>> SPEAKER: Hello. Thank you all for coming. I know it's the last session, and you kind of want to leave, so, I appreciate you being here. Um, our presentation is on embracing diversity through language and culture. I was just curious, if I can get a feel of the room, do we have any parents here? Okay. Providers? Excellent. Um, EHDI? We have some EHDI? Okay. So, good mix of everything. Other? Excellent. Awesome.

>> SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Maira Nava. I'm with Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side, and I have a 9-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son who is deaf, wears bilateral cochlear implants.

>> SPEAKER: I'm Christina and also with Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side. I have two children, a 2-year-old who was born deaf/hard of hearing and a 4-year-old who is hearing, and our communication methods, we use Spanish, spoken Spanish, English, and ASL.

>> SPEAKER: Our objectives are identify at least two advantages of having a child be multi-lingual versus mono-lingual, be able to list three ways early intervention providers can support parents of diverse cultural language backgrounds and recognize the importance of integrating families, language, and culture into services, understand the importance multi-culturallism plays into self-identity and how a person feels they fit into the world around them.

>> SPEAKER: So, families who live in the United States or have immigrated here from other countries or who do not speak English often feel pressure to stop using their home language with their children and to focus on learning English. That was my experience growing up. Um, so, when I first, in my household, we only spoke Spanish, and I entered kindergarten, I did not go to preschool, it was just Spanish speaking at home. When we arrived at the school, obviously, there was some communication, um, issues, I was not able to communicate in English, so the school gave me parents two options. The first option was for me to go to a bilingual program, which was housed where they, kind of, put everybody, so, there was high needs there. My brother went there, he is, um, low-functioning autism, so, my mom was not, um, feeling comfortable with that decision, so she said what other option do I have? So, the second was full immersion, English classroom, um, do not speak Spanish at home, so that she can learn the language faster. So, that's what she did, and I grew up, kind of, not being allowed to speak Spanish, and the whole family tried to transition to just English and, as I grew up, my grandparents came to live with us, um, and I was having difficulty communicating with them, and that's when my mom's like, yeah, this isn't going to work for us. So, we went back to just Spanish at the home, and I was able to get most of my Spanish back, um, and it's just a very, unfortunately, it's still encouraged today, sometimes, so, I want to, kind of, spread the word that, um, it's okay, to speak more than one language and encourage it, and I think that most, a lot of the time now, children who are given that chance to be multi-lingual/bilingual, um, oftentimes have equal or better language acquisition than those who are made to change their whole home language into something that's different.

>> SPEAKER: My experience growing up was a little different, where the school district we were housed in did not a bilingual program available at all. So, the only option was English, um, and my parents, um, they had no other option, so, we went straight into English mainstream schooling. Um, we spoke only Spanish at home as well and, when we started, um, my parents didn't know how to help me with homework because of that language barrier. Um, everything was coming home in English, and that was difficult growing up as well. However, my dad said you can learn English at school, but you will speak Spanish at home. There's no English allowed in this house and, from, I was upset, growing up, because, oh, I don't see anything wrong with it, but he would correct us each time he would hear us speak English, if it was between my siblings, um, he would say no English at home. So, growing up, at the moment, I was like, oh, I don't see that being a wrong thing, but I am grateful that he was strict, because if he wouldn't have been, I don't think my Spanish would have been as good as it is today, and I do see a lot of that with, um, newer generations, where the Spanish isn't as strong. Um, so, I am grateful that he was really strict in that aspect.

>> SPEAKER: So, you can read that up there, but we found it kind of neat that the percentage of people who are multi-lingual is so great in other countries, with Europe leading, um, and, then, the U.S., kind of, being at 20 percent. Some other fun facts were that, in the U.S., there's 26 percent of 5 to 7 year olds that are multilingual, and that varies from state to state. So, let's, um, I'm trying to think, in California, there was 43 percent who are multilingual versus, Virginia, there's 2 percent. So, huge different ranges and, then, Singapore has 90 percent of children who are multilingual. So, seems like we need to educate ourselves a little bit more, so we're able to encourage that multilingualism.

>> SPEAKER: Monolingual versus multilingual, monolingual, disconnect between child and family, a loss of cultural knowledge, loss of identity for the child, but multilingualism, they're able to navigate more than one culture, better prepared to live in a multicultural society, feel at ease with a diverse group of friends, build curiosity, eagerness to learn about more cultures.

>> SPEAKER: Before we go on, I just wanted to add a little bit into this too. A lot of the times, what I see, I'm also an educator, I teach in the school districts, and I've done K through 6, as well as some junior high, so, I guess through 8, and I see that when they're, um, given this monolingual pathway/monocultural, so, they're kind of immersed into our culture, as a society as a whole, they grow up feeling embarrassed of their own culture, and that's something that's hard to encourage, hard to get them to feel proud of their culture as they grow up, so, if we can encourage that as they're growing up, it might make for an easier self-identity. We'll talk about that later.

