

# A Guide for INTERPRETERS

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For an expanded version of this  
information, visit  
[www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org).



*Educational interpreters' jobs are different than those of community interpreters. Schools do not just teach the content curriculum; they also foster growth in language and social-emotional development.*

An educational interpreter works in complex educational environments requiring a high level of educational skills. The educational interpreter also works with children and youth at varying stages of development. Schools are accountable for student achievement and, as a member of the educational team, so are educational interpreters.

This publication is not intended to replace coursework and experience in learning how to interpret for young children. Educational interpreting requires a high level of skills and knowledge. When an educational interpreter is not qualified, the student who is deaf or hard of hearing does not have access to the education that a student who is hearing receives. Educational interpreters are obligated to obtain and maintain the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure educational access.

## Recommended Minimum Requirements for Educational Interpreters

Educational interpreting requires expertise in English and sign language. It also requires training in child development, educational systems, and curriculum. The vast majority of states have skill standards that specify minimum standards required in order to work in a school setting as an educational interpreter. Most of these standards are established by state departments of education for all school districts in the state. Educational interpreters should check with state officials regarding the standards in their state.

## An Educational Interpreter is a Related Service Provider

Educational interpreting is a "related service" in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which means it is a support required to assist a student with a disability in accessing education. Under federal law, the educational inter-



### Essential Qualifications

Essential qualifications for an educational interpreter include:

- an associate's degree in educational interpreting or interpreting (a bachelor's degree in a related area is preferred);
- a passing score on a formal assessment of their interpreting skills using a nationally recognized assessment, such as those offered by the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID);
- a passing score on a state or national assessment of knowledge related to interpreting in educational settings; and
- continued professional development.

preter is a member of the educational team that develops and implements the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and is legally responsible for supporting the IEP goals. As with all members of the educational team, the educational interpreter is responsible for ensuring that the learning and communication needs of the student who is deaf or hard of hearing are met. He or she should attend IEP meetings as a member of the team, not to interpret the meeting.

### Fostering Language, Cognitive, and Social Development

In order to foster language and cognitive development, educational interpreters need to know about the development of these skills in children. The educational interpreter needs to work with the educational team to determine the type of sign language a student needs and the adjustments that may be necessary for those students who need more scaffolding in their language skills, and then any modifications should be discussed with the educational team. Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing have delays in language and vocabulary compared with many of their peers who are hearing. They often need additional support.

When an educational interpreter has less than fluent language skills, sign vocabulary, and fingerspelling skills, this means the student may receive a degraded and incomplete version of classroom communication which affects educational achievement. Research shows that many interpreters have skills that are lacking and may

interfere with a student's ability to learn new language, concepts, and vocabulary.

The educational interpreter should be honest with the classroom team when interpreting challenges may have interfered with the student receiving the entire communication.

Vocabulary learning is essential to learning academic concepts. Educational interpreters should have both a strong English and sign language vocabulary. It is not good practice to invent signs to avoid fingerspelling words that do not have a sign. Fingerspelling is essential to learning academic vocabulary, and educational interpreters should fingerspell new vocabulary throughout the lesson when there is no appropriate sign. It is also not good practice to use more general signs for technical terms. There are good Internet resources for learning signs for more technical terms, and joining an on-line community of educational interpreters can be a very useful resource. The National Technical Institute for the Deaf has on-line resources for technical vocabulary related to science and math ([www.rit.edu/ntid/sciencesigns/](http://www.rit.edu/ntid/sciencesigns/)), and RID has useful information as well ([www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)).

Not all students—deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing—may realize that they don't understand what someone is saying. It is a skill that develops throughout adolescence. Educational interpreters cannot expect a young student to inform them if something doesn't make sense. They need to look for the subtle signs of understanding and lack of understanding, which should be discussed with the student's educational team.

## What Does an Educational Interpreter Do?

An educational interpreter:

- works to implement the student's IEP as an active member of the educational team. The educational interpreter can share information with the educational team, including the regular education teacher, relevant to the student's educational experiences. He or she should follow the same guidelines for confidentiality used by the other team members. For example, if a school requires all faculty and staff to report bullying, the educational interpreter is required to follow those rules. A full version of the *EIPA Guidelines for Professional Conduct* for educational interpreters can be found at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org).
- uses the modality and language as determined by the educational team. The educational interpreter may provide the educational team with observations that may assist the team in knowing which modality and language are the best fit for the student. Communication plans often evolve as the student gains proficiency in sign language or in spoken language. The educational interpreter should be proficient in the language that is used by the student.
- interprets at the appropriate language level, which may mean modifying the teacher's language to better scaffold the student's learning. Any modifications should be discussed with the educational team, including the regular education classroom teacher.
- makes sure the goals of the lesson are clear. The educational interpreter needs to understand the teacher's goals for the lesson in order to interpret the information accurately.
- clarifies information for the student and may also tutor when appropriate if he or she is trained as a tutor.
- teaches the student how to use an interpreter.



Social development fosters many aspects of cognitive development. Interacting with teachers and peers is an essential component of learning and is across the domains of academic knowledge, friendship, interaction, self-concept, and self-esteem. Educational interpreters may need to teach not only the student who is deaf or hard of hearing but also the student's peers who are hearing how to interact using an interpreter. Adults who are deaf or hard of hearing can serve as an excellent resource for students to learn how to communicate with peers and teachers who are hearing using an interpreter.

Teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing about accessible technology can foster social interaction that is more independent.

## Preparing Effective Interpretation

Like effective teaching, effective interpretation requires preparation time. Educational interpreters who have access to the teacher's materials and lesson plans are able to predict and produce a better interpretation. It is more effective to interpret topics when the interpreter is prepared and familiar with the content and activities (e.g., some schools allow interpreters to specialize in math or social studies to support them in being more effective). Also, educational interpreters should have a copy of the student's textbook, and they need a place to store their resources and to access the Internet.

Additionally, educational interpreters need time to learn new technical vocabulary. Unlike

English, there is no dictionary of all the signs in American Sign Language, and educational interpreters may need to access several resources to prepare.

Finally, educational interpreters should know the teacher's style of instruction and communication and be able to give feedback to the teacher on aspects that support or detract from effective interpretation.

### Professional Conduct Guidelines

All students are supported in their academic and social learning by classroom teachers and other educational staff. The essential principle is the same as for all educational professionals: maximize educational benefits for the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. As a related service provider and a member of the educational team, educational interpreters have a legal responsibility to do just that. If the student who is deaf or hard of

hearing is not learning, practices need to be adjusted by the educational team.

