School which is about 20 minutes from here actually. It's very beautiful. You should certainly visit if you can. I'm Rachel Benedict. I'm teaching the Early Childhood education, preschool to kindergarten. I've been doing that for four years here. Well, two years in Washington, D.C. I was teaching third and fourth grade. Then moved out here to Colorado. I don't think I'll be going back east.

I actually moved from the East Coast, as well, and I'm here to stay.

>> EILEEN KRATZER: My name is Eileen Kratzer. I'm the Assistant Principal at Rocky Mountain Deaf School. Previously for 7 years, I was the spoken English literacy teacher. I've taught deaf children for over 25 years both in mainstream settings but as well as at a Deaf School. Most of my time has been spent at Rocky Mountain Deaf School.

>> SUZANNE SHARPE: And I'm Suzanne Sharpe, the speech language pathologist. I've been working for deaf and hard of hearing schools for 20 years in a mainstream setting and for the last 10 years plus in a School for the Deaf. So we want to take a minute and figure out who we have in our audience today.

Who do we have here that are Early Interventionists?

How about audiologists?

Any speech‑language pathologists in the room?

Parents?

And any advocates in the room. Welcome. Anyone else that I missed that wasn't on my list? And students?

>> Oh, right, students.

>> Welcome. Thank you guys for coming to our presentation.

>> So life at RMDS. Why we do what we do.

We're going to talk about bilingualism. I think you maybe know what it is but we'll define it for you as we use it.

Communication policies and philosophies and how they've happened, and the outreach process. We know that there's a need for something, there's a gap somewhere and then we'll create that and of course Eileen will talk more about that specifically.

You know there are a lot of activities for spoken language enhancement, access to spoken language in classrooms. That's not all that we do, but that is our focus for this particular presentation. At RMDS we're doing obviously many things, ASL access is important as well for all of our students, so we want students to succeed, and we're going to do whatever it takes to get there.

>> Before we really dive into the information, I want to show you a short video here, and this is a great example of what we do at RMDS. You'll actually see first ASL handshapes. You'll kind of see this if you look up here, for bear, and you'll see that.

And then you'll actually see the teacher using rhythm. We actually have a big drum at RMDS that we use so that all students have access to that rhythm. And you can hear the spoken English teacher at the same time, and you'll see the kids moving to that rhythm, and that all kind of folds into the kids learning the skills that connect to literacy, whether it be rhythm, handshape, and spoken sounds of English, as well as the visual phonetics of ASL.

[ Video ]

The students are being bears in this video, as you can see, and there was a cave over in the corner, and you'll see that more of that video later during this presentation.

RMDS's communication policy is really ‑‑ we follow the community here in Denver that bilingual approach. It was set up 10 years ago, and we recognized that we had a need within our community to connect with those deaf children, making sure those that have spoken access to English, and that auditory language, but more than just speech, but that auditory access, because they needed to connect what they could hear to the print that they were reading.

So we actually decided to hire spoken English literacy teacher at RMDS who goes into the classroom and exposes the kids that can access that spoken English to phonology, to sound, to phonemic awareness, to provide those types of skills to those specific students outside of just the speech class.

We also recognized that most of our students need access to ASL, and want, along with that access to spoken English at the same time.

All of our staff are fluent in ASL, as well as English. They're bilingual. All of our hearing staff are fluent in ASL. And of course, our deaf staff with fluent in reading and writing in English, as well as ASL.

>> So now let's take a look a little bit at what the research says. We definitely use research to guide our practices at RMDS, and there is becoming more and more research into the benefits that ASL can provide to students, and we're going to briefly touch on three different pieces of research that supports our philosophy at RMDS and drives the way that we engage with students.

>> The first research is from Sharon Baker, and this talks about the benefits of visual language, and the criticalness of that bilingualism. We actually have three different groups of students at Rocky Mountain Deaf School. One group is completely fluent and uses ASL 100% of the time. We have another group who arrived at RMDS and used spoken English as their primary language, and so they did have full access to that English at school, as well as at home. And then the third group of students are those that arrived and didn't have a complete language, whether it be ASL or spoken English.

