



COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS A-Z™

Educational Interpreting

What is educational interpreting?

An educational interpreter provides visual access to ensure your child can actively interact with teachers and peers in his/her academic pursuits. It is a challenging profession that requires proficiencies in Sign Language and English and the mastery of cognitive interpreting processes. Competent educational interpreters must also demonstrate knowledge sets related to child development and language acquisition, subject matter expertise as well as K-12 pedagogy, educational laws related to interpreter roles and responsibilities, and functional aptitude with other support systems (e.g., FM systems, CART, Cochlear Implants). This knowledge and skill set must be partnered with the proven ability to work as a collaborative member of the educational team.

What issues are at the forefront of educational interpreting?

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, a Federal law (2004), has classified educational interpreters as “Related Service” providers. This means that your child’s educational interpreter should participate in IEP meetings as a service provider, not as the interpreter for the meeting. This mandate has also raised awareness regarding necessary professional and academic qualifications. Current national and state efforts are defining the professional standards of educational interpreters. More than half of the states now require demonstrated competencies on a standardized testing system, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2006) has recommended a baccalaureate degree for interpreters working in K-12 environments.

What should every parent and professional know about educational interpreters?

An educational interpreter is not a surrogate parent in the classroom. He/she is one of the professionals who supports your child's academic goals. Since interpreting can be provided using American Sign Language or some form of Signed English, some interpreters will be a better "fit" for your child. Therefore, the qualifications of the interpreter should be at the forefront of consideration if you choose an interpreted education for your child. The Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) is a national tool that assesses both knowledge and skill sets. Further, a highly qualified interpreter should also hold a bachelor's degree, or document equivalent professional development, in educational interpreting or a related field. It is appropriate for parents to ask about the qualifications of their child's educational interpreter.

Where can I go for more information on educational interpreting?

Recommended Resources:

- Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment: www.classroominterpreting.com
- Meeting the needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. (2006). National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc. <http://www.nasdse.org/>
- Your State Education Agency's Policies
- Comparison of state standards: www.unco.edu/doit/Resources.html

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Leilani Johnson, Ed.D., IC/TC, CI, NAD III is the architect and administrator of the Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training Center at the University of Northern Colorado. The Center administers an ASL-English Interpretation bachelor's degree program and several professional development programs that are delivered via distance technologies to interpreting-students throughout the United States. Dr. Johnson has solicited and managed more than \$12M from federal grants and partnership contracts since establishing the Center's work in 1993. She has a master's degree in adult education with an emphasis in teaching ASL-English interpretation and a doctorate in Instructional Technology and Distance Education.

Communication Considerations A to Z™ is a series from Hands & Voices that's designed to help families and the professionals working with them access information and further resources to assist them in raising and educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We've recruited some of the best in the business to share their insights on the many diverse considerations that play into communication modes & methods, and so many other variables that are part of informed decision making. We hope you find the time to read them all!