Working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing in a K-12 setting is different than working with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. Many states have professional guidelines that educational interpreters are expected to follow. The *EIPA Guidelines for Professional Conduct* can be found at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org). See also the *NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct* at [www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/NAD\\_RID\\_ETHICS.pdf](http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/NAD_RID_ETHICS.pdf).

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*You can find more information about classroom interpreting at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org). For more information and resources about the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, visit [www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu](http://www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu). You will also find all the guides in our Classroom Interpreting series on our website.*

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This guide was developed in collaboration with staff in the Center for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital.



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ISBN #: 0-88095-273-3

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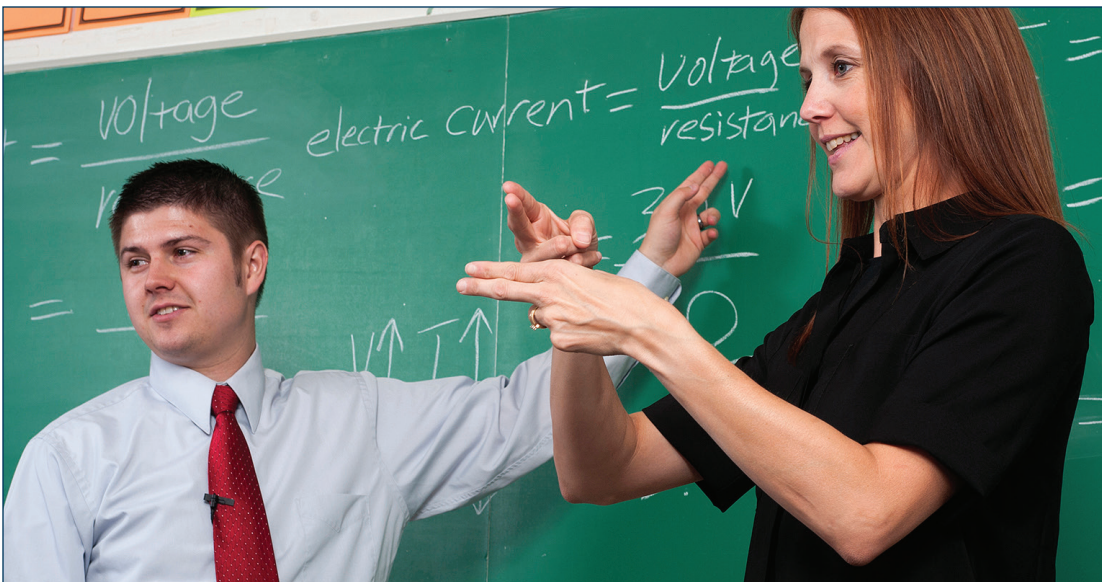
# A Guide for INTERPRETERS

## Working with Students Who Use Cochlear Implants

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*This guide provides information for interpreters when using differentiated interpreting practices.*



*Advances in the auditory benefits that deaf students with cochlear implants receive have raised questions about how educational interpreters will work with those students.*

Educational interpreters may be challenged by the unique needs of deaf students with cochlear implants. In some ways interpreting is the same, but in other ways it can be very different. This guide is directed specifically at educational interpreters. Its purpose is to explain how important it is for interpreters to work with educational teams, to explore interpreting strategies, and to gain skills in many domains that might be useful given that the needs of students with cochlear implants can vary significantly. It presumes that many individuals on an educational team can work with the interpreter to identify what is needed to help students with cochlear implants become proficient in visual and/or spoken language skills.

There are a few major premises that are essential when working with students with cochlear implants. First, research shows that early access to language—spoken or signed—is best for all children, but it should be a full language. The educational team (including speech-language pathologists, the teacher of the deaf, and the audiologist) typically assesses all uses of language, including a range of modalities and gesture systems. Next, the decision to implant a child is ultimately a matter of family choice as they work with professionals to

understand potential outcomes. The educational team works in the context of this family choice. The interpreter is part of this constellation supporting the family, the educational team, and the student. Finally, many students with cochlear implants use a range of communication modalities and sources of information. These may include sign language, visual cues, graphics, and print. They may also include spoken language, vocal features, and auditory information such as spoken English, tone of voice, and environmental sounds. Many professionals refer to this as the “auditory to visual continuum.” All individuals have preferences for how they best learn. For a student with a cochlear implant, visual information may supplement auditory information and vice versa. Students with cochlear implants may demonstrate a variety of learning preferences anywhere on this continuum depending on the type of information and the setting.

Children change over time, and their learning needs are discovered as they mature. With all students, there is a need for flexibility in whatever approach or strategies are used to address their changing needs. In the case of students with cochlear implants, the use of auditory and visual in-



formation to access the academic environment is something that develops over time as they become increasingly experienced with using the cochlear implants and developing auditory skills. As students develop over time during their preschool through high school years, the interpreter's role in providing support will shift.

A cochlear implant is a medical device that uses electrodes to stimulate the auditory nerve and generate a representation of sound. However, it does not restore normal hearing. When an individual receives a cochlear implant, his or her brain needs to develop the skills to make sense of what he or she is perceiving. Some students enter school still in a period of developing these skills. An interpreter may be part of the educational team that will assist in this development.

While cochlear implants can provide auditory access to sound, not all students have the same level of auditory access and understanding of spoken language. There are many factors that have the potential to impact a student's communication preferences and access to the auditory environment.

Some students may use their cochlear implants to alert them to environmental sounds but still need full sign language support to understand classroom discourse because they have limited auditory access and cannot understand spoken English. Other students may be able to express themselves using spoken language but

may require key words, signs, or speechreading in order to fully comprehend spoken language. And still other students may fully comprehend all of spoken communication and rely primarily on speechreading or the printed word to support their learning. Since the population of students using cochlear implants is so diverse, highly differentiated interpreting practices are needed in order to meet the individual needs of the students.

The interpreter needs to have a clear understanding of the student's ability to access and use spoken English and/or sign language as well as the educational team's goals for the student. Key information about the student's learning preferences can be found in assessments that identify his or her speech perception skills, speech-language abilities, sign language skills, and academic levels of functioning. Interpreters should review this information with the educational team. Observation of the student during social and instructional settings can provide good information about how the student wishes to naturally interact in the environment. For example, students may wish to use interpreters in the classroom, but they may not want or need to use interpreters in social settings. Preferences for how auditory and visual information will be used can be identified as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). It is important to engage the student in conversation regarding his or her auditory and visual learning preferences, especially as he or she gets older.

Whether a student needs an interpreter or can manage without one may vary according to the content of the communication. If the concepts and vocabulary are new or complex, some students may need visual support even if they do not need support when the language is less academic. Needs for interpreting support can also vary by social or academic context. It is essential for educational teams to discuss content and context in relation to the student's ability to use and understand spoken language or sign language.

