

DCPS Guide to Working with an Educational Interpreter

Duval County Public Schools provides sign language interpreting services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) and whose main mode of communication is sign language. The purpose of this document is to help faculty and staff understand the role of the interpreter, the interpreting process, and how to facilitate a successful educational experience for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

What is an interpreter? An interpreter is a trained professional in the field of sign language interpreting and Deaf culture. The interpreter acts as the communication link between the instructor or other students and the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

What is the roll of the interpreter? The interpreter is responsible for taking the source language (spoken or signed) and converting it into the target language (signed or spoken) so both the individuals with hearing and without will readily understand the message. This conversion must be done without losing any of the meaning or context of the message. There are some common misconceptions about interpreters. For clarification, the interpreter is not a tutor, paraprofessional, instructor, or advisor to the student.

What is the appropriate way to communicate to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing with an interpreter? Communication should always be directed to the student. For example, you can say, *“Do you have a question?”* instead of *“Ask her if she has a question.”* Teachers should speak directly to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing about any issues or concerns, the same as any other student. The interpreter will simply convey the message.

Where will the interpreter sit? Generally, the interpreter will sit or stand near the instructor. This enables the student to maintain eye contact with both the teacher and the interpreter, thereby helping establish better student-instructor rapport. If there is a problem with the seating arrangement, the situation should be discussed with the interpreter and student, as appropriate.

Can the interpreter participate in class? The interpreter is part of the educational team and is present to facilitate communication, not to participate or to monitor the classroom. Interpreters should **never** be left alone with students.

How can teachers assist the interpreter?

Videos/Media: Captions are necessary for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to have access to media, whether or not they use interpreters. It is important to plan for this as early as possible. If DVD, video, or other media will be incorporated into a lesson, please check to see if it is closed-captioned.

Textbooks: Having access to a course textbook allows the interpreter to prepare for each class period and become familiar with the vocabulary that will be used. The interpreter may approach the classroom teacher to inquire whether there is an extra copy of the text that can be borrowed for the semester.

Lesson Plans/Handouts: Preparation is essential for interpreters to effectively communicate classroom content and vocabulary. Interpreters need time to preview information and vocabulary, learn new signs,

and understand the concepts and how they will be taught. Providing the lesson plans and handouts in advance will enable the interpreter to prepare for class and seek clarification if necessary.

What if the student is absent? The interpreter is required to wait 15 minutes for the student after the start of the class. After this time, the student is considered a no-show and the interpreter will leave. If the student knows he/she will be absent ahead of time, they have the responsibility, like any other student, to contact the teacher(s) and to find out/make up what was missed.

What resources are available to learn more about interpreting services? The interpreter is available to answer questions before or after class and can provide additional resources. You may also find the tips and strategies at the following website helpful: www.classroominterpreting.org

Who is the contact person to arrange an interpreter for IEP meetings, assemblies, field trips etc. or to answer questions regarding interpreting services If an interpreter other than the school based interpreter is needed or for any questions regarding interpreting services, please contact the lead interpreter below.

Danielle Moskowitz, Lead Interpreter (Support Technician)

Email: moskowitzd@duvalschools.org

Phone: 904.348.7824

Fax: 904.858.3625

References:

Material adapted from:

Instructor's Guide to working with Sign language interpreters at Madison College

https://madisoncollege.edu/files/users/skuehn/DHH%20Instructor%20Guide_4.1.15.pdf

www.classroominterpreting.org This website was developed by Dr. Brenda Schick and produced by Boys Town National Research Hospital, the site of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Center.