

Better Together

ASL and Spoken Language Professionals
On the Same Team

EHDI Conference - March 2026



Presenters:



Lauren Burke, MS/CCC -SLP

Communication Specialist - Spoken Language

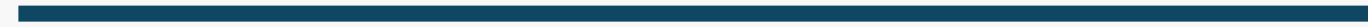


Christina Vorreyer -Davis, MS/NCAAT

Communication Specialist - ASL



Objectives



- 1 Identify successful components of ASL - Spoken Language
· collaboration with **both professionals on the same IFSP team** , joining visits together.
2. Examine **real-life early intervention scenarios** when partnership met the unique needs of family outcomes.
3. **Reflect** on professional boundaries and purposeful teamwork in your own programming/ services.

Setting the stage

ASL and spoken language viewed on opposite ends of the continuum

Different languages, modalities, strategies

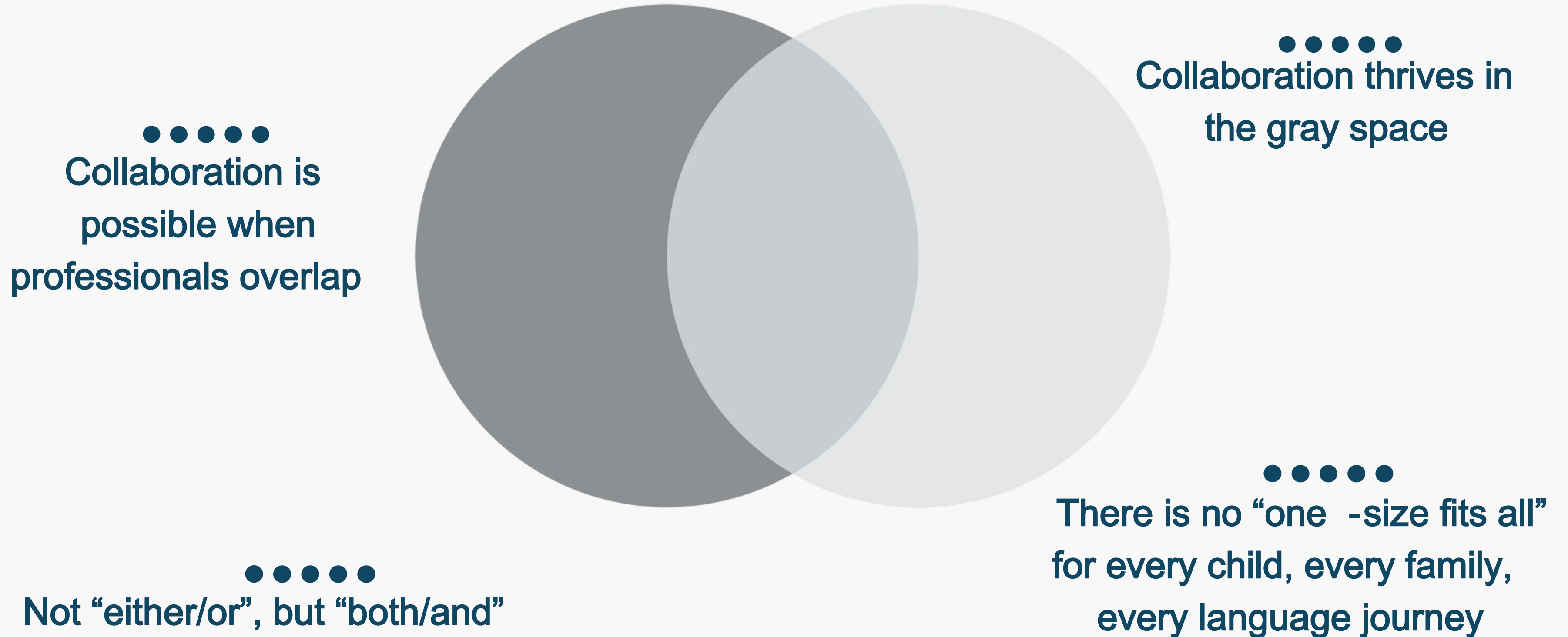
Different language specialists

Challenge:
How do we bridge
the divide?