### Differentiated Interpreting Practices

The "one-size-fits-all" approach does not fit every student who is deaf or hard of hearing regardless of if assistive listening technology, hearing aids, or cochlear implants are used. Resources that can be utilized when discussing and planning for interpreting services include the Clerc Center and Boston Children's Hospital's *Students with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program*

Cochlear implants provide many implanted deaf students with access to sound to the extent that they can understand spoken English without an interpreter. However, students using cochlear implants range in their abilities to understand spoken language due to a variety of factors:

- age of onset of hearing loss
- spoken and sign language skills prior to implantation
- age at cochlear implantation
- frequency of use of the cochlear implant
- use of accessible language in the home environment (spoken and/or signed)
- access to a high-quality early intervention program
- educational environment
- hearing and speech skills prior to implantation
- sophistication of the cochlear implant technology
- structure of the cochlea or function of the auditory nerve
- appropriate fitting/programming of the cochlear implant sound processor
- presence of learning or intellectual challenges

*Planning* and Boys Town National Research Hospital's *Interpreter Communication Plan*. You can find links to these resources on the Clerc Center's Interpreter Guides web page.

Differentiated interpreting may require a discussion of what visual and spoken language will be used. Context and situations should result in discussions related to how interpreting may vary according to changing needs throughout the day and school year. This may include discussions of what language to use; when simultaneous versus sequential interpreting should be implemented; when, how, and what type of visual supports should be offered; and whether or not the student needs interpreting in a particular situation. It's important to remember that more may not always be better. Some students may need to focus on the spoken message first; other students may need to see visual language before they can make sense of the auditory information. The goal is a goodness-of-fit between what the student needs and what the interpreter provides. The interpreter's goal is to adjust practices by determining the student's learning preferences or needs and provide the appropriate support. This is achieved when interpreters engage in ongoing task analysis to understand what the student needs or prefers as the classroom and social situations change.

## Guidelines for Differentiated Interpreting Practices

**Acoustic environment.** Maintaining an appropriate acoustic environment will aid the student with comprehension of spoken information. The interpreter can assist the student with being able to identify and report when classroom noise or acoustics are interfering with optimal auditory access. The interpreter can provide the student with examples of how he or she might handle or resolve the auditory distractions. For example, if the class is doing small group work and the conversations are making it difficult for the student to hear peers, the student might ask the teacher if the group could move to another room or further away from the other groups. The responsibility for maintaining an appropriate acoustic environment lies with school administration. There are educational team members (e.g., educational audiologist, teacher of the deaf) who can assist.

**Device technology.** The interpreter may be responsible for checking the student's technology on a daily basis to ensure it is working as well as

for reporting problems. If the device is not working, the interpreter may need to provide full interpreting support when the student doesn't have sufficient auditory access. An educational audiologist can provide information on how to check hearing devices.

**Visual environment.** Establishing a supportive visual environment is also important. Some students use speechreading in addition to looking at the interpreter to enhance their understanding of the spoken message. Therefore, it is important that the instructor and interpreter both be visible to the student. Consideration should also be given to the impact that competing light sources or visually distracting backgrounds have on the student's speechreading and understanding interpreted information (e.g., moving back and forth in front of the illuminated SMART board will introduce competing and inconsistent visual access to the spoken and signed message).

**Mixed methods of communication.** Some students with cochlear implants use spoken language to express themselves and sign language to understand the spoken message. When students use mixed methods of communication, one method may be more developed. In many cases students with cochlear implants have more developed spoken language skills than sign language skills. An interpreter may need to familiarize a student with basic signs if directed by the educational team.

For those students who have a high level of auditory comprehension, a single sign or written/fingerspelled word may be all that is needed to help them comprehend a new or difficult-to-understand concept.

For students with cochlear implants who are highly successful in understanding spoken English, consideration should be given to how the student prefers information to be presented. There may be times when the student prefers to listen to the speaker first and then look to the interpreter to confirm if what he or she heard was accurate. This allows students the option to check their own listening comprehension and to build confidence in their hearing ability. With increasing self-knowledge about how much visual support is needed to understand the content, students can advise interpreters regarding when and how much visual support they need to access the content.

**Type of sign language.** The type of sign language to be used by the student should be writ-



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This guide was developed in collaboration with staff in the Center for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital.

ten into the IEP. Many students with cochlear implants will need sign language that aligns with English rather than American Sign Language. Should the specified system or language not meet the student's need even after the interpreter makes modifications to clarify or support comprehension, this information should be shared with the educational team.

**Visual support.** Learning and keeping pace with academic content is a complex task for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in general education classrooms. A variety of forms of visual support may be used in classrooms in addition to interpreting. The interpreter may support the student by pointing to print, pictures, charts, or overhead material. This will aid students in following the flow of classroom discourse. Pointing to the teacher's outline on the overhead, providing vocabulary terms on the whiteboard, or pointing to visuals in the student's textbook highlights key concepts that assist the student in following the classroom discussion.

**Visual orientation.** When visual or auditory orientation/access to the entire classroom is not available or optimal, the interpreter may need to visually orient the student to who is speaking, especially during fast-paced classroom interchanges. Pointing in the speaker's direction or indicating the speaker's gender, color of clothing, or name are strategies that can be implemented to ensure access.

**Cues.** Many students who are deaf or hard of hearing may experience auditory and visual fatigue due to the amount of concentration it takes to access the environment. This may be especially true for a student with a cochlear implant who is receiving both spoken English and sign language. The interpreter can help prioritize essential listening times by helping students focus attention on the most important information. One possible strategy is for the interpreter to develop cues that identify when the teacher is starting a lesson so the student knows when he or she needs to attend again. This is a different way to think about interpreting—not just how to interpret but what to interpret.

## Conclusion

An interpreter who works with students with cochlear implants needs to work with the educational teams to understand each student's auditory access, use of spoken English, use of sign language, and the educational goals surrounding the use of spoken and signed language. Most interpreters will need further training and assistance in order to scaffold a student's development of listening and spoken English skills. When working with students with cochlear implants, it is essential for interpreters to build collaborative relationships with speech-language pathologists, audiologists, mainstream teachers, and teachers of the deaf to achieve optimal outcomes.



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# A Guide for TEACHERS

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*This guide includes suggestions for how the classroom teacher and the interpreter can work together to improve accessibility and integration.*



*An educational interpreter supports the ability of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to be educated in a regular educational classroom. However, it is more complicated than simply placing an interpreter in the classroom. Real integration requires all members of the educational team to work together.*

## The Educational Interpreter's Role

Educational interpreters provide communication access by representing the classroom instruction, teacher and peer interactions, and other relevant sound information, such as school-wide announcements. They may provide access using some form of sign language interpreting, oral interpreting<sup>1</sup>, or Cued Speech transliterating<sup>2</sup>.

