REALTIME FILE

EHDI 2019

HEATHROW AB - SESSION 1

MARCH 4, 2019

11:50am – 12:15pm

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PRESENTATION: *The Language Growth Chart: How Parents Can Track Bilingual Language Development in the First Three Years of Life*

>> MANDY LONGO: Hey, everybody. Hi. How are you doing today?

Ok. I'm going to start over. Hey, everybody, how are you doing today? Whoo‑hoo!

Welcome to EHDI. We're so excited to be here. We've been coming to this conference for years. This is our second time presenting. We just love being here, the collaboration and the opportunities that come from all of us like‑minded individuals in a room together and having the opportunity for these conversations we think it's awesome. And thank you so much for being here. We really appreciate it.

My name is Mandy. I'm a speech‑language pathologist. I grew up in Florida. I went to undergrad at the University of Florida. Then I went to Gallaudet University for my Master's Degree. And that's where I met Katherine. And I'm going to let her talk about herself.

>> KATHERINE ROBINSON: Hi. I'm from Florida. So this cold thing is just not fun for me. So, yeah, we met at grad school. I'm an Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist. I'm also a nationally certified interpreter. And depending on the day I wear different hats. Yeah, so that's it. So we're going to get into it.

>> MANDY LONGO: Yeah. All right. Here we go.

Are you here to help us? Wonderful.

>> No. I think you're good. This is your PowerPoint?

>> MANDY LONGO: Yeah.

>> You're good.

>> MANDY LONGO: And we click to the next slide by ‑‑ that's not ‑‑

>> Oh, my gosh. There's a lot of static in here. There you go.

>> MANDY LONGO: What do I push?

>> Just the arrow.

>> MANDY LONGO: So in real life this looks really good. And RIPPLE is all in one word and there's not an E that hangs down.

We worked in the field of Deafness for over 20 years. And we decided ‑‑ we've worked in a variety of different situations ‑‑ clinics, schools, statewide projects, all over the place. And we decided for the last 20 years this is our contribution to the field and for the next 20 years what do we want to do and how do we want to see ‑‑ how can we contribute to some change? So we kind of went back to our Early Intervention roots because we know change really happens when you're working with families because the parents ‑‑ like, they're the start of everything. And if we can just help parents understand what they need to understand related to their Deaf child, related to language acquisition, they can be fierce advocates and advocate for their child throughout their life. So we wanted to go back to Early Intervention roots.

So we created a business called RIPPLE. And RIPPLE stands for Reach their Individual Potential through Personal Language Experience. And we know that language has a ripple effect in our life. And we think of language as a drop of water. So if you think of a drop that drops into water and you can picture a ripple effect of what that happens, language acquisition, you know, impacts academics and literacy, it impacts bonding with parents. It impacts relationships. It impacts social emotional relationships and in developments. It impacts your job and future potential in your lifetime. It all hinges on that language.

So language is so precious to us. And we've been so frustrated by seeing so many children deprived of language for really no good reason. So that's how we want to spend the next 20 years in our career, is making an impact and having that ripple effect with other families, with other providers. So that's how we started RIPPLE.

>> KATHERINE ROBINSON: We provide support and help for professionals and also for parents. So we have three different branches. We have what we call direct services, so Early Intervention Services. We can go into the home. We do online webinars with families across the United States. We do different types of events.

>> MANDY LONGO: Language experiences.

>> KATHERINE ROBINSON: Language experiences. Because you can't learn language, like, in a box. You have to learn it through experience. So we provide language experiences, talking with parents about how you can provide an everyday language experience for your child.

We also do professional development trainings, workshops. You know, we're from Florida but we present across the nation. We've been to Canada. So we love that. It's exciting. We love this. This is like one of our favorite things to do. So we do professional development trainings.

And the other thing we do ‑‑ or we have done, we've authored a book. And we're creating products. So we have that here. And part of what we're going to talk about today is the parent aspect, a form we've created from "Closing the Gap" book and I'll let Mandy talk about that.