So what we did was provide 100% access via ASL to give that foundation of having that primary language, and then we gave spoken English opportunities in addition to that. Again, as we've mentioned, the foundation of having a language is proven through research and that supports using that bilingual approach.

>> So I'm going to be talking a little bit about bilingualism and this is research from VL2, the visual language lab, and most of the world is actually bilingual and we're not there yet because our country is so large but bilingualism is perhaps a little old news at this point and there's lots of research showing the benefits and how it can work and we'll talk about how it works in our schools for our students.

I think probably most of us in the room know this, but it's a nice reminder that learning a second language does not hinder the development of a first language. Many times our students arrive to school and they do not have a primary language, as Eileen said, and so we are teaching them both languages, and they will be completely bilingual when they're adults. The more languages they're exposed to the better off they are. We know that bilingualism and multilingualism garner great benefits to the user.

>> Then I'm going to discuss some research ‑‑ sorry, Rachel, I think I jumped in too early.

>> RACHEL BENEDICT: That's all right. Some of the videos you'll be seeing will show that children really living in both worlds, using English, using ASL, and of course at their age they're still figuring out what to do so there may be instances of confusion or knowing perhaps one language is better suited to one particular activity or one language is better suited to a person that they're speaking with, so there are intentional code switching that happens, and sometimes we will actually prompt them to do that in a moment if they're speaking, and they might choose to sign something, and it's a beautiful thing to see. They're growing and exploring and developing their world via two languages.

>> Okay, now I'll jump in with research from 2014 by Davidson and Martin that looked at spoken English language development among native signing children with cochlear implants, and this research investigated the spoken language skills of 5 children who had cochlear implants, and had deaf signing parents. So these children had full exposure to ASL from birth, in addition to access to spoken English skills after they were implanted.

Their scores were then measured on different language measures and compared to scores of hearing children that were bilingual in ASL and English as well so they were hearing children of deaf parents, bilingual in ASL and English, and what they found is that there were comparable standardized English language scores for both the cochlear implant group and the hearing group on a variety of standardized language measures.

And the results that they got exceeded previously reported scores for children when compared to similar cochlear implantation age, as well as years of cochlear implant use. So they concluded in this research that natural signing language input does no harm, and in fact, may mitigate negative effects of early auditory deprivation for spoken language development.

>> So from research to practice. We shared the research with you. We'll now talk about what we're doing.

Our goal in terms of the big picture is we want to develop children's language, and that may instantiate itself in different ways but I'll show you a couple of examples of what we're doing. As Suzanne just said we're supporting both languages, all staff are able to support both. And we're seeing it translate to their literacy skills. So kids who have auditory access and kids who don't still benefit from what we're doing at the school.

There's 100% access, I think you mentioned it, the adult Eileen mentioned all of the staff are language models bilingually. We have deaf teachers, we have hearing teachers who sign, we have speech‑language pathologist, spoken language facilitators or teachers who are bilingual so we have many resources we're bringing to bear and we allocate the resources appropriately for the children's benefit.

>> Okay, our data, and if you could hang on one second. We're an extremely small school just FYI but we're proud of our school. We have 72 students in total. And we had that number for about 5 years now, and so our sample size is small, but the proof we have is quite big in terms of impact of what we're showing.

>> So our population at Rocky Mountain Deaf School of preschool students starting at age 3, through 3rd grade, is 31 students, and of those students, we have 15 students that use ASL only, and then we have an additional 16 students who use ASL, that also use spoken English and have spoken English access. Of these 31 students, have been at RMDS for more than 3 years.

>> Those 15 students that we've had for a minimum of 3 years, 6 of them have an additional disability, and 9 do not have an additional disability. And again, of those 9 students, we looked at their scores in different areas, and 8 out of them are on or above par, so that lets us know that the strategies that we're using are working for this set of students. And the assessments that we use for reading, writing, and math do show that they are on grade level.