## Learning Through an Interpreter is Challenging

Having an interpreter does not mean that the student who is deaf or hard of hearing has access to all classroom communication. The student may have language and vocabulary delays that mean he or she may not understand what is being interpreted or taught. It is also possible that the student may not understand because the interpreter's skills may not be sufficient for the subject matter or the student's level of skills.

Adults who are deaf or hard of hearing report that learning through an interpreter can be more

challenging than learning through direct communication.

Communicate with the student to understand his or her level of functioning, not just with the interpreter. You need to know the student's level and how much additional support the interpreter is or is not providing.

It is almost impossible to make a regular classroom completely accessible through an interpreter. Information will be missed. The student may not understand something because the interpreter missed it or did not interpret it accurately.

Not all interpreters are qualified. Research shows that about 60 percent of interpreters do

<sup>1</sup> Oral interpreting is done by a skilled professional who facilitates communication between individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are hearing. Oral interpreters work within a continuum of service provision from solely using mouth movements to the inclusion of natural gestures, fingerspelling, or writing key terms.

<sup>2</sup> Cued Speech transliterating is done by a professional, often certified, who uses a cueing system to facilitate communication between individuals who use spoken language and those who use Cued Speech (which is composed of eight handshapes with four different placements near the face which, when combined with movements of the mouth, make the sounds of spoken language look different from each other).



not have sufficient skills.<sup>3</sup> They may lack the range of vocabulary and sign skills needed to translate spoken communication into sign language. They may not have sufficient understanding of the academic content, and this affects their ability to interpret the information.

### Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing May Have a Range of Abilities to Communicate in Spoken Language

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing range from those who only communicate using sign language to those who use both speech and sign language. Many students have some ability to use and hear spoken English. However, their communication abilities can vary widely depending on the situation. A student's speech quality is not a good predictor of how much he or she understands spoken English. Speaking and understanding speech are different skills.

It is important to learn from the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan team the student's expectations for communicating through spoken English and through an interpreter. Older students can also help you understand their communication needs.

### Students' Rights Regarding Educational Interpreters

Your students who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to:

- communicate in their own language and have the interpreter communicate in their language;
- utilize educational interpreters who are highly qualified;
- utilize educational interpreters in the classroom, during school meetings and assemblies, and during after-school groups, sports activities, and events;
- be treated with respect and encouraged to become independent like their classmates who can hear;
- opportunities to learn how to work with and schedule interpreters;
- opportunities to learn how to use Internet interpreters;
- be included in discussions concerning interpreting and their interpreters, such as in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings or teacher meetings (if they are 14 years old or older); and
- have their family know about their interpreters and how the accommodation is working.

For most students who have spoken language skills, spoken communication is best when only one or two people are talking and the environment is quiet. Some students may be able to talk with a teacher somewhat independently in this situation. They may want an interpreter only if communication becomes difficult. Other students may want an interpreter in all communication situations.

Noisy classrooms with multiple speakers make listening very challenging for many students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Students may need to utilize an interpreter more in these situations and depend on hearing less, or they may rely on a combination of hearing, watching you, and watching the interpreter.

As the complexity of content and vocabulary in academic instruction increases, a student who is deaf or hard of hearing may need to utilize an interpreter more. That is, in more social conversations the student may be successful in using spoken English but in academic lessons may need more interpreter support.

### Interpreting Services Should be Discussed at IEP Meetings and Other Times

At every IEP meeting, take time to discuss how the student will utilize the interpreter. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are not all alike, and each student has different needs.

**Should the interpreter be allowed to help the student maintain attention on him or her?** Student levels of attention to the interpreter will usually improve with age and experience. Older students will need to assume more responsibility.

**Should the interpreter tutor or assist the student with school work?** If the interpreter serves as a tutor, he or she should report back to the IEP team about the student's success. The IEP team should decide if the interpreter is qualified to tutor and should define when and where tutoring will occur. The tutoring should be supervised by a qualified teacher.

**How do the student's auditory skills affect how he or she utilizes an interpreter?** A student with auditory access may watch the teacher and utilize the interpreter only when he or she

<sup>3</sup> Schick, B., Williams, K., & Kupermintz, H. (2006). Look who's being left behind: Educational interpreters and access to education for deaf and hard of hearing students. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11, 3-20.

misses information or is not understanding the teacher's communication.

Students should direct academic questions to you. This helps the student understand that you are in charge of academic instruction and encourages student-teacher interaction.

## Share and Communicate

The interpreter will do a better job interpreting if he or she understands your goals, style of classroom management, and general philosophy of learning.

**Share lesson plans, books, and materials with the interpreter in advance so he or she can review them during preparation time.** When the interpreter knows about the goals of a lesson and the lesson content, especially new vocabulary, he or she is better able to convey the classroom communication into sign language.

**Share new vocabulary in advance.** An interpreter may need to do research to learn the signs for academic vocabulary. He or she may be able to review new vocabulary with the student in advance as well.

**Talk with the interpreter.** You can learn what makes his or her job easier or harder. Sometimes simple changes to the classroom or routines result in big changes in the quality of interpretation.

**Learn from the interpreter.** The interpreter often knows a great deal about the students for whom he or she interprets. He or she can help you understand how much the student understands. However, the interpreter should not be your only source of information. Be sure to communicate with the student directly so you also gain information about his or her communication skills. The IEP team can provide essential information about the student as well.

**The interpreter can help you learn to communicate using an interpreter.** Not surprisingly, most people who are hearing do not know how to use an interpreter to facilitate communication. It is fine to ask the interpreter to give you feedback.

## Think Visually

Create a visually accessible learning environment. When a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is watching an interpreter, it is very challenging

to also look at the board or other visual materials. A student who is hearing can look at something while listening to you talk. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing vary in their ability to do this. There are some simple ways to support students:

- Slow down and don't talk during looking time. Give all students a brief time to look at visuals before talking.
- Let students know where you look. Students who are hearing can follow where you are looking or gesturing. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing may miss this cue.
- Require each student to raise his or her hand and be called on before speaking. The student who is deaf or hard of hearing needs to know who is speaking, not just what is being said. Students who are hearing may know each other's voices and know who is speaking. A student who is deaf or hard of hearing may not recognize others' voices.
- Use visual supports. Even though they make looking a bit more challenging, these are excellent learning support.

## The Interpreter's Job is to Interpret

An interpreter is a professional who has spent a great deal of time learning sign language and interpreting. The interpreter is not a classroom aide. He or she should not be left in charge of the classroom while a teacher leaves the room.

A student who is deaf or hard of hearing should never miss classroom communication or peer interaction so the interpreter can do other tasks. When not needed for interpreting, many interpreters use the time to prepare for future classes.

