

Supporting Early Learning with American Sign Language

Marie Baeta: Hi, everyone, and welcome to "Baby Talks." We're so happy to have you here with us today. Today, we're going to be talking about supporting early learning with American Sign Language. For those who are joining us for the first time, "Baby Talks" is a series of webinars for teachers, family childcare providers, and home visitors working with infants, toddlers in Head Start, migrant and seasonal Head Start, and American Indian and Alaskan Native programs.

All of these webinars are designed to introduce you to research about babies and toddlers. You'll notice that we have an interpreter here with us today, and you can adjust your videos accordingly. Please note, as we get started, if you have a direct question, please put that in the Q&A widget, not the attendee chat, so we're sure not to miss it, and we can answer it for you.

Hi, everyone. My name is Marie Baeta, and I will be your host today. I'm from I-LABS, the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences here at the University of Washington. I-LABS is a NCECDL partner organization, which is an interdisciplinary research center, dedicated to understanding human learning with an emphasis on early learning and the brain.

Today, we'll also be joined by our guest speaker, Sam Sanders, from the Hearing, Speech & Deaf Center here in Seattle, and we'll meet him in just a moment. Before we get started, we wanted to review some of our learning objectives for today. By the end of today, you should be able to share a little information about American Sign Language, deaf culture, and infant and toddler language development.

You'll also be able to learn and use basic ASL signs and identify strategies for learning and integrating ASL into early learning environments. To aid you in today's talk, please reference the viewers guide, which you can download from the Resource List widget. The viewer's guide provides space for you to write with different prompts on it today as well as a list of resources to help continue your learning after today's webinar.

Before we jump in today's content, I wanted to first define a few words that are a little central to today's themes. In Head Start, a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while also developing a first, is considered a dual-language learner.

Children who are learning American Sign Language are also dual-language learners and are represented in our programs of Head Start, as well. Typically, they'll be learning American Sign Language and English, but this could also include other home languages as well as other home sign languages. Thinking about children who are DLLs today in our programs, we also want you to understand that bilingualism and supporting children who are DLLs is an issue of equity.

Equity in Head Start means the fair and just treatment to all children, families, and those who support them, and equity enables everyone to achieve their full potential. Leading with equity in our programs around language and access to culture means supporting the full and effective

participation of these children and their families where they feel seen, heard, acknowledged, and where they feel just really a sense of belonging and connection. We'll kind of talk a little bit about that today, how ASL and deaf culture are part of this mosaic of dual-language learners here in our Head Start programs.

I also invite you to explore the newly updated multicultural principles, which outlines the ways in which we can support children with diverse languages and culture, and there is a link in your viewers guide in the resource section, actually, is where you can find it. To get us started today, we have the pleasure to talk with Sam Sanders, who is the lead teacher for children ages zero to five at the Hearing, Speech & Def Center here in Seattle, to help us dive into the world of American Sign Language in early learning. Welcome, Sam, and we'd love to hear a little introduction.

Sam Sanders: Hello. I am absolutely thrilled to be here today. I hope you all are excited about learning as I am going to be teaching you. I have been working as a lead teacher with deaf children and hearing children for about five years. Some of them have additional needs, and I also work with their families. What I love is being able to see people get learning about different curriculums, the classroom, and our center and getting really motivated and involved. As you all know, we stay very busy, and I love that you all are considering providing more than one language.

Marie: Thank you, Sam. I'm really excited to have you, and let's jump right in.

Sam: Great.

Marie: To get us started, can you share a little bit about what is ASL? People, this might be the first time they've ever heard of it.

Sam: Of course. ASL is a visual gestural language that uses many different ways to communicate. They are able to express themselves, describe a visual world using space, and it is a complete language in and of itself. ASL, American Sign Language, has a very rich history. There was a man named Laurent Clerc who realized that deaf children in America needed better education. He got on a boat, went to Europe. He met Laurent Clerc. Thomas Gallaudet met Laurent Clerc. They were able to connect and continue. They came back to the United States and were able to develop the first American deaf school. And as that happened, deaf schools expanded across the nation.

People who use ASL, some people identify it as a cultural viewpoint. It is a social, cultural, a way of communicating. It is not in any way missing anything. It is a full language. Obviously, since it is modern native language, ASL is best taught by deaf people. We do it using storytelling, experiences, poetry.