>> MANDY LONGO: All right. The book that we created is called "Closing the Gap: The Early Interventionist's Guide to Assessing and Monitoring Bilingual Language Development in Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing ‑ Birth to 3". We call it "Closing the Gap" because our focus is on having a deaf child be able to have language at the same level ‑‑ their language level being the same level as their chronological age. So if a child is 1 year‑old, we want them to have a language of a 1‑year‑old. If they're 3 years old, we want them to have the language of a 3‑year‑old. But often in children who are deaf or hard of hearing there's a gap. There's a gap between their age and what their language levels should be to to match that age.

So our book goes into detail to talk about what is language, what is language depravation, how do you identify if a child has a gap between their chronological age and language age, and what do you do to close that gap. Because language is the number one factor in many deaf children where if we could close that gap, that could change the rest of their lives.

And we all know the earlier we can get to a child, the earlier we can give them that language, the bigger difference it will make in the rest of their life. So this book is specifically looking at birth to 3, that critical time period of brain plasticity and language development and helping to educate professionals on how they can monitor that language development and also how do you talk to a parent before that so a parent understands the critical role of language in a child's life, language in a child's brain, and what the parent's role is as well as what the professional's role is.

So we have the book here. The book explains all of those concepts and ideas. It's designed for a professional. It's not really designed for a parent. A parent could read it but it's designed for a professional to get a foundation and understanding what all of those concepts are.

And then at the back of the book ‑‑ can you hand me a DRIP‑EY? We explain and introduce this protocol that we created. It's called the DRIP‑EY which stands for Diagnostic Record and Intervention Plan, and the EY part is Early Years. So this is not an assessment. It's a way to collect data from whatever assessments it is that you use. It's designed to look at both English and ASL and compare the child's chronological age to their English age, compare the child's chronological age to their ASL age, how to know is there a gap, how big is that gap, and it gives you ‑‑ it has sections to put all the data on.

And then it has a chart. This chart is a way where you can plot the data. I'll show you a slide later so you'll be able to see this better. And at the end if you want to come up here and look at things, you're welcome to come up.

The chart gives you a visual representation of the data that you collect. And we're going to explain what that means. But a lot of times we have found as professionals we're often the only ones sitting at an IFSP table or somewhere where we're the ones who understand this information. So the purpose of this form is not only to be able to have a method for collecting the data and identifying the gap and planning your intervention but also as a tool to help other people understand what the gap is and how critical that is.

Oftentimes we use data ‑‑ when we assess children who are deaf, we're comparing them to hearing peers. We're comparing them to deaf peers. But really what it comes down to is comparing them to themselves. So it's a different way of collecting data. We're trying to look at this gap right here. So the blue line on the bottom is their language age. The black line on the top is their chronological age. And if those two lines are not on top of each other, then there's a gap.

Really, the goal ‑‑ like I said before, the goal is for their language age and their chronological age to be the same. So really all you need to do is look at themselves. If their language age is equivalent with their chronological age, then they're on target and they're set. You know what I mean?

A lot of times we get these assessments, do a language assessment, and get a score of 52. Well, what does that mean? What do you do with that information? We need them to have language that's on target.

Here's an example, a very quick example, of a DRIP‑EY form that's been filled out. Go ahead.

You're probably thinking, why are you talking so much about the DRIP‑EY, that's not what we're here for? This information will translate over to how parents understand it and there is a parent form. So just keep holding on to that thought.

>> KATHERINE ROBINSON: To quickly understand what you're seeing up here, we have the beginning of the year to the end of the year, going chronologically across this form. This is the initial evaluation, a six‑month review, and an annual review. So we start at the beginning of the year with this child where we're looking at their chronological age. So this child is 24 months old. This line is their ASL language age, 12 months old. And then we have their English language age of 6 months old.

So we transfer these numbers to these bars so we can color it in and get a picture of what that gap looks like. So in ASL if we see the gap between 24 months and 12 months, meaning their chronological age versus language age in ASL, they have a 12‑month gap.

Over here in English, their chronological age is 24 months, English age 6 months. We color that in and we see that they have an 18 month gap.

So we can use this information to figure out, ok, one year from now where do we want their language to be? And every kid is going to be different. But you have to think about in a year's worth of time, they have to have more than a year's worth of growth. Because if they grow one year in one year worth of time, what happens to the gap? It stays the same.