## Who is Responsible for Classroom Management?

Teachers are responsible for maintaining a safe and effective learning environment for all students, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Some teachers prefer that all adults in the classroom be engaged in classroom management. Other teachers prefer to be in charge of all classroom management. Communicate your preferences to the interpreter.



The interpreter is a member of the educational team and should work with you to help you manage your class consistent with your expectations and goals.

The student who is deaf or hard of hearing does not “belong” to the interpreter. He or she is a member of the class, and expectations of him or her should be consistent with those of the rest of the students. Communicate with the interpreter what kinds of student behaviors must not be ignored regardless of a student’s hearing status.

### Communicate Directly with the Student Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing need to learn to negotiate classrooms through the use of an interpreter or through spoken English if they are able. They need to learn to talk with you directly, using the interpreter when needed. Model this process. Talk with each student directly. He or she may be looking at the interpreter, but you should look at the student.

For some students who are deaf or hard of hearing, teachers can communicate in spoken language and gestures in order to help them feel more connected. Explore how much a student understands without an interpreter. For example, can you welcome the student in the morning with a smile and a gesture? Can you direct a student back to a worksheet with a look and a gesture? Can you talk with the student about his or her homework? These kinds of direct communications can help

underscore that you see the student as a valuable member of the class.

Learn some basic sign communication and everyday signs. You do not need to know many signs to communicate a sense of inclusion. Your goal should not be to teach using sign language but to greet and interact with the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. This shows the student that even though you do not know sign language, you know it is part of who he or she is.

### Help the Student Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing be as Independent and Connected as Possible

One of the risks of having an interpreter is that it is easy for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to become isolated in a classroom of peers and adults who can hear. Ensure that the student is a full member of the classroom.

Students who are hearing also need to learn how to communicate directly with their peers who are deaf or hard of hearing. It can be intimidating communicating through an interpreter. The interpreter can help students learn how to best communicate with each other.

### The Interpreter is a Professional Working in the School

The interpreter should follow all school policies just like all other professionals. In addition, there are national guidelines for professional conduct specifically for educational interpreters.

You can find more information about classroom interpreting at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org).

For more information and resources about the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, visit [www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu](http://www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu). You will also find all the guides in our *Classroom Interpreting series* on our website.

**About the Author:** Brenda Schick, PhD, a professor at the University of Colorado-Boulder, studies the development of spoken and sign language and its relationship to cognition in children who are deaf or hard of hearing. She has had three National Institutes of Health grants investigating language and/or cognitive development in children who are deaf or hard of hearing, including Theory of Mind. Each grant required data collection across the nation and the development of language assessment tools for American Sign Language (ASL). Schick is currently a member of a research center that focuses on literacy and young deaf and hard of hearing children. She has also served as the school board president for an ASL/English school for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and is a former teacher of the deaf. She developed a videotaped curriculum for hearing parents learning sign language and translated a series of classic children’s storybooks into sign language. Schick grew up in a culturally deaf family, is fluent in ASL, and is a former certified interpreter of the deaf.

This guide was developed in collaboration with staff in the Center for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital.



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ISBN #: 0-88095-273-3

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# A Guide for STUDENTS

Author: Brenda Schick, PhD

*This guide offers several strategies that can help you learn and make friends in school.*



*As a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, you have the right to understand your teachers and classmates. Although learning and making friends through an interpreter can be challenging, it is very important for you to be able to learn and communicate with all of your classmates and teachers.*

## Students' Rights Regarding Educational Interpreters

You have the right to:

- communicate in your own language and have your interpreter communicate in your language;
- utilize an educational interpreter who is highly qualified;
- utilize an educational interpreter in the classroom, during school meetings and assemblies, and during after-school groups, sports activities, and events;
- be treated with respect and encouraged to become independent like your classmates who can hear;
- opportunities to learn how to work with and schedule interpreters;
- opportunities to learn how to use Internet interpreters;
- be included in discussions concerning interpreting and your interpreter, such as in your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings or teacher meetings (if you are 14 years old or older); and
- have your family know about your interpreter and how the accommodation is working.



It is very important to understand that some types of communication that the interpreter sees or interprets may be reported to the school. For example, in some schools using bad language may be reported. The interpreter may also be required to report something you did outside of school if you talk about it in school. You should talk with your interpreters about when they may or must report your action, or when they may interpret what you say to others even if you do not want them to.

### Using Spoken English and a Sign Language Interpreter

Many students can communicate in both sign language and spoken English. If you can speak, you probably know that there are some times when you can understand speech and other times

when you cannot. Sometimes you may want an interpreter, other times you may want to communicate yourself, and still other times you may want the interpreter to help only if you do not understand. It is good to discuss with the interpreter at the beginning of the year how you want to communicate and to remind him or her later if need be. The interpreter may not know your preferences, and you can help him or her to understand.

If you can use spoken English, you may do better in quiet rooms with just one or two people. It may be harder to understand speech if there are a lot of people around or if the room is noisy. It is okay to talk with your teachers and classmates who are hearing about what helps you hear better. For example, there might be a quiet place in the hall where you can hear your friends better and you should tell them that.

### Becoming More Independent as You Grow Older

- If you are young, your interpreter may help you sometimes. For example, he or she may assist you in understanding how to use an interpreter during class to talk with your teachers and classmates who are hearing. Your interpreter may also help your classmates understand how to talk with you.
- Your interpreter may tutor you after class if your parents and teachers agree. The interpreter should not tutor you during class instruction.
- Deaf adults say that it can be challenging to learn new information from an interpreter. It is okay to ask the interpreter to repeat something or to help you understand what a new sign means. If you don't understand information, you can ask the interpreter to interpret your follow-up questions to the teacher.
- If you are older, you should be learning how to become more independent in using an interpreter. For example, in high school you may be responsible for scheduling an interpreter. This procedure is good to learn because then you will know how to do it when you leave high school and are an adult.
- You should talk with your teachers if you cannot always understand the interpreter. The teachers need to know if you are missing information.
- You should not talk with the interpreter about anything unrelated to school during class lessons. Class time is for learning. However, chatting casually with the interpreter is okay if all students have free time, although personal issues should not be discussed.

*Situations that make listening easier:*

- talking in a quiet place,
- listening in a quiet classroom in which only the teacher is talking, and
- listening to a teacher when you can see his or her face.

*Situations that make listening more challenging:*

- class discussions with a lot of speakers;
- small group discussion when other groups are also talking;
- talking with a group of classmates;
- sports activities in which people are moving around;
- noisy environments; and
- a teacher who moves around a lot, making it difficult to see his or her face.

Sometimes your school audiologist can help make the classroom a better place for listening. It is okay to let people know what can help you listen better.