Marie: That's really fascinating to hear that it has such a rich history, and I invite our participants to do a little research on your own to really find out there is just so many stories and interesting ways of seeing history in ASL and in culture, as well. It's so descriptive and

animated. I just wanted to share that, in this photo, we see an educator signing the word "ready" to a small child with the truck there. Yep, signing "ready."

Sam: Ready.

Marie: Thinking about ASL, what do you think makes ASL unique?

Sam: That is a great question, and it is honestly because it is visual, and we use space. This is not a word-for-word translation. If you think about a car, you can show the car in many different ways. I'm driving it. The car's driving by a tree. If you translate that into English, you would say, "The car passed the tree." I don't need to say all of that. I just say, "Car, tree," and then I show the car going right by the tree.

I think one part that when people start learning sign language, what they don't realize is how critical your facial expressions and body language are. They are an integral part of ASL grammar. For example, so like I said about the car, see my mouth? [Imitates engine rumbling] Like an engine. Or "Oh! Oh, my gosh. I had to stop really quick," and you see my face.

That is one of the things that is critical with our grammar structure is making sure that our facial and body language match the content. ASL does have poetry. It has many different poems. For example, when we talk about things like planting, so, "seed, you can show it being put into the ground. I drank some water. The plant begins to grow. It's a beautiful flower. I give it to you." That's one very minor example of ASL poetry is showing it in a visual language.

Marie: Wow. It seems so creative and such an expansive language. I love how it just builds a scene right in front of your eyes. It's really exciting. It's interesting to think about how critical facial expressions are in ASL because I know that, in some languages or in some cultures around the world, that having really overt facial expressions are seen as taboo, but it's very interesting to see how facial expressions are really part of the grammar of ASL. That's really interesting to see.

I wanted to tell our visitors that if you want to learn more about cultural variations of ASL in the U.S., or if you want to learn more about who uses ASL, you should watch a recording of our Front Porch from last month that is titled "Supporting Preschool Learning with American Sign Language," which is available on Push Play or ECLKC. And that is available for you to learn a little bit more. I'm curious to see what it means when we say deaf culture. This might be people's first-time hearing that there is a culture associated with American Sign Language. How would you describe that?

Sam: Absolutely. As you can see, the word "deaf" can be either capital D or small D. As we grow up and we are using sign language, we absolutely cherish our connection. It is how we communicate through the world and with each other. We recognize that it is - being deaf is a spectrum. Not everyone is culturally deaf, who has been handed down ASL through generations.

Like my parents, they may have kids who are deaf, those kids who have kids who are deaf. That is a very different experience. And that is really considered to be part of Deaf culture. But it is a vast and never-ending spectrum. And where a person lands, maybe they don't feel that they need to use sign language. They prefer to use their voice. They have hearing aids. And they - you can cherish every one of these identities. It is based on your experience. And again, I will just say, one of the things that we want to look at with Deafness is making sure that we understand that it is a culture. And there is no positive or negative about this. It is simply going to be part of our modes of communication.

In Deaf culture, we really share a lot of common experiences growing up. We live in the hearing world, so one of the things that we do is, when we are sharing stories, we're telling each other jokes. We're having the same - we all understand we have a lot of same lived, shared experiences. Our identity as a Deaf person in this world is as varied as the person themselves. It is very inclusive, and it covers every possible part of the spectrum. And the point is that we are connected through sign language.

Marie: Yeah, I really love that notion that there is this spectrum of identities and that how people experience their deafness can be really different or similar, but folks who use ASL can come together and really share those experiences with each other. I think it's important as educators, if we have children coming into our learning environments to really be aware that you meet one Deaf person and you meet one Deaf person. Like, they have a whole multitude of experiences, and that deafness doesn't define them but can connect them to a community, as well. Would you like to—

Sam: Yes, absolutely.

Marie: Would you like to describe this photo?

Sam: Of course. This is one of the kids from my classroom sitting in front of a poster. And the poster has a number of different pictures of little children signing emotions. Sometimes kids struggle identifying emotions or labeling them, so we have this poster that we use through sign language.

Marie: I love having the emotional representation available. I think that's so important for our social-emotional learning and learning those important words to communicate.

Sam: Yes, it's critical.

Marie: Now we have a question for our viewers. A little poll is going to pop up in a moment, but first, the question is, "What percentage of deaf or hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents?" A is 20%, B is 40%, C is 60%, and D is 90%. About 25% of you said 20%, about 30 said 40, 26% for about 60, and 90% of you — or, 18% of you think 90%. Let's see what the answer is. What do you say, Sam?