So, if you want to close the gap, you have to set a goal for yourself at the end of the year that you need that gap to close by more than a year in a year's worth of time, which means intense intervention.

So part of this book explains: How do I calculate the gap? How do I set a goal for a year from now? How do I monitor that over time to see if the gap is closing? If you go for a whole year and the gap is the same size or the gap is wider, we're doing something wrong.

So we look in the book at: How do you look at the quantity of intervention that you're providing a child? How do you look at the quality of intervention that you're providing a child? And you're monitoring that through the year to make sure that this is closing. Because if the gap is not closing, we're doing something wrong or there's something else we need to look at.

So you can't always expect for every child that that gap will close in one year. That's not always a realistic expectation. It might take several years. So the next year you take a new form and you plot the end of year data on to the new form and you keep going.

Let's look at what happened with this kid after a year's worth of time. So, we start off with a 12‑month gap in ASL, an 18‑month gap in English. We provided intervention, monitored this over the year. At the end of the year, their chronological age is now 36 months, a year older. The ASL age is 33 months, so I know they have a three‑month gap. The English age is 18 months, so that means they went from a 6‑month language age to an 18‑month language age. So their language age increased but they still have the exact same size gap, an 18‑month gap to an 18‑month gap. So they gained a year's worth of language in English but the gap didn't close whereas in ASL they went from a 12‑month gap to a 3‑month gap.

So we could spend all day talking about what this information means and how you could use this language to intervention services, the environment that would be best suited for them, where you need to focus help determine therapy, how much therapy do they need and when, what role does a parent play. This form can be used in so many ways. But today we're here to talk about one of those ways.

This is the parent chart. Can you grab a parent chart?

This is a parent chart. This looks very similar to what we just looked at. It looks like a data collection tool. But that's not the point of this form. The point of this form is to help parents understand. And this can be used to start a conversation. It can be used to help define the terms that are found on this form. It can be used to put on the refrigerator to give parents a reminder. It can be used to write down goals. There's a whole back side to this form, too.

But this is a tool to help parents understand. And you leave this form with them. You can fill it out. You can fill it out together. And you can use this each time you're with that parent to have conversations. Because, the time that you're with a child is a drop in the bucket compared to how much time that parent with that child. And it's critical for a parent to understand language development, understand what the gap is, understand the critical time period, know what the difference is between a chronological age and a language age, to know what those language goals are and how to work on them and how to address those goals.

So we use this form as a conversation starter, as a way to educate the parent so they are enabled, so that they have the knowledge and tools that they need to build language within their child.

And the thing I was so excited about this morning when we listened to the keynote speaker and he mentioned about changing from doing it for somebody and doing it with them. I think when we work with families, we understand that. I mean, I'm there an hour a week. That's not going to do anything for your kid. I'm there to teach you what to do for the rest of the waking hours with your child. And my job is to help you understand why it's so important. Because we're losing time.You know, if we look at that linear line and we see as a child gets older, they're getting older minute‑by‑minute by minute. And when you can kind of see that and you can see the discrepancy, you see ‑‑ I've had parents go: Oh, I got a lot of work to do. I see it now. I see my kid's delay now. Ok, so what do we do to fix it?

Because they can visual trivialize, it becomes concrete. And it becomes something ‑‑ they understand the urgency of it when you can have a discussion in a way that they can understand it, in a way that they can find ownership in it and understand that as a parent, you have so much more responsibility than I do as a provider. I'm here to coach you and help you but now we got a lot of work to do so let's figure out how we can could it together.

And then it's encouraging for them to see that line start to close. I've sat with parents and they're like: Look at that. Or, hey, how come there's a plateau? We're doing this progress monitoring, looking at it every couple of minutes here it feels like and they're not making the progress; so what do we do? That's the time to talk about what do we do. Do we need to change something? Is this approach working? Do we need to add more time? Do you need to be more specific? Do I need to change what I'm doing as a professional? So it gives them a visual, concrete way to kind of gauge how effective something is. And sometime in this field we need to show this isn't working. And we got to switch to something else and we need data to do it.