Some interpreters have not previously worked with students who speak and sign. You should discuss how you like to communicate during an IEP meeting with the interpreter present. The interpreter is a professional who wants to do whatever is best for you. You can help your teachers and interpreters to understand your communication needs.

### Preparing for Using Interpreters When You are an Adult

By the time you graduate from high school, you should be prepared for your role as an adult who uses interpreting services. You should understand how to work with an interpreter. You should know how to request an interpreter. These skills are important for college, for work, and for meeting with people such as doctors and potential employers. Schools have a responsibility to help you prepare for becoming an adult.

Many times it is very helpful to talk with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing about how they use an interpreter. You can ask your school to help you find adults with whom to talk. You can also suggest to your school that you and your classmates who use interpreters have some workshops with some adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. If you live in an area where there are no adults

who are deaf or hard of hearing, you can arrange to talk with someone using a videophone or computer video technology.

Many adults who are deaf or hard of hearing will help the interpreter understand how they want to communicate. Learning about your own communication needs is important to help you use interpreters in your future.

### Technology and Interpreting

You should learn about using a computer to use an interpreter. You can use an interpreter through the Internet to make phone calls to talk with people who are hearing. You can call your classmates who are hearing. Your school should help you learn to use technology to get interpreting services so that you know how to apply it even when at home. You can order a pizza, check to see if a store has something you want to buy, etc., using Internet interpreting.

If you prefer to use spoken English but cannot hear other people very well, there are special telephones which allow you to speak while a person who can hear interprets what the other person is saying to you. Your school can help you learn about special telephones and other technology that can help you communicate with others.

Your school should help you find websites where you can see other signers, learn new signs, and learn what is happening with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing in the United States and around the world.



## Helping Others Understand the Purpose of Educational Interpreters

You probably already have experience with teachers and classmates who are hearing and who do not understand that you are the person talking, not the interpreter, or they might think that the interpreter is only supposed to work with you.

People who can hear often do not understand how to use an interpreter. You may need to have a polite conversation with them about this topic. You may want to tell someone after class what can make communication better for both of you.

People who are hearing may also forget to do things that help communication. For example, they may look at the interpreter and not at you,

causing you to feel left out. You may need to remind others of what you need.

Your interpreter or another person who is deaf or hard of hearing can help you learn how to explain the purpose and role of interpreters.

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*You can find more information about classroom interpreting at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org). For more information and resources about the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, visit [www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu](http://www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu). You will also find all the guides in our Classroom Interpreting series on our website.*

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ISBN #: 0-88095-273-3

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# A Guide for P A R E N T S

Author: Brenda Schick, PhD

*This guide includes information for parents about accessibility and integration in an interpreted educational setting.*



*An educational interpreter enables a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to access the regular education class. However, it is more complicated than simply placing an interpreter in the classroom. Real integration requires all members of the educational team to work together.*

## **A Student's Need for an Educational Interpreter**

The classroom is a complex communication environment with a variety of speakers. For a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, a typical classroom environment can be quite challenging. He or she may need a sign language interpreter in order to access classroom communication and peer interaction.

## **Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing May Have a Range of Abilities to Communicate in Spoken Language**

Many students who are deaf or hard of hearing have some ability to use and to hear spoken English. However, their communication abilities can vary widely depending on the situation. For most students who have spoken language skills, spoken communication is best when only one or two people are talking and the environment is quiet. Noisy classrooms and multiple speak-

ers—a typical classroom—make listening very challenging. The need for an interpreter should not be based on a student's audiogram or whether he or she has a cochlear implant. Rather it should be based on the student's ability and success in learning and communication.

*Even students with strong auditory skills may miss essential information when:*

- new concepts and vocabulary are introduced,
- lecture and group discussion become fast-paced,
- the classroom is noisy,
- the teacher's style of instruction makes lipreading and listening challenging, and/or
- there is visual information to process in addition to spoken language.



## What is the Educational Interpreter's Role?

Educational interpreters provide communication access by representing the classroom instruction, teacher and peer interactions, and other relevant sound information, such as school-wide announcements. They may provide access using some form of sign language interpreting, oral interpreting<sup>1</sup>, or Cued Speech transliterating<sup>2</sup>.

Educational interpreters are not personal disciplinarians; students who are deaf or hard of hearing do not “belong” to them. The regular classroom teacher is responsible for maintaining a safe and effective learning environment for all students, including the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Expectations for all students should be consistent regardless of hearing status. The educational interpreter facilitates communication so the student who is deaf or hard of hearing is able to be a contributing member of the classroom, interacting with teachers and peers.

## Advantages to an Interpreted Educational Setting

Educational interpreters make inclusion in a regular educational setting possible for many students who are deaf or hard of hearing. For some students, this makes attending a local public school possible. Educational interpreters can provide the student with access to the general curriculum in the regular education classroom. They can also facilitate the student's social interaction with peers during class and extracurricular activities.

As determined by the IEP team, educational interpreters may take on additional responsibilities for the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. They can pre-teach and review vocabulary as well as serve in a tutorial role if the educational interpreter has those skills.

## Your Child's Rights Regarding Educational Interpreters

Your child has the right to:

- communicate in his or her own language and have the interpreter communicate in his or her language;
- utilize an educational interpreter who is highly qualified;
- utilize an educational interpreter in the classroom, during school meetings and assemblies, and during after-school groups, sports activities, and events;
- be treated with respect and encouraged to become independent like his or her classmates who can hear;
- opportunities to learn how to work with and schedule interpreters;
- opportunities to learn how to use Internet interpreters;
- be included in discussions concerning interpreting and his or her interpreter, such as in his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings or teacher meetings (if he or she is 14 years old or older); and
- have his or her family know about his or her interpreter and how the accommodation is working.

<sup>1</sup> Oral interpreting is done by a skilled professional who facilitates communication between individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are hearing. Oral interpreters work within a continuum of service provision from solely using mouth movements to the inclusion of natural gestures, fingerspelling, or writing key terms.

<sup>2</sup> Cued Speech transliterating is done by a professional, often certified, who uses a cueing system to facilitate communication between individuals who use spoken language and those who use Cued Speech (which is composed of eight handshapes with four different placements near the face which, when combined with movements of the mouth, make the sounds of spoken language look different from each other).

## Disadvantages to an Interpreted Educational Setting

Accessing the regular educational classroom through a single interpreter is not the same as having direct access to all the teachers and peers in the classroom. Some professionals and some adults who are deaf believe that an interpreted education is a compromised education. Their concern is that essential information can be lost in translation and the message may be altered.