Sam: The answer is 90%. I know you're probably pretty shocked by that. But that is also why it is critically important to be involved in early-intervention services just to make sure that the deaf child is getting access to language as quickly as possible. A lot of people don't understand this is a unique situation. This might be the first time they meet a deaf person. When a deaf child is able to meet a deaf adult and learn a new language together, they are able to then acquire any other language, as well, and it happens very, very quickly. It's amazing.

Marie: I also want to mention that this is a situation in which the parents often don't speak the language of their child, which is a unique situation in a dual-language learner. ASL really expands our ideas of what a dual-language learner looks like in our Head Start programs. I wanted to share that some of you and our audience actually may work with infants or toddlers who use hearing assistive devices, like we see here. Some of you may have not seen children or serve children who might use some of these. On the left picture, we see a small toddler with a little cap, and that's usually to keep them from taking their hearing aids off and such.

Then on the right side, we see a child with a cochlear implant. Perhaps in the future, you'll get to know or serve children that might use these. These tools are helpful for children to learn how to hear and hear spoken language. But it's also important for them to have exposure to ASL, as well, because it depends on your visual system, not by hearing. But it is really important to talk with families and understand their own communication decisions for their child, too, and really support what they're wanting and needing support, language-wise, for their children.

Sam: I believe that it is collaborating with families is very, very important. Recognizing their values for what their values and goals are for their children. Some kids may have hearing aids or cochlear implants. That's completely fine. Bilingual means that they will be able to access both English and ASL at the same time. ASL supports spoken and hearing language as spoken language supports ASL. And as their ASL skills develop, their English skills will develop at the same time. It doesn't negate one or the other.

I do want to emphasize that if you learn ASL, it does not mean that your English will deteriorate or that they won't be able to learn English. They will actually learn both very well and very quickly. But for deaf children, the key is always going to be access to language and as early as possible - as infants would be preferable. It's important to be able to support the deaf child, to be able to go out in the world and be successful.

Marie: I think you're absolutely right. That early access to really quality language models is critical for these children. I love that you signed both languages can grow. I really love that image together. What we know about bilingual learning is that developing the home language or the base language supports the acquisition of another, and so we do see them both grow together, which is beautiful. And for our viewers, if you want to learn more —

Sam: Yeah. They grow and grow and grow and grow and grow and grow and grow.

Marie: A garden of languages. [Laughs] And for our viewers, if you want to learn more about the benefits of being bilingual, which applies to spoken languages and sign language, you

should check out a "Baby Talks" webinar that's called "Brilliant Bilingual Infants and Toddlers," which is available on ECLKC. And I think it's also in your resource guide, as well. What we find with children who are exposed to native ASL signers before 6 months old is that their linguistic milestones are identical to spoken-language milestones. Remember, it's not the modality of the language that matters, but it's the timing and the quality of input of language models. These language milestones includes the babbling stages.

For hearing babies, they'd be saying, "Bah bah bah," "Mama," and for babies who are signing, they will be babbling with their hands. Then, we get to the first-word stage where children might be speaking their first word and same for sign language. They would be signing their first word, which most often is "milk" because that is the most motivating sign for a little baby, as well as the two-word stage spoken and with sign language, as well.

Sam: That's right. It feels like magic when you see a baby sign "milk" for the first time. It's wild because it happens so early. Hearing loss and deafness itself is not a barrier in any way to language acquisition. For deaf children, language deprivation happens because they don't have access to language.

Well, at early, as their counterparts. The early intervention is possible to introduce the skills with children, toddlers, and babies. It prevents language deprivation. As we know, the first 1 to 4 and 4 to 12 months, if there's no access to language, it can seriously impact their cognitive skills, social and emotional effects. It has a compounding impact.

Marie: Yeah, and I think that's why — like we said before, it's so critical to work with families to really understand their values around communication and making sure that they have the right connections to early intervention services.

Sam: Absolutely.

Marie: And just like babies, before they can produce their first word or their first sign they're taking in language around them, whether they're listening with their ears or listening with their eyes, long before they can produce these, right? Although babies are not talking or signing back usually before six months, they're still learning through observations, and they're also communicating with us, too. They're using nonverbal ways of communicating, using their eye gaze, looking at things they want, making facial expressions, reaching for things like we see in these babies in the photos here.

