>> TRACY DUNCAN: Hi, and welcome to our session. We are so glad you picked this session to come to. We love this job. Why? We love families. And where do you have such a joy working with families than in early intervention and the honor it is to be with families and their children. So what you're watching is a loop. It has our agenda. All of that good stuff. So we're going to change that now and begin our -- so we're going to change the loop now. Okay.

So we want to introduce ourselves to you, but more importantly, who's here? We want to know who's here? So I want you to raise your hand. And it could be you're going to raise your hand a lot or just a little, but we want to know who's here. So who are the families? Raise your hand. Yay! Who are the professionals? Hooray! We're glad you're here and who are, those of you, that are the students? Because boy, do we need students. Yes, we need students. Terrific. So now we're going to introduce ourselves. And I'll start with me. I'm Tracy Duncan. I'm the birth to 5 language and literacy coordinator for the State of Tennessee and I live in Nashville, which is in the Middle Tennessee.

>> I am Connie Robinson. I work with birth to 5 in the program for western Tennessee.

>> I'm Alyssa Lakes, and I work with birth to 5 in east Tennessee.

>> Hello, everyone. I'm so glad you're here with us. I'm Brella Dees. I'm the Deaf mentor program coordinator.

>> TRACY DUNCAN: Our language literacy team, all of us will talk with you about the 3 featured preparations that we've had for our language in literacy that's available to all families in the State of Tennessee who have a child identified, recognized as deaf and hard-of-hearing or deaf plus, or deaf whatever. We welcome families.

I'm following this. I will go off on a bunny trail so I'm trying to follow a script because we have limited time. But I want all of you to know the PowerPoint and extensive handouts have been loaded to the website. Agenda, activity sheets, everything is online and I encourage you to go to the website and get those. And we stole it. We [Laughter] We did not come up with this ourselves. We've been to a lot of workshops. And we found ideas that worked for our state. And I encourage you to take it back and make it work for your state. Match it with the families. Then also at the end, we have something to handout to you. Is there something wrong? I'm sorry. The EHDI website. I'm sorry, yes. Yes.

However, at the end of the PowerPoint, if you want to come to our website, it's featured at the end of the PowerPoint. Okay, great. So don't leave here without your little handout that we are going to give to you, okay? All right. So we all know that language, reading, and writing skills are linked. Early literacy development is a continuous process that begins immediately at birth. Think bonding. Early literacy develops in real-life situations through positive interaction, with the environment, the materials, and the people. Each step of this ladder is critical. Without the first step, the rest of the steeps are out of reach. Because language is taught at home and literacy is taught. The literacy workshop that we design and presented offer a variety of modalities. We don't believe there is one right way. We believe families know the best way, and that they will come through that journey.

So we accommodate all of their learning styles, whether it's siblings, the actual children, extended family member, we really try to meet their needs. I like you to read this and then I'll comment. So, in other words, children with sufficient language before the hearing assistive technology is really working, will maintain their path toward the acquisition of language, age-appropriate social-emotional skills, positive self-esteem, and cognitive development. They will be as ready to read as they can, because their families will know how to support them in that process.

This program was developed so it follows and respects a bilingual, bimodal, bi-cultural program. The literacy workshops all blend together, they're all blended together, but they're found on evidence-based research in order to offer the families the information that they need to make informed decisions. Families are their child's primary teacher, and in the best position to incorporate into those daily routines that match their goals, their standards. We teach and support the families the strategies, they take the strategies home and they use them every day.

So now I'm going overview the literacy programs. And we really focus on the shared reading project as it is the foundation for the other the two other featured programs that we offer. So we provide the programs that provide efficiency access to language. That's our top priority. Language-rich environment means there's effortless access to fund, nurturing atmosphere, blending play and intentional interaction. Encouraging incidental language. So we want that kindergarten readiness. And for all children, they need to have basic interpersonal communication skills, cognitive and -- cognitive academic language proficiency. So the strong language foundation is needed by all children, and this communication starts immediately with babies.

So this really sets the stage for the rest of that person's life as their ability to think, to read, to learn, and to engage day-to-day with their environment. So I'm going to turn this over to Briella.

>> Okay, so here is a brief description of the shared reading project. It's important for you to understand the history behind the shared reading project. It was established in the '90s by group of people who recognized that deaf parents of Deaf children were exposing their children to reading, writing, and English through American Sign Language. There were 15 principles identified, and they thought if 15 principles could be taught to hearing parents of Deaf children, the child should be able to be on the same trajectory linguistically and literacy wise as of a Deaf child and deaf parents. And learning to read and write English through American Sign Language.

We felt that that concept fit with our program, and that philosophy is something we share. We give families opportunities to meet with certified SRP tutors. They can meet weekly or bi-weekly, depending on the family's preference, virtually or in person. We try to use books that are already in the home. Because we don't want to bring in books and teach signs around the concepts and book and then not allow the family to be able to continue to read those books to their child. We either use books in their home, or if we bring a book, we leave the book. We also try to find a paired signed version of the book we bring so that the families can see the story told in American Sign Language. If that is not commercially available, then we will create that and send that along to the family. The shared reading project is not the only project we offer.