Interpreting is a complex and challenging skill and requires a great deal of training and experience. However, qualified educational interpreters may be difficult to find, especially in rural areas. Educational interpreters vary in their skills, and one who is not highly qualified can greatly alter and reduce the quality of the information that the student who is deaf or hard of hearing receives. As a result, the student may not receive the same information and instruction as his or her peers.

A student who is deaf or hard of hearing may not have opportunities for direct communication with peers, which may impact his or her social development and ability to have friends. Also, a student who is constantly accompanied by an interpreter may experience difficulty fitting into social groups. Sometimes this leads to inappropriate situations in which the student views the interpreter as a friend.

States and school districts vary in terms of the requirements for qualifications for educational interpreters. Many states with requirements have provisions that allow a school to hire an educational interpreter who is not qualified, sometimes with no time limit. A student who is deaf or hard of hearing may have the same unqualified interpreter for multiple years, seriously compromising the quality of his or her education as well as his or her ability to meet educational standards.

## What Does Special Education Law Say About Educational Interpreters?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that mandates special education services for qualified students with disabilities. According to the IDEA, educational interpreting is a “related service.” This means it is a support required to assist a student with a disability in accessing education.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes the student’s parents, determines the need for an educational interpreter. This accommodation will be recorded in the IEP as a related service, and the number of interpreting hours per day will be specified in writing.

Since the educational interpreter is a related service provider, he or she is a member of the IEP team. The educational interpreter can provide the IEP team with important information about the student’s ability to access information using an educational interpreter and assist in identifying factors that help or hinder learning. The educational interpreter can also provide information about how well the student is able to interact with teachers and peers who are hearing.

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing who need communication access accommodations but not special education services, a 504 plan can outline the accommodations needed. The law that provides a 504 plan does not require parent participation and approval, allow due process, or provide special education funding.

Parents should ask about the educational interpreter’s certification/licensure, qualifications, and proficiency. They should know the state’s standards regarding interpreter qualifications, typically available from the state’s department of education. The lack of state standards does not mean the school does not need to provide a highly qualified educational interpreter.

## Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Need to Learn How to Manage an Interpreted Education

Many adults who are deaf or hard of hearing manage communication when they use an interpreter. They have learned to help the interpreter understand their sign language and spoken language preferences. They have learned to be proactive about interpreted settings. These skills are essential to being an adult who also uses an interpreter.

Young students who are deaf or hard of hearing typically need to learn how to become consumers of interpreting services. Schools often provide students with information and training to help them develop these skills beginning in middle school and high school. In high school, students who are deaf or hard of hearing should participate in decision making related to interpreting services.



If there are problems that consistently interfere with the ability of the student to access instruction, communication, and/or social interaction, he or she may need support in advocating appropriately toward resolution. Formal policies can provide the necessary structure for students to take their concerns to the designated authority.

For students to become effective users of interpreting services, schools must provide age-appropriate training.

### Parents' Role Related to Educational Interpreters

When a school system fails to provide a qualified educational interpreter, it may be because the administrators lack knowledge and/or expertise in the complexities involved in interpreting and in working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Many professionals who are hearing can underestimate the skills and expertise required to interpret. Parents may need to advocate effectively in order to ensure that the educational interpreter is qualified.

Some school systems may fail to provide a qualified educational interpreter because the administrators view the costs of these services as unnecessary, typically because they do not understand that the services are essential for the student to achieve educational standards.

At each IEP meeting, time should be taken to discuss how the student will utilize his or her educational interpreter. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing have different needs, and the team should discuss how your child's interpreter needs will be addressed.

### Interpreters for Extracurricular Activities

Any school-sponsored activities, including lunchtime, recess, before- and after-school programs, athletic practices and games, field trips, school assemblies, and other events offered by the school or district, are subject to the student's IEP accommodations. The student's IEP can specify that interpreters be provided for these events.

Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing may prefer not to have an interpreter in some situations, sometimes for social reasons. For those students, their ability to communicate with peers and adults who are hearing may be adequate in social situations, and they may not need interpreter support.

Many schools have policies that require older students to formally request an interpreter for extracurricular activities. This is good training for life beyond high school where self-advocacy and planning are required for communication access.

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ISBN #: 0-88095-273-3

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# A Guide for ADMINISTRATORS

Author: Brenda Schick, PhD

*This guide provides information for administrators about overseeing an interpreted educational setting.*



*The classroom is a complex communication environment with a variety of speakers. For a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, a typical classroom environment can be quite challenging. He or she may need a sign language interpreter in order to access classroom communication and peer interaction.*

## **A Student's Need for an Educational Interpreter**

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing may need a sign language interpreter in order to access classroom communication and peer interaction. You cannot determine the need for an interpreter by looking at an audiogram, which shows only the student's level of hearing.

The U.S. Department of Education's document on policy guidance directs the educational team to consider social, emotional, and cultural needs as well as linguistic and academic needs when considering whether a student needs an educational interpreter. The student who is deaf or hard of hearing must be able to access all aspects of the classroom curriculum, not just the teacher's lecture. This includes peer interaction, which is important for learning and social development.

Even students who can communicate easily using speech may need an interpreter. Often stu-

dents who are hard of hearing can interact independently in quiet environments with a few speakers. However, it may be more difficult for them to interact in classroom settings with multiple speakers and during lessons containing new concepts and vocabulary. Students who are hard of hearing may understand some teachers without an interpreter, but it may be more difficult to understand other teachers due to their speech, language, and/or teaching styles. The need for an educational interpreter should be determined by the student's ability to access classroom communication, not by his or her ability to speak.

Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing may have language and vocabulary skills that are delayed compared to their peers who are hearing. Although an educational interpreter can help support language and learning goals, the interpreter is not a skilled teacher or a teacher of the deaf and should only work on students' skills under the direct supervision of a qualified professional.



## Legal Rights Related to Educational Interpreters

The legal right to an educational interpreter is well established by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. IDEA recognizes the educational interpreter as a “related service provider.” Typically, the right to an educational interpreter is specified on the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan. For many students who are deaf or hard of hearing, an interpreter is essential to providing a free and appropriate public education.

All educational interpreters should be highly qualified. To ensure that educational interpreters are competent, the majority of states require interpreters to meet minimum performance standards, typically set by the state’s department of education, in order to work in the K-12 setting. Currently, 76 percent of states have some type of minimum requirement. However, research shows that many working educational interpreters do not have skills that are sufficient to convey classroom content.

In addition to being highly qualified, the educational interpreter must be able to adapt to the language needs of the student receiving interpreting services. There are various forms of sign language, and the student’s specific language needs must be considered. The educational interpreter needs to be able to assist in determining those language needs in collaboration with the educational team.

