



# TOOLKIT

## for Spoken Language Interpreters in Education



A publication of  
**NAETISL**

**National Association of Educational Translators  
and Interpreters of Spoken Languages**

[www.naetisl.org](http://www.naetisl.org)



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**Suggested citation:** National Association for Educational Interpreters and Translators of Spoken Languages - NAETISL (2022), Toolkit for Spoken Language Interpreters in Education: <https://naetisl.org/best-practices>

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# VISION

In order to engage in their student's education, emergent bilingual families must receive the basic opportunity to share and understand information and concerns that are vital to their child's well-being, health, safety, and education.

Language rights are civil rights which are inextricably linked to the rights of students. If we have a genuine interest in providing a free and appropriate education for all students, then our commitment should also extend to meaningfully including all families as a critical part of their support base. Language access policies and practices must be centered in inclusive schooling practices and promoted as an integral piece to preserving the rights all families have to accessing the full benefits of public education in this country.

Family engagement, through quality communication, is a core component in strategies to eliminate the opportunity gap and appears in social justice goals that seek to disrupt discriminatory systems that perpetuate disparate outcomes based on race, ethnicity, and country of origin.

## **NAETISL believes:**

...that emergent bilingual students, their families, and the educators that support them, should have access to, and be able to collaborate with, professional, highly qualified, and nationally certified educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages.

## **NAETISL acknowledges:**

...the impact of professional, highly qualified, and nationally certified educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages, on family engagement and student achievement in early childhood and K-12 education.

## **NAETISL promotes:**

... high standards of ethical practice and professional integrity of educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages in early childhood and K-12 education, by developing and disseminating the academic and professional credentials required to attain and maintain a national certification in the field.

## **NAETISL advocates:**

...for emergent bilingual students, families, school districts, school administrators, teachers, educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages, and other community stakeholders, by striving to enhance the quality of translation and interpretation through the promotion of high standards, best practices, and accountability.

## **NAETISL IS A 501(C)(3) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**

Your membership supports the development of resources for emergent bilingual families, interpreters, translators and educators. For membership options, please visit: <https://naetisl.org/membership>



# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages

## Acknowledgements

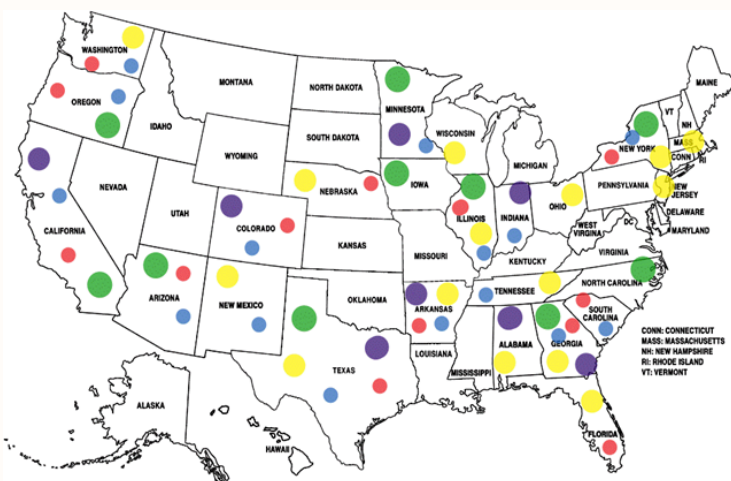
This document draws upon the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language that was developed over five years by the University of Minnesota Program on Translation and Interpreting and the Minnesota Department of Education with support from grant #H323A100010 from the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. We appreciate the Minnesota Department of Education and the National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care (NCIHC 2005) for providing the initial framework for these nationally-vetted standards for educational translators and spoken language interpreters.

Abiding by our commitment to involve stakeholders in the process of establishing qualifications, standards and best practices for educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages, this Code of Ethics was reviewed by a sample of:

- Early Childhood and K-12 Teachers
- Multilingual School Personnel
- Department of Education Representatives (Title I, Title III, Early Childhood and Exceptional Student Offices)
- Emergent Bilingual/Multilingual Families
- Bilingual Family Engagement and Parent Outreach Coordinators
- Certified Medical, Legal and Sign Language Interpreters
- School District Faculty and Staff (School Principals, Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, Speech and Language Pathologists, and School Psychologists)

Our special thanks to NAETISL's Board of Directors, Standards and Best Practices Committee Coordinators, and the University of Georgia Faculty for providing guidance on survey development and data analysis, along with insightful recommendations and feedback.