>> And ASL assessment, as well.

>> Yes, ASL, of course.

>> So this is the first video sample we're showing you. This is a deaf child in 2nd grade. I shouldn't say he's deaf. They're all deaf, obviously. It's RMDS.

What I meant to say is he's coming from a deaf family. And has a brother who we'll speak about a little bit later but he was in our preschool program and he got spoken language enhancement even though his hearing level didn't indicate he would benefit from that access but we saw he was benefiting from ASL and we wanted to see what spoken language access would do as well. There are two videos that have been supplied together.

He's explaining, he's inventing, it's an innovation lab project. I don't know if you have innovation lab in your schools, but make or space kind of spaces in the classroom. It's an ASL activity where they had to use gesture. They weren't able to use lexical items of ASL about natural disasters. See if you can guess which one he's talking about.

>> So here we have a house, and we have a good monster over here, and over here is a bad monster. And there's a car here. And there's a bridge over here, and you can see that this is a really big, tall building, and this is for, like, you know like a factory where they have, like, machines and that sort of thing. And this is just a small house over here.

[ Laughter ]

>> So guesses? What was he talking about? Yeah, volcano, right.

>> Exactly. So obviously, his ASL ‑‑ he's above grade level, above expectations for his age. He's quite fluent.

He's 8 in this video. The question was asked how old he is. He's 8 in this video.

And he's been at RMDS since the age of 3.

Now, this is a writing sample, same student. Same child. His brother who's in 4th grade, is the writing sample on the left.

Can everybody see this okay in the room?

Yeah? Okay, great.

They don't have any special accommodations or any help with this writing. This was a writing sample that they both were just able to produce, and you can see the bridges they're building. You can also see that the writing is on par ‑‑ above grade level, really.

Up here, the picture is ‑‑ this is a series based on what he had built, so there's different zines for second and third, just free writing time so it's really nice to see a child be able to express themselves in both languages and that's what we would consider bilingualism.

>> This next student struggles with language development both with ASL as well as English, and you will see her trying to communicate through spoken English, and she will pick out some words, but she has a lot of extra sound sort of added in there that may be hard for you to understand and then with the ASL support in her message, it's there sometimes, and so that sometimes helps understand what ‑‑ helps you understand what she's talking about, and she's actually going into depth about her project here.

[ Video ]

So you can see how we're getting her message across through the use of both languages, English and ASL. And she's still acquiring both.

>> Right, and she's having a lot of speech and spoken English. She works with a literacy teacher on a daily basis and she's been doing that three years now. In addition, she has most of her classes are taught via ASL. We did have some problems with our video.

>> I think it will work.

>> Fingers crossed it will flip when the video starts, and there's another two students here that are using spoken English, and they've had spoken English exposure for three or four years, and they both have spoken English access at home.

Now, the boy, you will actually see him talking about what he learned from this specific bear video. He was in the class in the morning that I showed you earlier, and so this was when lunch was just over, and he happens to see a friend who was not in that class in the morning, and so he wants to show her what she's learning.

I didn't ask him to do that. It just so happens that I was filming, and this kind of came up, and I decided to take advantage of that moment.

[ Video ]

We should probably mention that both of them, their dominant language is English.

>> Right, and the girl also has Spanish access at home, as well, so she's actually working on three languages here.

>> And again, these are the same two students. They're having another conversation in the hall. The little girl has a strong English foundation, and like we just mentioned, Spanish language in her background, as well, so ASL is now becoming her third language. When she arrived at RMDS, she did not have any ASL skills, and she's been there for about a year and a half now. And so in this video, she'll be using spoken English, and then we ‑‑ where she's having a conversation with some hearing staff, and a friend of hers that also has spoken English access. And later you'll get to see her doing another lesson in ASL.

[ Video ]

[ inaudible ] is what's being said. He wasn't really all that clear, what was being said on his lips and the sound weren't quite in sync. They're leaving without us so he was complaining like: Hey, stop videoing me. I want to go.