We've known here in our gut level for a long time that some things are working good and some things are not working good for that particular kid. And now we can use this to show it to then put on the FSP to move that to an IEP of what we they need. We can justify our supports and services. We can justify more time for intervention. We can justify more supports because this kid's not making enough progress. And we don't have a lot of time. We have, you know, three years that critical language window is starting to close. So it's urgent.

This form has really helped. When I sit down with parents in the room on their floor and I explain it to them this form helps create a conversation and then have them really get it. And it helps the other team members who don't understand D/HH. It makes it concrete and visual for them, too. And I can't expect them to know everything about D/HH. That's not what they do. But it helps them see it.

>> So if you look at the back side of this form, I know you guys can't really see it and I'm sorry we don't have a slide for it. But basically it's an area for the parent or you ‑‑ it's good to have the parent make their own notes. This form is for them so that they have something to reference and something to look at. But we have a section at the top for the parents to write notes, for the parents to write questions, to write anything that they want to write down. This is for them.

And then at the bottom there are two separate boxes here. One is at the time of the six‑month review and one is at the time of the annual review. We like the parents to understand what is the current language gap that your child has right now and what are we aiming for. What are we striving for?

And when it comes time for that next assessment whether it's at six months or 12 months, did they get there? And let's talk about that. And what tools can we use to help them get there?

So a lot of times ‑‑ like, before we had this form we would say: All right, here are the results of the assessment; here are the language sub-skills that we need to focus on and we talk about that.

But with this, it gives them a different investment into it because they are looking at these numbers and they are looking at this gap and they are understanding my way of helping shrink this gap down is by doing these things. They have concrete information of if I work on this skill or if we go do these language experiences or whatever it is, then I'm working on reducing that gap. So it gives them another perspective and a deeper understanding of what their role is and how they are influencing their child's language, their child's brain which is so important.

So it gives parents a completely different ownership of their child's language. It gives them a deeper understanding of their child's language. It also gives them a deeper understanding of what those goals are and how to achieve them. And it also gives them a voice and a tool to say to the professional to say to the school, to say to the early intervention program: Why is this gap not closing? I know ‑‑ I'm a parent. I can see on this form. The form shows this gap isn't closing. What does that mean? We need to talk about that.

So it gives them data. It gives them a voice that they didn't have before. Because a lot of parents with our testing that we do, they see a number on a paper but what does that number mean? They're not trained in that. They don't get that. And that's ok. But this gives them something that they have that they can control, that they can understand. That gives them more ownership and more voice into intervention and language development within their own child.

>> And going back to what the speaker said, we can't do the intervention for the parent. I can coach you. I can teach you. I can give you as much of my brain as you can understand at that moment in time. And then I have to teach you what to do. Then you have to do it. So it definitely helps. In my experience in using this, it definitely helps the families.

The other thing that I was going to say that I think is helpful for the families is ‑‑ so, for the professional side of me, when I'm using the DRIP‑EY, there's an area that I use my assessment data as a professional, I'm putting my assessment data on there. And then there's an area that asks me questions what are the sub skills? What are the deficient sub skills that this child is missing right now? And I have to target that. And I have to teach parents: How do you work on pointing? That's a sub skill they don't have. So I'm going to teach parents, you know, when you're outside, point to a tree. How do you embed that in your everyday activities? When you're outside, point to a tree. Talk about the tree. Start commenting about the tree in either language. That's important in either language. Right?

So if I know exactly what the sub skills are that that child needs to work on and I can teach that to the parent and they can incorporate that into their everyday language with their child, we're going to see this line start to move because we know we're working on it. We're not working on some skill that they should have at their chronological age. We're working within their zone of proximal development; that this is the next thing we have to work on next. Then we're going to work on the next thing and the next thing.

I think it makes it real for parents. I think it makes it applicable for them. And then teaching them how to do that every day.

>> Do you have any questions about anything? Yes, right here. Hold on one second. Let me come to you.

>> My question is, What if a family is Spanish‑speaking? How does that apply into this DRIP‑EY? If the family doesn't know any English but the child is learning English at school but is speaking Spanish at home, how does that work?