Children Need Language to Learn



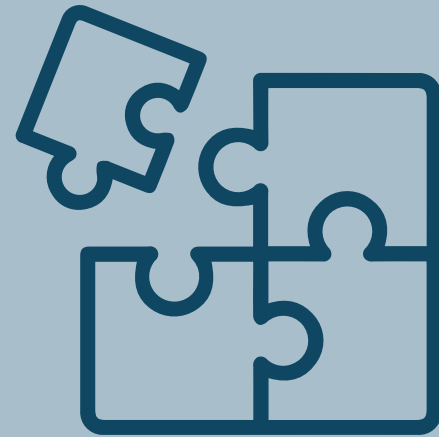
Embrace the “Gray”



Wisconsin's EHDI Model



EHDI staff includes an early intervention multidisciplinary team



Full participating partner with Part C statewide program



ASL and Spoken Language Specialists as equal partners



Coaching professionals and parents/caregivers via virtual support

Framework for Successful Collaboration

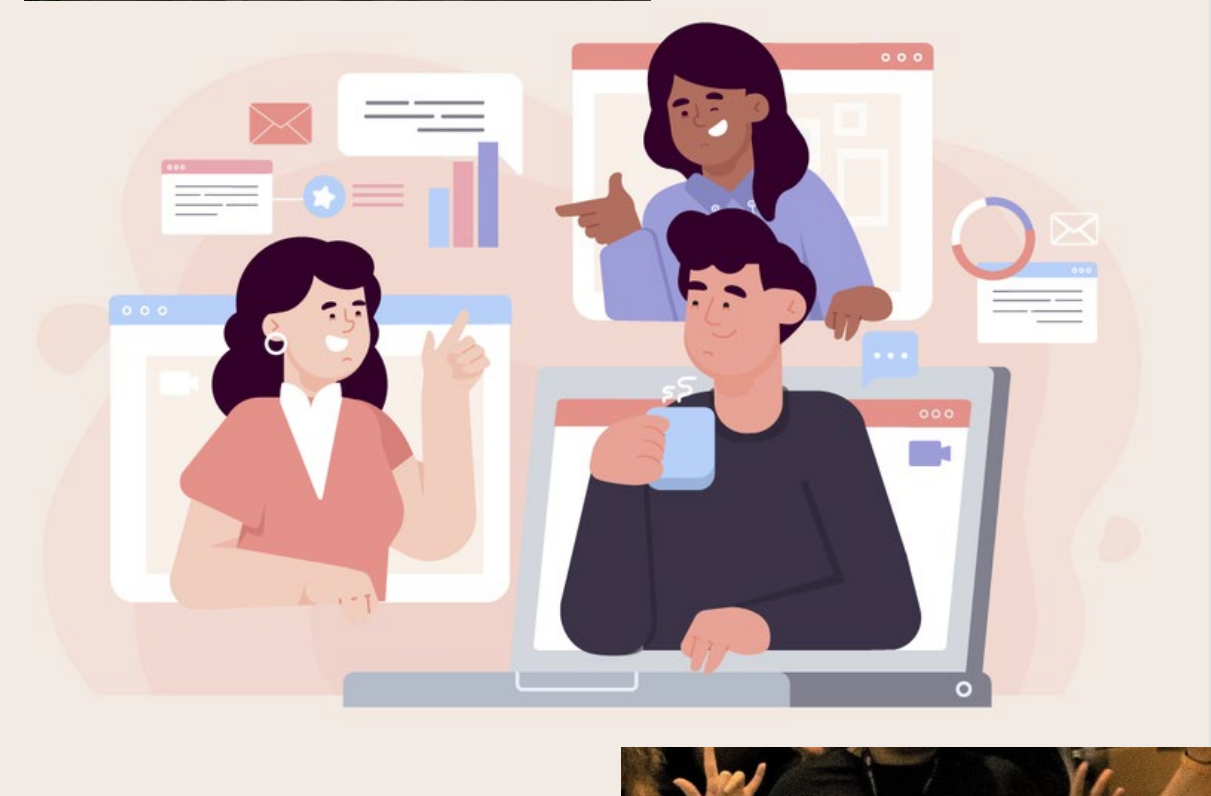
Ongoing Communication

Ongoing communication scheduled

- Weekly meetings 1:1
- Team meetings weekly (Multi-disciplinary)
- Case Conferences monthly with Support Parents