## Qualifications of Educational Interpreters

Interpreters require a great deal of training in order to meet minimum standards. Educational interpreters should have a formal assessment of their interpreting skills using a nationally recognized assessment, such as those offered by the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Additional requirements include a formal assessment of content knowledge related to educational interpreting (i.e., a passing score on the EIPA Written Test) and the ability to perform as a professional member of the educational team. Interpreting requires strong English skills, especially vocabulary skills.

Essential qualifications include:

- an associate’s degree in educational interpreting or interpreting (a bachelor’s degree in a related area is preferred);
- a passing score on a formal assessment of an interpreter’s interpreting skills using a nationally recognized assessment, such as those offered by the EIPA or the RID;
- a passing score on a state or national assessment of knowledge related to interpreting in educational settings; and
- continued professional development.

Research shows that interpreters who fall below minimum standards omit and distort a significant amount of teacher and peer communication. When an interpreter is not highly qualified, a student who is deaf or hard of hearing misses vital classroom communication and does not receive adequate access to the general education curriculum. Highly qualified interpreters require years of training, and their pay scale should reflect their level of education and expertise.

## Hiring an Educational Interpreter

The school’s interview committee should include individuals who are highly qualified educational interpreters. If your school district does not have a highly qualified individual, your state’s department of education or the state school for the deaf may be able to recommend someone. Potential applicants should have evidence of their qualifications, such as state licensure. If the interpreter has not taken a national test of interpreting skills, school districts can use the EIPA Pre-Hire Screening to determine if the interpreter has sufficient skills to be able to meet state standards (see [www.classroominterpreting.org/EIPA/index.asp](http://www.classroominterpreting.org/EIPA/index.asp)).

## The Educational Team and the Interpreter

The educational interpreter has an important role in implementing the student’s IEP. As a related service provider, the educational interpreter should understand the IEP goals for the student and the curricular goals for specific classes. The educational interpreter should participate in all IEP meetings. He or she should work with all other members of the team, including the deaf

educator, the speech-language pathologist, and the student's parents, to help provide the student with access.

When an educational interpreter is participating in a team meeting about a student, he or she cannot also interpret the meeting. The educational interpreter who is participating should focus on his or her educational interpreting role, and a second interpreter should be provided to interpret the meeting.

### Supervision of Interpreters

Ideally, a supervisor is a highly qualified interpreter who is very knowledgeable about the K-12 environment. Many larger school districts have established lead interpreter positions, and smaller districts contract with an individual qualified to provide oversight. In some school districts, another member of the educational team who is highly knowledgeable about interpreting, such as the deaf educator or the speech-language pathologist, oversees the educational interpreter. The supervisor should be a fluent communicator in sign language; however, that is not the only skill the individual needs.

Since evaluating interpreting skills is not a simple task, it is best to rely on external confirmation obtained from national test results regardless of the interpreter's level of training.

Interpreting for long periods of time is cognitively and physically demanding. The supervisor should ensure that the educational interpreter has sufficient preparation time and breaks from interpreting. In addition, the supervisor should ensure that a student does not have a specific educational interpreter for multiple years of his or her education. It is better to rotate interpreters.

### Legal Interpreting Considerations

There are occasions when law enforcement or interactions of a legal nature will occur in educational settings. All members of the educational team should be aware that whenever a situation arises that is of a legal nature, interpreters with specialized legal interpreting training must be hired to provide interpreting. Many states have rules and regulations requiring the use of a certified legal interpreter. The majority of educational interpreters do not have specialized legal training.



### Students' Rights Regarding Educational Interpreters

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to:

- communicate in their own language and have the interpreter communicate in their language;
- utilize educational interpreters who are highly qualified;
- utilize educational interpreters in the classroom, during school meetings and assemblies, and during after-school groups, sports activities, and events;
- be treated with respect and encouraged to become independent like their classmates who can hear;
- opportunities to learn how to work with and schedule interpreters;
- opportunities to learn how to use Internet interpreters;
- be included in discussions concerning interpreting and their interpreters, such as in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings or teacher meetings (if they are 14 years old or older); and
- have their family know about their interpreters and how the accommodation is working.

Such situations include:

- law enforcement interactions with a student or the parents and/or a potential victim, witness, or possible suspect;
- any circumstance in which a statement is being taken for use in future legal proceedings;
- juvenile delinquency matters; and
- any court proceedings.

### Interpreting Social and Extracurricular Events

School is more than a place to learn academics. Participation in social events and extracurricular activities is necessary in order for students to develop social skills.

It is the responsibility of the educational system to provide students who are deaf or hard of hearing with the opportunity to participate in all aspects of school life, not just in academics.

Often students who are deaf or hard of hearing have social needs that may be difficult to meet. An educational interpreter's support will promote effective social interactions between the student and his or her peers who are hearing.

### Use of CART Services and Relay Interpreters via the Internet

CART, or Communication Access Realtime Translation, is the instant translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer, and realtime software. A person who is hearing listens and transcribes

classroom communication. In general, CART is not recommended for most students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It requires a student to read all classroom instruction and interaction, which is equivalent to reading a textbook all day long. Any student would be challenged to learn in that manner. Also, students who are deaf or hard of hearing vary in their reading skills, and some may not be able to comprehend classroom lectures through reading. Finally, CART does not allow a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to talk and participate in the classroom or interact with peers, an essential part of learning. It can be extremely isolating to be in a classroom with only CART. However, for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing who has age-appropriate language and reading skills, CART may be a good option for advanced classes with complex technical vocabulary.

There are interpreting services that are available through the Internet. These services are best for one-to-one communication, not for interpreting classroom instruction. They are not acceptable for supporting and encouraging peer interaction during the school day but may be an excellent means of communication for students to talk with peers who are hearing after school.

*You can find more information about classroom interpreting at [www.classroominterpreting.org](http://www.classroominterpreting.org). For more information and resources about the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, visit [www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu](http://www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu). You will also find all the guides in our Classroom Interpreting series on our website.*

*About the Author:* Brenda Schick, PhD, a professor at the University of Colorado-Boulder, studies the development of spoken and sign language and its relationship to cognition in children who are deaf or hard of hearing. She has had three National Institutes of Health grants investigating language and/or cognitive development in children who are deaf or hard of hearing, including Theory of Mind. Each grant required data collection across the nation and the development of language assessment tools for American Sign Language (ASL). Schick is currently a member of a research center that focuses on literacy and young deaf and hard of hearing children. She has also served as the school board president for an ASL/English school for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and is a former teacher of the deaf. She developed a videotaped curriculum for hearing parents learning sign language and translated a series of classic children's storybooks into sign language. Schick grew up in a culturally deaf family, is fluent in ASL, and is a former certified interpreter of the deaf.

This guide was developed in collaboration with staff in the Center for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital.



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ISBN #: 0-88095-273-3

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