>> SPEAKER: In the U.S., children in a multilingual home are likely to have parents without a high school education, are likely to be growing up with financial challenges, and are likely being raised in a different cultural setting than the majority of society. When it comes to this, this really hits home for me, because my mom and dad did not finish high school. They migrated to the United States at a very young age, dedicated their lives to work and family, um, they had minimum wage jobs, we had a lot of financial challenges growing up. We also, um, didn't have enough money for food, so we would go to food banks, um, thrift stores for clothing or, um, hammy-downs from relatives, so, um, that was my experience growing up. So, our culture setting was different from my typical peers, so, be aware and conscious of these possibilities with families that you're working with. Families with a native language other than English should not be told to discontinue their home language, rather the professional can help these families balance their home language with English and ASL, if they choose to maximize language acquisition in their child's lives.

>> SPEAKER: Okay, so, I just wanted to add that this is what I wish would have happened to me, um, but thinking of our children who are deaf and hard of hearing, if we're able to make connections with their parent cultures, um, and keeping their language will have them also be able to connect with their extended family, right? So, especially in our culture, we have family that is extended living with us at some point, like, we had aunts, we had uncles, we had my grandparents, we were, like, called the nursing home of the family, and everyone was Spanish-speaking, right? So, able to keep that home language is going to give us a better sense of family and a better sense of community.

>> SPEAKER: How can providers support multilingual and multicultural families, get a better understanding of provider demographics? So, in 2021, out of 213,115,000 speech-language hearing associate members, only 8.2 percent self-identified as bilingual service providers. That is not enough to support the multilingual population. All providers can benefit from education and training to better work with the bilingual and multilingual population.

>> SPEAKER: So, spending time learning about the family's language, this can include, um, language history, language usage, language background, and utilize different resources, you can do, um, surveys and asking questions the right way. I know family dynamics vary between culture to culture and, like, even our own dynamics are different, even though we're technically both of Mexican culture. Um, it's also important to don't assume that communication methods are met since one parent speaks English. So, Maira will talk about this as well later. Then, you can ask about language goals and find ways to support their goals. So, something I'm thankful for is my providers always ask me for my future, like, where do we see ourselves in a few years, and they were able to give me resources that I didn't know I could benefit from until they were able to ask those questions.

>> SPEAKER: Reflect on linguistic biases. The U.S. tends to be English-centered. Everyone has linguistic biases, either unconscious and conscious. Um, many professionals have a history of looking poorly at bilingual experiences. Few providers have training in bilingual language development, and be open to learning and making challenges. So, I wanted to add, be conscious, if there is another language being spoken in the household, even if the child speaks mostly English or American Sign Language, they might have some other vocabulary in their native language. So, in my household, my son and daughter does have some Spanish vocabulary. For example, um, my son, Enrique, was reading a book from home, and it was, um, I see big apples, I see little apples and, when he read that sentence, I see little apples, he would say I see -- Spanish -- apples and, since he couldn't say it, he minimized it to ito, I see ito apples, and I said, since we were practicing in reading and in English, I did correct him, and I said, I see little apples, and he looked at me, and he said, wrong? Am I wrong, mom? And I said, no, you're not wrong. I had to explain it to him, like, you're right, that means little, but that's in Spanish language, and we're reading in English. Um, so, don't assume, um, you know, that whenever you're working with these multicultural children, um, that if you don't have that background or that vocabulary, that they might, um, be saying, like, jargon or that it's words that, um, they're making up, because they're actually having, um, that actual Spanish, um, language. Our experiences, um, my family dynamic is I am bilingual, I am English and Spanish-speaking, um, however, my husband/dad is primarily Spanish-speaking. Enrique and Emma is mostly English and sign language with some Spanish vocabulary. So, what I want to share is that being aware of other peoples' culture can go a long way, or it can, um, be negative impact as well on children, because my daughter, we went to a speech-language evaluation, and we were there, and they play with certain toys and certain scenarios to, kind of, watch them. So, they brought out the birthday cake, and they brought out the little doll, and they wanted to observe how she did with that scenario. So, my daughter, like, hummed, like, the happy birthday, she didn't have the vocabulary for it, but, then, she grabs the doll and smashes the face into the cake, and the SLP reacted, oh my god, well, what are you doing? And because of her strong reaction, not knowing the culture, made my daughter feel that she did something wrong. She turned to me with her eyes filled, wanting to cry, and I said, no, no, no, you didn't do nothing wrong, it's okay. So, I just wanted to share that experience, because, um, if you're not familiar with the culture, you can also make the child feel they're doing something wrong. In reality, they're not, it's part of who they are and the culture they come from, um, and I think having that understanding, it just can make the family feel much more welcomed and trusted with providers and just have that understanding. The other thing is dad is primarily, um, Spanish-speaking, so, the providers would just give all the materials to me in English, which then caused more burden on myself, with everything that's going on in my life, taking the kids to doctors and therapies and follow-ups, on top of that, I still had to go and explain everything to dad of what our day looked like, what the therapy session was. So, by the providers being able to provide a summary session in our native language can also leaveiate a lot of that pressure to mom, um, regarding, like, in my situation, with my husband, but, also, think about that, that can also help include grandparents, um, that want to be involved, that want to know a little bit more, um, that they have access to that as well.