>> That's an excellent question. I'll stand here because I know we have more.

One of the beauties of this form is that it's a data collection form. It's not an assessment ‑‑ I'm so sorry. I'm blocking the interpreter. I'm going to move over here.

Ok. So the beauty of this is that it's a data collection tool. I could erase the word ASL and I could write in, you know, French Sign Language. I could erase the word English and write in Spanish. It doesn't matter. It's the system. It's a system used to monitor that language. You can assess any language you want. You could assess only English with this form, only ASL with this form. You can use it however you want to use it. It's really the system that the form creates for you.

>> And if you wanted to look at ASL and English and Spanish development, because language is language and we want as much language going in as possible, pick a green pen and draw a green line for Spanish. Write a note on it. Show the parent. Look, we're looking at three different languages. We're looking at English, ASL, and Spanish. We're going to see where ‑‑ we're going to use the language that they're most successful in to build that secondary language, that third language, and show parents that that's a positive. Language is additive. It's great.

>> Are you good? Ok.

>> Thank you very much. Are there any plans for future editions to allow for more slots, for more language comparisons?

>> We have so many editions in our head. [Laughter]

>> We published this in June and we already had about a thousand things we want to do to change it. So, yes, there will be future editions and we have lots of plans. But this is our first edition and where we are at now.

>> And one of the things that I do right now, because I use it in my everyday life because I'm a developmental specialist going into homes. It's set up for initial eval, six‑month review and annual review. I make additional lines. Because I have to progress monitor every three months as an IFSP provider. So I just draw a little nice line in it and I can ‑‑ like I will put a line ‑‑ I spread it out and I hashtag ‑‑ hash these lines. And then I can do more data points across time, which is nice because it's just more data. It gives me a better‑looking line. It helps the parent see.

There's questions.

>> A lot of great information here. I'm curious. I know you guys kind of primarily deal with birth to 3. Do you think an assessment like this would have any value for children over the age of 3, like well into ages 5 or 6? Like, if there's a child who is 6 years old and has great oral English skills but maybe wants to develop ASL, do you think that this is a useful tool for that? Can it be adapted for older children?

>> 100%. We have grand plans of doing another school age version of this. We started off with birth to 3 to hit that critical time period, which is, you know, where we think we have the most bang for our buck. But we have used this same system all the way up through high school age.

>> And keep in mind, too, that this isn't an assessment. This is just a data collection tool. So you would use your regular assessments that you use for assessing ASL in English, different versions of all of those, and then you're just using this ‑‑ it's a methodology. What we found is ‑‑ we travel around the state and we did assessments for kids. We use this same methodology to see where kids are and where they were and how much progress they needed to make. That was part of our job. We would do language assessments together. So we took the methodology and created a protocol to help other people use the same methodology because we found it was helpful in explaining to IEP teams and ISP teams a language gap. We would write reports about a language gap and how much work we need to do to close that gap. So it gives a visual.

Mandy is coming. Run, Mandy, run.

>> I'm curious what assessment tool you're using now for ASL if you're using the ‑‑ what you're using.

>> Everybody asks that question. So, for birth to 3, the VCSL is a great cool to use because it ‑‑ it's normed on deaf children. It gives you an age level. The VCSL just recently changed their criteria for assessors and they're revising the assessment. So that might make it a little bit difficult for people who are currently using it to use it in the future.

>> Basically you have to be certified and qualified to use the VCSL beginning pretty much now. So that changes the dynamic.

>> Yeah. And it's a good thing. And it's frustrating at the same time. But it's a good thing. But look at ‑‑ again, looking at checklists, looking at data, looking at observational data, looking at anything that can give you an age level and a range would be great.

I know we've ‑‑

>> Is our time up? Ok. Our time is up. Oh, can we take a picture with all of you guys before we walk out the door? Nobody move.

>> We love it. Some people are moving but it's ok. Quick.

>> Everybody smile. Squeeze in. Social media.

All right. Good.

>> Yay, thank you, guys. Our business cards are up here. DRIP‑EY flyers are up here if anybody wants to come grab one.

Thank you, guys.