So this is another student who has actually been with our program since the age of 2, and their language at home is spoken English and now they're completely bilingual. They can sign in ASL. All of their lessons on a daily basis are in American Sign Language and they had spoken language from the age of 2 until kindergarten in RMDS and then that ended, but they still have phonemic awareness instruction and that sort of thing at 1st grade but in second grade that stopped. They had all the skills they really needed to be able to is have their lessons through ASL, and so they've actually transitioned completely into ASL, and at the same time, these two are discussing with each other the book that they've just been reading.

>> And I'm going to jump in here, too: These students don't receive speech‑language services through spoken English because their speech and language skills are at and above grade level in spoken English for all areas.

[ Video ]

>> So you can see, they're having a great discussion about the book that they're reading, and you can see that they've developed both languages proficiently. This young lady will sign her creative lab project.

[ Video ]

[ Captioner has unstable audio ]

>> And I just want to mention that we use a lot of fingerspelling at RMDS, from the ECE all the way to our high school content areas.

>> Okay, in this video, this is a group of students that when they came to RMDS, none of them had a strong foundation in either language. They had all been in some sort of either total communication or oral program before, and so they had bits and pieces of both languages, but neither language was really a full language.

And so when they came, we developed a strong language foundation for them through ASL, and now ‑‑ and we've been bridging their English language to match that, and as they have developed the language concepts and their understanding of language through ASL, we're seeing their spoken language come right along with that. And this is an activity where we're focusing on using correct English grammar tenses and structure, and they have cards in front of them. It may be a little bit difficult to see in the video. They have cards with different parts of speech and words printed on them.

And they have to use those cards to arrange and create a sentence that is grammatically correct. Since they have no choice in the vocabulary and words printed on there, the sentences can be silly and that's what they were told, is it's fine for your sentence to be silly and funny, but it has to be grammatically correct.

[ Video ]

And for that, then we walked through and talked about she wasn't able to give what the grammatical error was in that sentence, so then we continued on and talked about what was wrong with the sentence and how to fix that grammatically.

>> So now, we're going to show you some activity that we use. Since we've covered the research piece of it, we want to show you the application from that research to activities we use in the classroom.

Our classes up here that you'll see are using ASL.

So our SLP is a team decision that we make in the IEP, if we're going to provide those services or not, if they qualify for those speech‑language pathology services.

For spoken English and the literacy teacher, that individual actually comes into the classroom for ECE for 60 minutes every day, and collaborates with the ECE teacher, Rachel.

What you're going to see here is the morning circle time, play time, the spoken language teacher is in the room at this point, and we're going over lessons. Sometimes she joins me. Sometimes we'll sit side by side and working with different students, so you're going to see a short video.

I'm here on the right. The spoken language teacher is in the left hand of the frame, and there are three students. The young boys ‑‑ the one on the right is acquiring sign language. The boy in the middle was just adopted from China, I think probably a month before this video was taken, so no formal language, so just sort of playing, trying to expose this child. It's interesting to see how they interact.

And our teacher is talking to them, and I'm signing to them, and that's what basically happens every day. You'll see a short clip of that.

[ Video ]

So that happens throughout the morning for about 30 minutes. This video is the bear video again that we saw earlier. What you saw earlier was just sort of natural spontaneous play. What you'll see in this clip is more structured and intentional planning where we're talking about poetry and ASL.

Lisa, our speech‑language teacher, will be speaking. I'll be signing, so that all of the children have access to both. And you'll see that they're copying the signs. I remember the first day we did the activity, only those who already were fluent in ASL were able to do that, and here this is probably a week later, a review of these concepts, and they know what to expect as we scaffold them through the week. We have the drum as well, so they're rhythmic patterning, so you'll see that.

[ Video ]

So we're going in the cave and we hear sleep. If you didn't hear, they were saying cave and sleep.

>> The kids are reading a book right now about bears called "The Bear Snores On," so maybe you're familiar with that story, and so they're doing that during their literacy time.