Joint visits, In -person and Virtual

- Planning ahead of visit and reflection after visit
- Visit summary notes



Framework for Successful Collaboration

Procedures

ASL Specialist at Initial Eval / Initial IFSP

- Families meet Deaf Professional early in their Part C journey
- Both VCSL and Auditory skills assessed from the start

CARES Beginnings Framework with Early Intervention Coordinator

Differentiated Intervention support for each family

- Communication Opportunities presented early
- Family's and baby's learning styles and communication goals
- Both ASL and Spoken Language specialists available to every family with IFSP

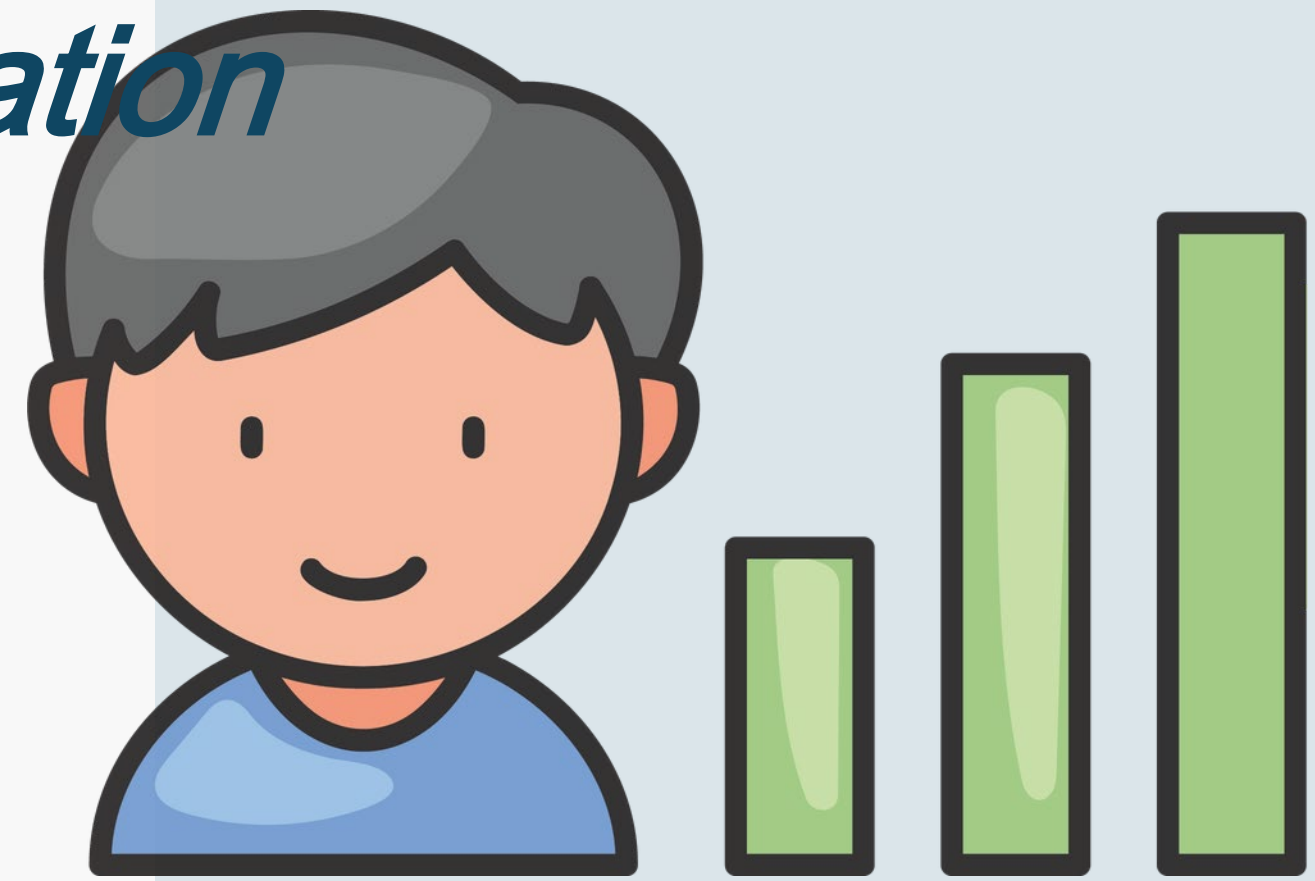


Framework for Successful Collaboration

Assessment Protocol

How we assess language acquisition:

- VCSL
- Auditory Skills Checklist
- ASL/English Milestones Checklist
- Vocabulary, Pragmatics, and speech sound inventories



Ongoing Assessment scores tracked via statewide database

Team meetings monthly

- IFSP updates, summary of progress shared
- Child at-risk for delays in language acquisition?
- Request for support (Support Parents, ASL Specialist, SLP, TODHH)

Early Intervention Scenario



Uncertain Start, Strong Advocate family

Initially, the family wanted listening/talking as primary

- Uncertainty with diagnosis and auditory access
- Functional listening activities

Early, both spoken language and ASL supports

Later, family shifted to only ASL

Outcome: Family scored ASL resources independently; L1 ASL



Early Intervention Scenario



Young Mom

Former Loss To Follow Up and At -risk for Loss to Intervention

ASL primary language

Both team members join IFSP visits; Parent support especially important

Navigating path toward cochlear implant

Outcome: Growing together, thriving together



Early Intervention Scenario



Mixed Communication Preferences

Family of 6 uses spoken language, but as toddler grows...



Mixed communication

- Receptive Language: child's preference - spoken language
- Expressive Language: child's preference - ASL

ASL learning for parents and siblings, embedding into all daily routines

Outcome: Stronger parent -child relationship

Early Intervention Scenario



Bilingual - Bicultural

Families with newborns who are candidates for cochlear implants

Early supports: Parent -child bond, early attachment, ASL

Later, supporting new listening skills via CI

Language Plan - continue progress in both spoken language and ASL

Outcome: Advocacy and acceptance



Early Intervention Scenario



Deaf Plus



DHH and visual differences

DHH and autism

DHH and global developmental delays

DHH and craniofacial differences

Feedback from families

Families value choice and feeling heard.

“We feel supported no matter the path.”

Feedback from Part C Providers

Emphasis on relationship -based work.

Strong collaboration. Increased learning and confidence with low incidence population on their caseload. Coaching “just in time”.



Myth Buster #1



Early Intervention should focus on only one communication approach.

Myth Busted:

- Best Practice early intervention services are
 - Individualized
 - Family Centered
 - Flexible

Collaboration supports equitable language access.

Myth Buster #2

*ASL Specialists interfere w
listening goals.*



Myth Busted:

- Collaboration strengthens outcomes
 - ASL supports engagement and connection
 - Strong communication improves listening readiness
-

Myth Buster #3



*Families must choose on
language.*

Myth Busted:

- Families do not have to choose
 - ASL supports and Spoken Language supports work together
 - Supports both visual and auditory language access
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Myth Buster #4



ASL Specialists and SLP's do same job.

Myth Busted:

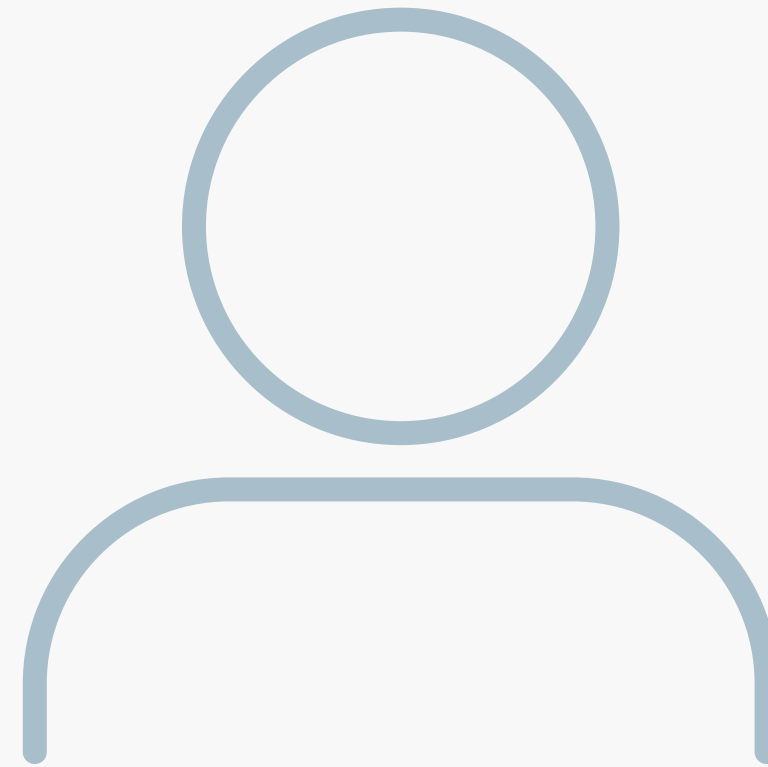
- ASL Specialist
 - Visual language access and development
 - Parent-Child communication
 - Deaf culture and identity
 - SLP/ Spoken Language Specialist
 - Auditory access and development
 - Parent-child communication
 - Receptive language, expressive language and speech development
-

Lessons Learned: ASL Specialist



Benefits

New knowledge and perspective



Growth

Stronger advocacy for families

Challenges

Balancing philosophies



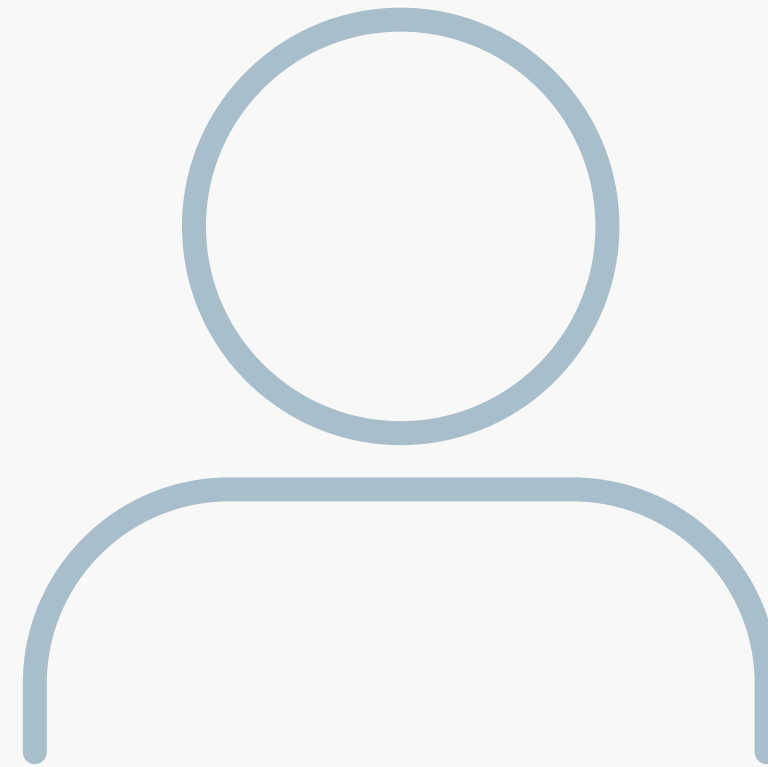
Lessons Learned: SLP/Spoken Language Special

Benefits

New knowledge and perspective

Challenges

Communication and distance



Growth

Learning to let go of control



Key Components for Success



Scheduled ongoing communication



Procedures to prioritize language acquisition



Mutual respect and learner mindset



Shared IFSP planning and responsibility



Family centered care drives decision -making



Bridging the divide

Collaboration thrives in the “gray space”

Families are empowered when they are knowledgeable and when they are active participants in decision -making

ASL-Spoken Language teamwork strengthens outcomes

Children Need Language to Learn



Everyone has the same goal: language acquisition!

Reflection and Discussion



How might you expand
your professional
boundaries?

What would an
ASL - Spoken Language
collaboration look like in
your setting?





Thank you

Lauren Burke & Christina Vorreyer -Davis

Contact info available upon request