The 15 principles of SRP are the foundations needed for the two other literacy projects that we offer. So here's an example of some of the principles. Principle 2 is keep American Sign Language and English visible throughout the entire process. The other two workshops after SRP will have visual access to both English and ASL. It could be English-wise spoken, read, or shown, along with American Sign Language. Principle 5 is follow the child's lead. So I don't expect the child to sit in one place and have me give them information in a passive learning way. Children are proactive learners, so they learn through touch and exploration. The other two workshops do also competent with that philosophy.

Principle 9 is, we connect the child to the real world. The other two workshops will make sure that they are including information that is connected to the real world and not include stories or toys that are things that will not be relevant to them. For example, if transportation is the focus, we will use and talk about transportation methods that the child sees every day, such as airplanes, buses, and cars. You might be more interested in understanding about the following two workshops that come after the research in the shared reading project, and I'm going to turn it over to Connie -- I'm sorry, Alyssa to share those with you.

>> Thank you. Can you hear me okay? Okay, great. Well, I'm excited to share this workshop that we do with the families with you. This is called our Ready, Set, Learn! workshop. It is provided to families across the state for free. There is no charge. And the recommended age for this workshop is about 12 months to 5 years. And we typically keep the workshop to about 5 families. And we provide them across the state in the areas where families live so they can connect and get, you know, connected to families in their community. And by having 5 families, it keeps it intimate in an environment where they can interact. The workshop is typically two and a half hours and we do provide childcare.

So this is an example of the kit. We brought one of them to show you. Each kit has a different theme. And this kit is our animals theme. And depending on the theme, the kit has 4 to 6 books in each kit. So this one has, well, they all have the books and activities, manipulatives and things like that the families get to use with the book. I want to emphasize, they keep this forever. This is not a borrow. This is not a loan. We want them to take this kit home and use it in a way that works for them. The kit also has a manual. In the manual, there are activity sheets. There are YouTube links for videos that go with the book we've shared, as well as gifts for the sign language that we've shared with them during the workshop. The activity, there's also information in here that hopefully the families will find valuable.

The goals for the activity sheets also align with the Tennessee Department of Education Early Language standards. And now, the activity sheets that are in here, these are for the families. It's really what we're working on in the workshop as well. We're sharing strategies with them and then these activities and the activities have different levels, three different levels for each activity and each book. So the family can start where their child is and progress to the different levels as they go. Again, I've said the workshop is about two and a half hours-long. The first 30 minutes is really instructional type stuff and then it's hands-on. That's where we want the families to practice, get comfortable with the kit, open it, use the materials, look at the activity sheet, the activities, practice with us, practice together, you know, interact.

And that's a lot of fun. And it really does create a fun safe environment where the families are connecting and bonding. We really strive to respect the family's cultural if linguistic, and the personal request they have shared with us in the workshop. Just creating that environment that's comforting to the families. Main purpose is not only to have sharing strategies and the kit, but to connect. We really want the families to connect. And then they're able, through the workshop, practice the book sharing strategies and really realize how to play with their child, read these books, and use these book sharing strategies to take home and create that language-rich environment in their home. And I'm going to turn it over now to Connie. Oh, thank you, thank you. One thing that we had seen. When we go into the homes, a lot of families shared with us, you know, when you put it out for the families or children to play with their toys, they get into it. There's a lot in here. You're welcome to look at it later. If you don't have a model to put it together, it's hard to remember what goes with what book sometimes. Because this team is all animals. So it helps if you put it up. And then maybe pullout, you know, what do you want to do? Which one do you want to do? Give them the choice and follow their lead. But keep it in the bag to keep it organized as you can. That's coming from families who have shared their experiences with us. Okay, thank you.

>> So now I'm going to briefly talk about the bookworm buddy program. This program is like a play date that happens every two months. This is for their parents and their babies. Families will learn how to read with their child, play with their child, use American Sign Language and spoken English. Remember, all of our programs are offered bilingually. Our families can switch between the two languages. There's not one way. Let me explain how bookworm buddy works and what we do. First, we choose an age-appropriate book. And then we develop and create activities that are specific to the book. We collect all of that and put it into a bag, and mail it off to the family for free. And they keep everything that is in that kit. During the bookworm buddy's time, which is about one week later after they receive the kit, a language model will show the family how to sign the story, and then we play. Yay! The fun part. I have little demonstration for you. Here's one of the activities we do. This is actually, I think, it was a wet wipes bottle that I repurposed. It was very simple to make. The families are given pictures that are printed, and they can tape them around an object, and what you do is the baby sits in front of you, and the parents will roll this back and forth for an interactive play experience where it stops, it becomes an opportunity to teach vocabulary. So it could be sign. It could be lip-read. Awe, love. Love. I love you. And you love me. So it's an opportunity to use that vocabulary word meaningfully in language.