>> Yeah, this was during morning meeting. So we're trying to kind of piece that together throughout the day to make sure it's consistent.

>> This again is during morning meeting, we sit in a circle, we go over who's in the class and who's at home that day and there are names on the wall and so what you'll see here is the spoken language teacher sitting behind the kids who really benefit from spoken language enhancement and engaging in some code switching and you'll see the kids talking and discussing and figuring out how many kids, trying to figure out the names. We have a lot of kids who just arrived and we don't have a name sign for them so we've got a lot of fingerspelling happening vis‑a‑vis their fellow classmates.

[ Video ]

So you can see that the spoken English teacher is not functioning as an interpreter, and we're really careful that they're not interpreting what the deaf teacher is saying. So the teacher like Rachel uses ASL, and they make a plan before as far as what language they're presenting in and what materials they're going to use, and they're on the same page, but there's no interpretation happening for Rachel and it's also helpful for new students who just arrived at RMDS. We have one that just arrived in February so to have an understanding of the environment and where to sit and that sort of thing, to have that English support until they're ready to transition and they can have that full access to ASL when they've acquired the language.

>> Does everybody know the book good night gorilla? So this is an activity around that. Another purposeful planning we're engaged in is if we're signing the whole story some children won't have access to it so we do a parallel storytelling. I will lead, as I lead since she's not interpreting but she's reading from the book as well.

We have props here to enhance the instructional strategies, and again it's a bilingual approach so if we say good night elephant and good night lion and so forth, what you'll see in the book is we might count them in, if you will, a cue for the kids to know that we're about to sign together the chorus of the book, if you will. You'll see some of them speak and some of them sign.

>> And also, we use a lot of visuals, too. You'll see Rachel saying prompts before she'll actually give props before we actually ‑‑ we have those props with the video that we show them before we go ahead and show the video, so we have the picture of those kids, they have it in their mind so then you have the spoken name with their fingerspelling word, plus the picture of them, so they get a lot of cues to know when it is actually their turn to go, when to stand up, and they start to recognize their name through that fingerspelling.

Apparently we're too loud.

[ Video ]

So the spoken English teacher also tries to kind of use that vocal inflection to match the ASL teacher, Rachel, and how she's signing.

So those nursery rhymes we typically use nursery rhymes, and that's actually pre‑literacy skills that we teach. We teach rhyming. We teach rhythm, and we do the same thing through ASL, as well as spoken English.

>> In this video, I push into the Early Childhood classroom and Rachel and I are team‑teaching a lesson on sequencing vocabulary on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, so again, we're working on some of those early literacy skills of how we sequence information, steps we need to take and then the specific vocabulary that we use as transitions and for sequencing in literacy so you'll see me supporting the skills through spoken English with some students, and at the same time, Rachel is using the same vocabulary, and the same focus to support these same skills through ASL.

[ Video ]

[ Captioner has unstable audio ]

>> So that's the really cool thing I love about Rocky Mountain Deaf School. You can see two kids who are signing and chatting via ASL fully. They're deaf children from deaf families. They're talking about the activity. And then you can also see Rachel teaching in a specific area with another child, and then you can see Suzanne working with another student through ASL, all at the same time, working on a similar project.

>> We do have a unique diverse population at RMDS, and so we have 7 students, and 2 of them are completely fluent and can work independently. We have 3 students who have just come from pre‑K into kindergarten that quite have those skills and we have those students who are benefiting from spoken language, so it's the same activity for everybody but it's different and that's what Rocky Mountain Deaf School looks like.

>> This video if you remember the girl from before, she's actually learning math through ASL. It's a really short clip but she's just basically working on math addition.

[ Video ]

[ Captioner has unstable audio ]

>> Okay. Then, in this video, these are two students receiving pull‑out services that are going to focus on articulation skills. The first student uses bilateral cochlear implants consistently. She's from a hearing family, but all her education has been at a School for the Deaf.

The next student uses bilateral hearing aids, and he comes from a family where both parents are deaf, and all members of his immediate family are deaf, and use ASL as their primary language.