Sam: Yep. I love to see these pictures. I do. They're some of my students. And you're right. When we are building these communication skills, it really is important for their developmental milestones. For the young babies, to look at — it's eye gaze. They're looking at people around them. At around 6 months, babies become more mobile, and they're more interested in the world around them. Their attention shifts and they get better at looking at objects or things in their purview right in their immediate area.

After that, they will shift their attention between an object and an adult in very meaningful ways and start making connections. It is called a joint attention. It's an important developmental milestone. Eye gaze and that joint attention really is the foundation for communication between adults and children, and it is critical for their communicative competence, early social skills, cognitive skills. They're learning the functions of participating in a conversation without actually talking.

Marie: I think that's so amazing to hear about. We also know that infants acquire new words more easily and efficiently during joint attention than if the adult simply just redirects the child's attention. We know how important this skill is for children. Because ASL is such a visual language, you have to be looking at somebody to see what they're saying. Learning how to switch your attention from object to person is a specific skill that deaf babies, especially from deaf families, really excel at. Here we're going to dig in a little bit deeper for a little research tidbit about a joint attention experiment that was done here at the University of Washington.

The researchers compared the eye-gaze-following behaviors of deaf infants of deaf families and hearing infants of hearing parents. In this experiment, the baby sat on the parent's lap, facing the researcher, you could see the pictures here from the researcher's perspective. On the left and right side, they had an identical toy that's out of reach. And without speaking, the researcher would look at the baby and then look at one of the sides. They wanted to see if there was a difference in behavior. What did they find, Sam?

Sam: The researchers found that deaf babies with deaf parents had significantly higher gaze-following scores than their hearing counterparts, mainly because these are kids who are born in a signing environment. They become very attuned with visual communication and getting communication signals from other people. As an adult turns to look at something, it means it's probably interesting to see.

The kid will always look to see if that is something that they want, as well. Deaf infants, as they get older, show an increased tendency for something called checking back, as you can see in the third picture here. And by following the adult's gaze, checking out what the adult is looking at and then checking back in with the adults to get any information about that object or an experience.

Marie: I think this is such an interesting study that really highlights the gains and interesting communication features that children who are immersed in sign language really start to learn and learn these cultural and language practices of how to get information that they know they need to look back. To explain this a little bit more, we're going to watch a little fun video of this skill in action. We'll have you all watch this video and tell us what you notice in the chat while you're watching. Here we go.

[Video begins]

Mother: Rain. Rain, rain. Angry rain. Happy rain. Angry rain. Good morning. No rain. Not a good morning.

[Video ends]

Marie: Such a cute video. Sam, what did you notice about the checking-back skills in this small child?

Sam: Yes. And I know that you all probably noticed how good that child was at looking at the book, looking to check back in with the adult. That is a child who has been able to get immersed into this language. And, really, once they learn these skills, it is such a great way for attention control to look at the signer. They get very, very skilled at this sort of checking behavior. And even knowing when to look. When the adult lifts their hands to sign, the child looks up and notices when they're done and then lowers their eye gaze.

Marie: Yeah, I think it's so cool how these, like, very specific cultural norms are so naturally developed when they're exposed to them from an early age. It's really exciting to see. Well, now that we've talked about some infant-toddler communication and special highlights about deaf infants, I would love to talk about some of the benefits of learning ASL in early childhood. Because motor control develops before speech control, ASL provides a sense of expressive communication before spoken communication. Signing engages our physical and visual senses at the same time.

When we are using multiple senses to learn new information, it helps to remember it because it's stored in different places in our brain. And the reason for this, as you all know, is that our brain language centers and spoken centers are in different places. Signing is engaging both visually and socially, as you have to look at the signer and actually focus on them. Learning ASL has been shown to increase English vocabulary, retention, and, of course, they know sign language, as well. Children get frustrated very easily, as we know, when they can't communicate something.

ASL gives them communication access earlier than spoken, and it actually tends to reduce unwanted behaviors based on frustration. Signing, of course, is also a communication bridge. Children who are dual-language learners may not speak English and providing them with a tool to communicate some basic needs is going to help so much with other adults and, of course, their peers.