The pictures are changed. [Laughter] I cannot keep this thing from rolling away from me. [Laughter] Thank you. See? Look, that's a perfect example of interactive play. So the parents have access to the images. And then they can create something along the lines of what I just showed you. And also the pictures could be life experience representation. Maybe the family just went to the beach. And so they have a beach ball. Or bath time can be represented by a rubber ducky or a car can be represented for a recent trip.

These are instructions on how to make the interactive toy. And then I have two more examples I like to share with you. If you'll notice, the kit has a book plus any material needed for the activity. Sometimes the book is from the imagination library, sometimes it's based on the book the family already has in their home. If the family does not already have that book in their own library, we purchase it for them. And all of this is free. Anything that is sent to them, they can keep. Am I missing anything, team?

>> What about the imagination library?

>> Are you familiar with the imagination? It's different in each state. Yeah, if you can go ahead and explain that, Tracy?

>> TRACY DUNCAN: Thank you very much for your attention. I was saying that the Dolly Parton Foundation provides free books to all families in the United States when they have a state partner. And each state has a different name. So the imagination library is in Tennessee. I don't know what Dolly Parton's library is in each of the states that you have. But I saw some people nodding their head. So do you have a Dolly Parton library in your state? Fantastic! Great. If not, it's something you should look into. Most states have a governor's literacy program, and you can contact your governor's office and ask about getting that for free. It's a matching thing. Nothing is free. So it's a matching agreement between Dolly Parton and the state.

So we are so pleased that you've enjoyed this workshop. And we would love for you to come up and see the items that we brought with us. If you have questions, we love to entertain them. Now, do we need to pass the mic? Okay.

>> Is there another mic?

>> So I saw 3 people in the back. So we were wondering about your funding. Where does that come from to do what you do in Tennessee?

>> The funding for this program comes through the Tennessee schools for the Deaf outreach program. We are not the School for the Deaf. We are the outreach program. And our budget allows us to do that. The shared reading project, which is through Briella's program. We have a grant from the state for the past four years that is doing the deaf monitor parent advisor program. And so all of the Deaf mentors are shared reading project tutors, and they are ones who provide that to the families. Thank you for asking that question. That's a good one. Money doesn't grow on trees. [Laughter]

>> Ready, Set, Learn! project, where do they meet in person? Can that be done virtually for our rural families? What is the procedure for presenting that to them? I know you said a small group like five.

>> TRACY DUNCAN: Thank you. Great question. We started Ready, Set, Learn! before COVID. We made 40 kits. We started with animals, I think, and then transportation. And we went out to wherever we could scrape together people. So we had them at the Regional Center for the Deaf. We had them at churches. We had them at libraries. We had them anywhere we can gather the families together. Sometimes it was at a University and we had 4 or 5 people. Sometimes we had less. But our goal was always to have, sometimes we had 6, but we always provided an interpreter, whatever that language might be. And we provided lunch and childcare. So we had to have a setting that allowed that. COVID hit. We made a kit for a little bit older children. And we did it virtually. And of course, it was not nearly as successful. Driving those kits to each one of those families' home took a long time. It's not as easy. Yeah. So we did couple of those kits. And we are chomping at the bits to get back out into the community. And I think people miss us. I think they said, hey, we love for you to come back. And we are thrilled about doing that. So we're glad to be back on road Gladiators. We developed the bookworm buddy during COVID because parents wanted to see their children play with other children. So we did it in breakout room in written language, or ASL, or whatever combination. Following 20 minutes, everybody turned their screens on and we pointed to the babies and the babies were playing and we watched the parents play with each other. So it was a little virtual play group. But again, we're very excited about getting out there and doing this in a small group again with families across the state, person-to-person. I thought someone else had their hand up back there? Go ahead. Okay, wait, wait, wait.

>> How often do you provide the Ready, Set, Learn! workshops? How often are they provided?

>> TRACY DUNCAN: We have funding to make 40 boxes. We have a long state. So we start contacting people. When we run out of boxes, that's when we're done. So it might be 4 or 5 or 6 times a year in each part of the state. Or just as long as we have the boxes, we can keep doing them and, again, it depends on how many families. So maybe we're going to get really popular this year and we can really go out and do it more frequently. We would like that a lot. We have a question here. Do you need a mic? He's going to sign.

>> Hi, I'm Eric from Oklahoma. It's so great to be able to give the family these boxes. So as the kits get older, I'm wondering what the families do with the box? Do they donate it back to you? Is it destroyed at that point? Do you have experience with what happens to the life of the box?

>> TRACY DUNCAN: I don't think we've had that experience yet, because we just started that, like in 2018.

>> I think 20. Yeah, maybe.

>> TRACY DUNCAN: Anyway, Alyssa has couple of more families that are older. But for the most part, we hope it's for the velveteen rabbit and they're loved, and loved and loved and used and maybe their siblings have it. Okay, that's what you were going to say. So it becomes the family's property. If they want to give it back to us, that's perfectly fine. We're not going to turn it away. But we want the families to love it like the velveteen rabbit. To have cherished memories and not want to give that stuff up. I have children who are older and they actually love those old books. When I look at those old books, even though they're older, they're cherished. Time's up. I'm sorry.

>> Thank you, everyone. Come and take a look if you would like.

(End of session).