[ Video ]

On one of the cues you might have seen me put my finger up to my nose. I use visual phonics to support students without access and to give them another visual cue to support how they're producing their speech sounds.

And a lot of times, that may be the only cue I have to give to a student if they're struggling with a sound. I can just give that slight cue, and oftentimes they can correct their articulation of that sound themselves.

>> The same student you just saw in the articulation activity is going to be in this video with a signing activity that's quite lovely to see.

[ Video ]

[ Captioner has unstable audio ]

Hatchet was the term in the book and so we asked them to draw a scene from I think it was Chapter 4, no, maybe Chapter 9 of this book.

>> So now we've kind of shown you all we do at RMDS, and our students. So we want to open it up for questions. Anybody have any questions for us? Yes?

>> So I can sign. Should I sign, or... Your ASL might be better than mine.

>> Thank you so much. I really enjoyed this. Thank you so much. I work in Early Intervention as a Service Coordinator, so I wondered if you had specific recommendations for how I could combine these strategies for a home team. You have a family, you mentioned some of the children coming to your program where they had a little bit of everything.

How can I help families and our team unify these strategies to get the children more school‑ready?

>> Well, I think, you know, that's an important part. I used to work in Early Intervention for 4 years, as well, and I think it's important for us to emphasize the criticalness of ASL and the parents becoming ASL‑fluent and to separate those two languages, and make sure that the team knows that there is that bilingual use, and that they're using either English or ASL, and that their exposure is that they have enough exposure time to ASL.

I think it would often be difficult in this environment, because there's not enough staff for those home visits, but if you have a specific time where the parents are aware that they're going to expose them to ASL, say, for example, at the dinner table, I think that might be a critical time, and then offering other times throughout the day at home that they can use spoken English and have that access.

>> I think it's also important to leverage the deaf adults in your community. Like Eileen said we don't have enough staff to go into a home visit but there may be community resources you can leverage, such as deaf adults.

>> Good morning. Thank you for the wonderful presentation. I actually have a question for Suzanne, the speech‑language pathologist. I've been hearing that ASL and spoken English are competing with each other, so that bilingualism is supposed to support the development of both languages. I'm just wondering what your experience has been with students working on spoken English, if you've noticed any hindrance from ASL or if in fact it's been a benefit to the development of spoken English. Thank you.

>> SUZANNE SHARPE: I've actually noticed quite the opposite. We've had several students that have come in with cochlear implants that have been struggling with speech skills, really don't have any functional spoken language, really don't have any language at all when they come in, and maybe a year or so after they've been there, and they're starting to get an idea of, oh, this is language through ASL, oh, all of a sudden that light bulb kind of goes on and it's like: This is what these people are saying is connecting to this. And it's kind of like there's this aha moment, and then you start seeing progress with their speech after they've kind of found a language to attach some meaning to.

It definitely takes a while. It certainly doesn't happen in the first month or two months of them being with us, but I do see that start to happen. And then I start seeing much faster progress with their spoken language skills.

That being said, we certainly don't ignore the spoken English piece when they come in. We're still trying to support that language and getting some functional speech sounds, but the progress is much slower and much more difficult, and much harder, and then when they get some language to attach some meaning to, I start to see the rate of their progress really pick up.

Does that answer your question?

[ Off Microphone ]

>> Wonderful examples of bilingualism and access to both languages. My question is: You said 30 to 60 minutes of spoken language on a daily basis, and I'm wondering what you do with parents who want more than 60 minutes of exposure. How do you talk to parents and also live by the principles that you have established?

>> Our families are really committed to our bilingual environment and philosophy and approach at RMDS, so they know what we have to offer, and they see their kids benefiting from what we offer at the school, and there can be more of a discussion of that during the IEP meeting. If their child actually qualifies within the IEP for more time there, then that's a possibility, but the point is, for our parents, they have to know the importance of having ASL as the primary language at our school.