## Stakeholders Involved in the National Vetting Process



- **School district faculty and staff (School Principals, Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, Speech and Language Pathologists, and School Psychologists)**
- **Department of Education representatives (Title I, Title III, Early Childhood and Exceptional Student Offices)**
- **Early childhood and K-12 linguistically diverse families who received interpreter assistance**
- **K-12 Family Engagement and Bilingual Parent Outreach Coordinators**
- **Certified Medical, Legal and Sign Language Interpreters**

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**Suggested citation:** National Association for Educational Interpreters and Translators of Spoken Languages - NAETISL. Code of ethics and standards of practice for educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages (2020). Revised August, 2022: <https://naetisl.org/ethics-standards>





# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages

## Review Committee

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**Elizabeth Campos Hamilton, Disability Rights Advocate & Professional Educational Interpreter, Former NAETISL Board Member**

**Flor Castellanos, M.A., Educational Psychology, NAETISL Secretary**

**Jessica Sanchez, Educational Translator and Interpreter - Spanish (Arkansas Bilingual Interpreter Credentialed in Education), NAETISL Treasurer**

**Mei Yan Lin, Educational Interpreter/Translator - Mandarin, Certified Parent Educator, Physician, Former NAETISL Board Member**

**Maria Leyva, Bilingual Paraeducator and Library Technician, NAETISL Board Member**

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**Dr. Jennifer Pendergrass, ES ESOL Teacher & Coordinator of ESOL Professional Learning, NAETISL Board Member**

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**Khadija Sheikh, Parent and Arabic Interpreter/Translator**

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**Lourdes A. Guillian-Ortiz, Trilingual Interpreter (Sign Language-Spanish-English)**

**Dr. Gloria Torres-Hunter, Member, National Association of School Psychologists**

**Dr. Ahmed Nader, ESOL Lead Teacher, Arabic Interpreter/Translator**



# Overview

The National Association of Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages (<https://naetisl.org/>) believes that our linguistically diverse families have the right to be supported by interpreters and translators who have been specifically trained to work in educational settings. The profession of the Educational Translator or Spoken Language Interpreter is unique and therefore, requires a specific set of standards of practice that professionals can follow as guidance to provide the best services possible to families, students and school personnel. This Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice includes guidelines for translators (who work providing language access through written documents) and spoken language interpreters (who provide oral renditions from one language to another). This Code also includes guidelines for those working with students, parents and school personnel in general education and special education in early childhood and K-12 settings.

This is intended to be a **living document**, providing in-depth explanations and examples that reflect our common experiences as professionals in education settings. We envision a framework where stakeholders will continuously share examples of the Code in practice to establish a collective understanding of the standards, qualifications and certification requirements for educational translators and interpreters of spoken languages. NAETISL and its Standards and Best Practices Committee will continue to seek and review stakeholder feedback and will update the Code of Ethics accordingly. Examples, case scenarios and suggestions specific to the NAETISL Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice can be sent to: [naetisl@gmail.com](mailto:naetisl@gmail.com)

## Language Access in Early Childhood and K-12 Settings

For more information about language access legislation and guidance in early childhood and K-12, access:

- Collaborating with Spoken Language Interpreters: A Primer for School Leaders: <https://naetisl.org/resources>
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI-Overview>
- Executive Order 13166: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statuteregulations/>
- Office of Civil Rights and Department of Justice Guidance on Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html>

## Spoken Language Interpreter:

An interpreter renders verbal communications from one language (source language) into another language (target language). In order to provide language access to linguistically diverse families, school districts rely on a combination of bilingual/multilingual school personnel and freelance/contract interpreters. The job functions and titles of school personnel providing interpretation and translation services may include Parent Outreach Liaison, Family Engagement Facilitator, Teacher, Instructional Aid, Clinic Worker, Front Office Clerk and countless others. Therefore, a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice must encompass the fluidity of the roles played by bilingual, multicultural and biliterate personnel in an early childhood and K-12 setting. Regardless of their function in a school setting, the bilingual and biliterate person who is called upon to interpret and/or translate, is responsible for maintaining the role, performance standards and ethical responsibilities of an interpreter or translator, while performing those functions. Ideally, a school staff member with a dual role, for example, a Bilingual Teacher, should refrain from interpreting at meetings that involve a family or student in their own class.

## Translator:

A translator abides by professional standards to render written communication from the source language to the target language effectively and accurately, ensuring that the meaning of the communication is clear and conceptually correct in the target language. In early childhood and K-12 settings, professionals hired to support families with interpretation are often, automatically, given the duties of a translator. Because the skills of an interpreter and a translator are distinct, early childhood and K-12 settings must ensure that translators have the literacy and terminology skills necessary to render accurate and effective communication in a written format.



# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages (Short Version)



## CONFIDENTIALITY

All information learned in the performance of their duties as translators and spoken language interpreters in general and special education settings is kept confidential, while observing relevant legal requirements regarding disclosure. Interpreters and translators adhere to all existing federal, or state laws or acts concerning confidentiality, including, but not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), when reviewing, sight translating, interpreting, or translating student records, transcripts, medical records and other documents pertaining to the student or the family.



## IMPARTIALITY

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to maintain impartiality and refrain from counseling, advising, or projecting personal opinions, biases, or beliefs, adopting a mantle of neutrality.



## RESPECT

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education treat all parties with respect, resolving conflicts with utmost professionalism.