Marie: I love seeing this list. There's so many great reasons for introducing American Sign Language into young learning environments. For our educators who are watching, this is such a great list to share with your other educators, with your managers or other folks to try to get them on board to really support your efforts to learn ASL and also really wonderful to share with families. Like, "Why would you be learning ASL in the classroom?" You can share some of these benefits with the families, too, and after learning all of the benefits, you got nothing to lose.

It's interesting about the multisensory piece because I learned ASL later in life. Sometimes when I forget an English word, the spoken word, but I'll remember the ASL word because it lives in a spatial memory for me, and when I sign it, the English word will pop into my head. I think

it's a very interesting way of experiencing that way of translanguaging between languages. I wanted to mention, in this photo, we see a young child signing airplane, and they're looking back to share their observation with an educator.

Now that you've all gained a little bit of background knowledge for ASL, this is the fun part, where we get to teach you some ASL signs that you can bring back to the children that you serve. We're going to have Sam take it away. Milk.

Sam: Yes, milk.

Marie: We saw this one before. Often, the first sign that babies use. Eat.

Sam: Eat.

Marie: Everyone loves to eat. Diaper change.

Sam: Diaper. Diaper.

Marie: It's kind of hard with our windows here, but it would be lower.

Sam: Yes, definitely not this high up. It's down by your waist. You can't see it because these windows are so small, but...

Marie: It's true.

Sam: It should be at your waistline.

Marie: And we have "all done."

Sam: "All done." "All done."

Marie: Very useful.

Sam: "Are you finished? All done?"

Marie: Popular with the littles. Nap time.

Sam: Nap time.

Marie: A necessary part of the day.

Sam: Yes.

Marie: Help.

Sam: Help. Help.

Marie: Usually, wouldn't be signed at my face level. But lower.

Sam: I know, exactly. It's a much more natural [Laughs] where your arms are comfortable — "help."

Marie: I wanted to notice that, in this photo, this young child is approximating a sign, which is like a kid almost close to saying the word correctly. Sometimes you have to be a little bit of a detective to understand what they might be signing. And we'll see some examples of that later, too.

Sam: Yes, yes.

Marie: OK, "play."

Sam: Play. Play. This can move around, as well.

Marie: Wash hands.

Sam: Wash hands.

Marie: Don't forget the cheeks.

Sam: Yep. You got to poof out your cheeks. You're turning on the water, washing your hands.

Marie: Clean up.

Sam: Clean up.

Marie: Oh, it's kind of like sweeping.

Sam: Yep. Yep. You can also use a closed hand if you're scrubbing, but clean.

Marie: Wait.

Sam: Oh, "wait." Wait, wait. Sometimes we wait and wait and wait.

Marie: Home.

Sam: Home. Home.

Marie: Stop.

Sam: Stop.

Marie: A good word to learn for safety. But the next sign we're going to learn is a fun game that all small children tend to love a lot, which is "go"! [Laughs]

Sam: Yep. "Go"! G-O. G- G-O. Go!

Marie: Go! We got to "stop" and "go."

Sam: Yep.

Marie: This is awesome! Thank you so much for showing us some of these signs. And to our viewers, once this video is on Push Play, you can rewind it back to this section and practice your signs. You can share it with other folks that and in the supporting preschool learning with American Sign Language Webinar, we have a different set of signs that you can learn.

Between both webinars, you have about 25 signs that you'll be able to learn and use. Now that you have a few ASL signs under your belt, how do you integrate it into your environment? That's what we're going to talk a little bit about now. In this photo, you see this small child signing the word "busy." Like, she was noticing all the camera crews that were in the classroom that day.

A great place to start to introduce ASL signs is during those everyday routines. They usually happen several times a day, like play time, mealtime, diaper changes. A mealtime/story time. There's lots of opportunities to have these ongoing conversations where you can introduce vocabulary in these real-life contexts, which encourages learning. We're going to take a little bit of time here to watch a video and see how educators and children are using these signs in these everyday routines.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Remember? "More"? "More"? Oh. Trevor says, "More broccoli."

Teacher 2: You're all done? Oh, you want to still glue.

Teacher 3: Can I put one in there?

Child: Thank you.

Teacher 3: You're welcome. You want this one? Good job. More?

Child: More.

Teacher 3: More. Here you go. More?

Child: More.

Teacher 3: More.

Child: Thank you.

Teacher 3: You're welcome. More?

Child: No more.

Teacher 3: More, or all done? All done? Want more? You want more? Vroom vroom!

Child: Vroom!