>> And I think it's important to add that for the new students, we really connect to the parents. We talk about RMDS and what the goals are here, and there are some new students that we might have a little bit more support in the beginning just to make sure they're comfortable, they're understanding their environment, that they build some confidence in the school system.

>> We also emphasize that they're getting spoken English at home, as well so most of their families, their first language is spoken English, so they do have that access at home, so they do benefit from having most of their time spent at RMDS and having access to ASL.

>> SUZANNE SHARPE: Then I want to jump in on that, too: We really value our parents and their input at our IEP meetings, so speech language services are heavily dependent on parents' wishes and family wishes and what language they're choosing to use at home, and those services can be fluid over time, depending on what families ‑‑ what's working for families at that moment in time in their life, and as their kids develop, maybe, okay, this isn't working for us anymore. We don't want to focus on this, or: Oh, we're starting to see improvement here. We want to increase the time. So that 30 to 60 minutes is from the spoken literacy teacher and then there's speech‑language time on top of that depending individually on the student and the situation and the family.

>> And actually if I could add to that quickly, I also think that you saw the video where Suzanne came into my classroom, and that was a writing lesson and there were two students who were supposed to have SLP time during that time but as we discussed we felt they would benefit from staying in the classroom. So rather than having a pullout Suzanne came in so we make those adjustments as appropriate.

I see a couple of hands.

>> I have a question about students moving on to the next level. When they're moving on to the next level, I'm wondering if your group gives students challenging activities, like, critical thinking skills, so that they can actually be ready for certain types of discussions.

Because students really need to be ready and prepared for college, so I'm wondering if you have that in your approach.

>> Well, really, our whole day is about critical thinking skills, with both English and ASL. We're always asking the students why and what for and what is your opinion? And can you justify your opinion?

So we, you know, often don't ask, you know, lower‑ordered questions like "what" and "when" but we're more specific in asking for higher level questions in both ASL as well as English.

>> I saw a hand over here.

>> I want to thank you for the presentation. Just wonderful but looking at the classroom specifically I'm wondering how does that transfer to the home? What kind of supports are you giving so that the child is continuing to develop bilingually at home?

>> Yeah, so we have ‑‑ okay, I've gotten the 2 minute warning, that's fine. So just to answer the question we do have many different resources. We have ‑‑ there was a presentation yesterday, a toddler program presented yesterday, and that's a 0 to 3 program that's twice every month, where we have free ASL classes for families to come in on a weekly basis. Many of the parents come. We are always full.

Teachers are very much in contact with homes and families, so I think 8 out of 14 parents are coming this Thursday to an event, so we have our school population, they happen to be a group of young parents that are very engaged and active.

>> And we actually have a YouTube channel, as well. So they are able to access that. Teachers have a Facebook page, with a lot of videos up on that Facebook page.

Last year, we started an annual ASL retreat, where families come for the weekend, and it's a silent weekend. We eat together. We use ASL the whole time. We play games. And we have a lot of resources in ASL for the parents.

>> And we have some parent groups. They meet on their own, as well, sometimes, as well as facilitated by the school.

>> Last question, yes?

>> Not a question, but a comment. I had an opportunity to come to the school just this past December and get a tour through the school and see a play that was put on, and it's such a deaf‑friendly designed building. The floors vibrate. You can feel sort of halfway across the room by something on the floor so I thought it was very innovative design.

I brought ‑‑ my three children are deaf and I brought them and as we left we talked about it and the kids said gosh, I wish we had had that. It was like the dream school, they wish they had it. Had it been open back then we would have taken advantage of it. If you're in Denver right now, I feel like ‑‑ and the children's faces speak for themselves. They're so happy. You should take advantage of a visit if you can.

>> Thank you so much. Actually, is anybody coming to the tour tomorrow? I think that there's two different field trips that are happening so we'll have more information about RMDS there, and the program, and our fingerspelling, as well. So you can check out the building if you're going to come and tour it.

>> Thank you so much for coming to our presentation.

>> Thank you.

[ End of session ]

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