>> SPEAKER: So, a little bit about my experience. Um, we've gone through a few different providers for different reasons, but our SLP, our original SLP was monolingual, and she did so well with us, like, she would provide resources, she would ask her colleagues to find different ways to develop sounds with Spanish words, right? She was able to find the same thing in English, which I really appreciated, and that provider ended up going on maternity leave, and she took the initiative to just, like, hey, I found this one who speaks Spanish, and this might be a better fit for you, and if you feel that she is, it's totally fine, if you don't, you know, if you just keep her. So, that was, kind of, that was really nice. I didn't know what the difference would be, but, then, I was able to see, it is nice, when you have the same language and, then, our DTH, um, was the one that was really good about asking us about the future, and I, she's the one that connected us with a deaf mentor, I had no idea that was a thing until she showed that to me. So, I encourage providers to ask questions. You know, I feel like we appreciate those questions, and that's the only way we know what we don't know. For parents, it's okay to switch, if you don't click with some professionals, it's okay. Sometimes, you can find one that is a better fit for you. It's okay, like, you don't have to take it personally. Sometimes, people click and, sometimes, they don't. so, learning about one's roots is the first step in learning about how someone has been shaped by culture, which is the last point that we want to touch on today.

>> SPEAKER: Including family's culture and language into sessions or assessments helps give children a stronger sense of who they are and where they come from. Families are able to connect and develop a sense of trust with providers when it's obvious that the provider's trying to learn their language and culture. Materials being accessible in their native language to share with others allows extended families to be actively involved. Building rapport is essential to better understand unique values, challenges, and needs for each family.

>> SPEAKER: Those are our children. They're so cute. So, something that's super important to us is, like I said, building that sense of identity. Um, children with hearing loss who are from a minority ethnic background often lack models for how to grow up in three different cultures. It's important for multilingual/multicultural children to learn and celebrate their uniqueness and appreciate that they belong to multiple communities. This way, as adults, they will have a stronger sense of identity and be able to form more connections across communities. So, myself, I don't have a hearing loss, but growing up multicultural, I often felt like I wasn't Mexican enough to fit with the Mexican group, or I wasn't white enough to fit with, like, you know, the Caucasian group or whatever, you know, like, I never felt like I fit in, and I truly think part of it is because we were forced into this other, um, dynamic of just English and just do what the school is expecting you to do and, thankfully, schools are changing now, but add in deaf/hard of hearing, now, you have not Mexican enough, not deaf enough, not hearing enough and, so, I feel like the goal should be to have that cultural and language fluidity, to be able to go from one to the other and feel confident doing that, and that is made possible by building a strong foundation to their different languages and to their different cultures, and providers, parents, the school system, everyone plays into that, and everyone can support that, so that these children will have a better sense of identity as adults.

>> SPEAKER: In summary, no matter what culture a person comes from, the goal should be to develop a person-to-person relationship. Treating people with respect solves many cross-cultural problems.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

>> SPEAKER: I'm actually very blessed, because I'm at sunshine cottage in Texas, and 50 percent of our providers, oh, it's more, we're actually outnumbered, English speakers to Spanish speakers at this point, um, but I wanted to share some resources. ASHA has some resources that are able to show you the phonemes that cross over, so, if this is a sound that is in Spanish and is also in English, a sound that is in Arabic that's also in English, so that you can do more targeting. They also have some developmental norms for what sounds emerge in American English speakers and in English speakers who are learning from non-native English speakers. So, those milestones look very different for when they come in, whether or not they're American English speakers versus international English speakers. So, go check those out. They're really great.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you.

>> SPEAKER: Hi ladies. I truly enjoyed it. Maira, I wanted to tell you how happy I am that you shared your experience, because I think the assumption is that, because you speak English, it's your job to interpret and translate everything for your husband, your in-laws, your cousins, your mother. It's an assumption that I see, I mean, I have made that mistake, and I'm learning a little bit, um, and I think it's very important, that the families understand the right to request a report in both languages or whatever language they want. I want to say thank you so much for sharing your experience, because I learned a lot today.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you, and if you guys can fill out your survey as well. Thank you.

(Applause.)