Teacher 3: Vroom vroom!

[Video ends]

Marie: In this video, we saw a few examples, maybe one during mealtime, during playtime, and I can't remember actually the third one. But I also liked seeing that child before. He was like, "Am I all done? Wait. No, I want more toys." I love that concrete way of children being able to correct themselves, too. If you all look on your viewer's guide on page two, you'll see a box that you can write in an activity or routine, like, the first activity routine that you would like to try to add a sign into. You can go ahead and write in a response or think about it, as well.

Sam: Yes. As a teacher, I have found that it is really important to share what the kids are learning with families. So sometimes we'll do pictures or videos, like a newsletter, to communicate with the family and so they're using it at home, as well, both parties end up benefiting. The kids get it at home and at school, and the families know what's going on and can communicate with their kids.

Marie: I love that connection and having the families learn, too, and, like, siblings. I think it creates such a rich linguistic environment for the children, as well. Oh, it looks like some of our videos are frozen a little bit. I'm going to go ahead - oh, Sam's here.

Sam: There we go. Sorry, technical problems. One of the things that I know we discussed earlier about joint attention and how we can encourage joint attention for infants and toddlers. One of the things you can do with infants is making sure that when you are looking at something that they are interested in, you — they will look at things like reaching, they will look at it, they'll want to move closer to it.

These can become non-verbal cues to help you understand what they're talking about. Facing the child with the object in between you is really helpful with your body positioning because the child needs to be able to see your face and body while you're signing, and that's just really helpful for them. For reading books, you can sit side by side. It is still easier, I think, to be across from you.

As we saw in the earlier video, the child sitting in the signer's lab, which you can do, but it's tough on joint attention. You can also start conversations by pointing to objects or holding them in their visual fields. What's important is patience. Being silent and being patient. Just waiting for their gaze to get to the object is helpful. Make sure they look at you before you sign it.

Marie: I think these are all super helpful tips to share with families and parents, too, to encourage joint attention at home, too. And you could share these tips with families and try it in your environment, too, and see which ones really work best.

Sam: Absolutely. Watching ASL storytelling or ASL rhymes is also a very important part of Deaf culture, and it's central to playing with language. In the hearing world, spoken and sung nursery rhymes are very common in early childhood. For example, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." It's a pattern of spoken language. The kids hear it, and it helps with their engagement, word retention, and, of course, vocabulary development.

What may surprise you is that ASL has its own visual version of rhymes and rhythms. Using movements and hand shapes that are rhythmic is the same as spoken and sung nursery rhymes and have the same benefits linguistically for deaf children as they do for hearing. We're going to watch a video really quickly to show what this looks like.

[Video begins]

Man: Good morning. Morning. Good morning. Good morning. Who's here? Who's here? Who's here? Who's here? It's June. Hi June. Hi.

[Video ends]

Sam: Perfect. One of the things that you may have noticed is, as we were signing, "Who's here?", it engages the children. As we are rocking back and forth, it starts setting the pace. The rhythm. The same for the other signs. Like, "Wait." You can make it fun. You can, "Wait, wait, wait. [Singing] Waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. You can even do it with "eat." Ooh! Hungry! Hungry. There's no limit to what you can do as long as you are keeping it rhythmic. A lot of this will be included on your ASL resources guide for rhyme and rhythm. Check it out.

Marie: That's so exciting. I'm really happy that we included this little tidbit. It's very interesting.

Sam: Here are a number of ways to infuse ASL into any learning environment. One way, of course, is to have the alphabet poster, the manual alphabet posters on display. If you're doing something like circle time or things like that, that can be on that wall. You can print and post different signs or pictures. As you can see, this bin has the sign for "all done." It's the bin that we use to collect everything when the kids are done with those specific toys. You can also make a picture book with children themselves signing the sign. Like, "What is your favorite activity at home?" They can do that, as well.

One of the things that I include a lot is mirror time in my classroom. It's so great for them to be able to see themselves signing so that they know what that looks like and they can practice. I found it's a really critical part of their development. Also, including as many diverse topics as possible. Any books that can focus on ASL, the deaf experience, from storybooks to rhyming ASL books, like "The Colorful Ocean," which, of course, rhymes with hand shapes and not spoken words.

Marie: We're going to push out another poll to you all. A little question. "What method of attention-getting is not appropriate in Deaf culture?" A, we have waving your hand in their space, their visual space, tapping their shoulder, throwing a light object near them, or flashing

the lights? 16% says you shouldn't wave your hand in their space. A few said, maybe not tapping their shoulder. Most of you said, 84% should not throw a light object near them, and 6% flashing the lights. And I think it's clear we have a winner here, as well, Sam. What do you think, Sam?

Sam: Honestly, I think this is almost a trick question because all the answers can be correct. I think it is very context and environmentally dependent. If I'm more comfortable throwing shoes at my family than I am a kid. Let's say, if you want to tap somebody's shoulder or their legs to get their attention, that's fine. Sometimes, young kids need a little encouragement to be soft because, of course, they come up and "whap!", and you're like, "No, no. Soft tap. Tap." Other ways, of course, is to wave in someone's visual space. If you're far, it's a great way to be like, "Hey, hey, hey," and then you all can sign across the room.

The third one, throwing a light object you can do that. I don't try to hit the person. I try to get the object to fall in their area, and then they look at it and look at me. One thing that really helps to get the attention of a crowd is to do the lights, light switch on and off. Now, you do need to set up a person first so that everybody knows where to look, because deaf people will automatically start looking for someone who's going to tell them what to do when we are doing that kind of attention-getting. They are all acceptable answers, depending on the environment, on how to grab someone's attention who's deaf.

Marie: That's true. I think it was a trick question, but it gets you thinking. We're going to watch a video of some young children using these types of attention-getting strategies. Notice which ones you might see.

[Video begins]

Cass: Do you see the stars? Yeah, it's safe. It's OK. You see stars? Where are the stars? Right there. Right there. Remember, at nighttime when it's dark, that's when we see the stars. Right now, we don't see any.

Teu: What, Ignacio? Can you help with my glasses? Thank you. Circle time.

Teacher: What? Lunch? Lunch soon. We'll have to wait for lunch. Lunch. Lunch. I know. We're waiting for lunch. Lunch. Yep, lunch. Lunch. Right. You're saying "lunch." We just ate a lot of breakfast.

[Video ends]

Marie: I love that little child. She's very concerned about lunch when it's going to happen. I want to see if — what attention. Did you see all of them, our viewers? Let us know what you saw happening there. You could type it into the chat. Might have seen some of those. We saw some hand-waving, very close to their face. Some tapping, some light turning on and off. Sam, what do you think about using attention-grabbing strategies for the little ones?

Sam: It is great. One thing you may or may not have noticed is, the teacher was showing them how to wait and be patient. You have to wait for kids to look at you before you can sign, so you'll probably notice that several times, they would say something, and they would have to wait. You also notice that sometimes as they're developing their spatial skills, they're going to knock things like your glasses off.

Marie: It's going to happen.

Sam: And if you want to learn more and strategies you can use in your learning environment, we have a few more suggestions. It is important to learn American Sign Language from deaf people, native language users who used it their whole lives. That's going to be — we have included some resources in the visual guide for you, the visitors guide. Inviting deaf volunteers or family members to teach ASL could be a fun, inclusive way of sort of strengthening that home connection as well as community connections. Finding your local deaf services in your area is a great resource, as well.

Marie: The Deaf service centers also usually have free resources or ASL learning classes. Have a lot to offer there. And I just wanted to mention that talking about differences in language and culture between your children, even if they're infants and babies, that's still something that you can include and start supporting their observations about themselves and about others and really building that positive identity.

For example, a baby reaches for Mario's hearing aids and be like, "Oh, we don't grab those. You're noticing Mario's hearing aids. Can you find the baby that has hearing aids?" Really having things that represent the children in your practice and really highlighting those differences can help celebrate and really affirm the identity of these young children. And with that, I wanted to just thank Sam, our guest. Thank you so much for joining us today. It was a pleasure to hear your insights and your expertise into the world of ASL and Head Start. Thank you so much.

Sam: I am absolutely thrilled to be here today. I'm so happy that you all are able to get together and learn about ASL. I hope you have a great day.

Marie: We're just almost time, but I wanted to share a very exciting upcoming resource. If you don't know already, Head Start has a free app called Ready DLL that you can download on iOS Systems and Android, which has, I think, seven languages right now that includes survival words, and pretty soon, in a few months, will be adding ASL. This will be at your fingertips to be able to learn a few ASL signs on the fly. Thank you all so much for joining. We'll see you next time.