## ADVOCACY

When the student's health, well-being, or dignity are at risk, or when student educational access and outcomes are compromised, translators and spoken language interpreters in education may be justified in acting as advocates.



## ACCURACY

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to render messages accurately, conveying the content and spirit of the original message, taking into consideration its cultural context. Translators maintain accuracy of units of information avoiding omissions and additions, abiding by grammar rules in their respective language. Spoken language interpreters and translators preserve the register of the source speech/text, considering natural differences between languages.



## PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education maintain the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from other types of involvement.



## PROFESSIONALISM

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education must always act in a professional manner.



## CULTURAL AWARENESS

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education promote and maintain respect for the cultural beliefs and practices of educators, families and colleagues.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to continually further their knowledge and skills.

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# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages



## CONFIDENTIALITY

**All information learned in the performance of their duties as translators and spoken language interpreters in general and special education settings is kept confidential, while observing relevant legal requirements regarding disclosure. Interpreters and translators adhere to all existing federal, or state laws or acts concerning confidentiality, including, but not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA, when reviewing, sight translating, interpreting, or translating student records, transcripts, medical records and other documents pertaining to the student or the family.**

As members of the multidisciplinary team, spoken language interpreters and translators working in early childhood and K-12 settings must protect the privacy of educational information and understand that only members of the education team should have access to such information. The only exceptions to data privacy are situations where child abuse is suspected and where the interpreter may be a mandated reporter as defined in state laws. Any information divulged according to mandated reporting disclosure requirements should be limited to specific information necessary and relevant to the suspected abuse. Spoken language interpreters and translators working in education, must obtain additional information about their status as mandatory reporters from immediate supervisors in their respective settings (early childhood, K-12 or language services agencies). Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Inform parties that all the information will be confidential to reassure that no important information or helpful details are left unsaid.
- Not divulge either specific or general information to third parties or anyone outside of the actual encounter, including a student who is the subject of discussion.
- Refer all questions about confidential information to their immediate supervisor in the early childhood or K-12 setting or interpreter agency.
- Safeguard their notes when they are working as an in-person interpreter or Video Remote/Over the Phone Interpreter, shredding and disposing of them after a meeting as appropriate. Translators producing documents and forms that contain student/family information must prevent unauthorized access. Notes, drafts and glossaries produced while translating documents must also be safeguarded if they include student identifiable information.
- Refrain from revealing confidential information about a student or family, if for some reason the interpreter or translator needs to consult with a professional colleague or mentor about a matter discussed in a meeting. The professional shall give enough context to present the problem or concern, while limiting and protecting identifiable information.



## ACCURACY

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to render messages accurately, conveying the content and spirit of the original message, taking into consideration its cultural context. Translators maintain accuracy of units of information avoiding omissions and additions, abiding by grammar rules in their respective language. Spoken language interpreters and translators preserve the register of the source speech/text, considering natural differences between languages.**

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Avoid literal (word-for-word) interpretations and translations, as they are generally inaccurate. Ensure that all parties understand that some educational concepts may not exist in the target language and therefore, additional words and explanation may be needed.
- Understand that accuracy is both linguistic and cultural. Therefore, before making word choices, the interpreter and translator carefully weighs meaning given the cultural background and register levels of the parties. Translators are encouraged to use footnotes or notes to indicate the best solution to an unresolvable term, or highlight dialectal differences in their respective languages.





# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages

- Recognize that accuracy at times requires the interpreter or translator to convey offensive and emotional content. The interpreter or translator maintains the message in all its complexities and impact. The professional must understand the concept of Functional Equivalence to ensure that the speaker's effect on an audience is the same among audience members who understand the speaker's language.
- Include hesitation and pauses (such as "um", "ah" and others) in the message as they may have an impact on the meaning of the message relayed.
- Relay and preserve any errors, inaccuracies, falsehoods, and omissions contained in the original message.
- Strive to convey the meaning behind nonlinguistic elements such as gestures of emphasis, body language, and tone of voice. To maintain the accuracy of a message, the interpreter may need to evaluate whether nonverbal cues need to be interpreted verbally or nonverbally and ask the speaker to clarify their meaning.
- Ask for repetition and clarification when necessary and request examples if needed.



## IMPARTIALITY

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to maintain impartiality and refrain from counseling, advising, or projecting personal opinions, biases, or beliefs, adopting a mantle of neutrality.**

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Disclose any prior personal or previous professional involvement with any party that may be perceived as a conflict of interest, and allow the school personnel conducting the encounter to determine if impartiality will be an issue.
- Decline to accept an assignment when there is a conflict of interest and impartiality cannot be maintained. Instances when this may occur are when one of the parties is a family member, friend, or business associate.
- Cite the Code of Ethics and professional judgement as reasons to avoid sharing advice, information, likely outcomes, or personal opinions if asked by a parent/staff member. The interpreter must share this concern with all parties present.
- Refrain from becoming personally involved with the parties.
- Avoid any conduct or behavior that may suggest preference for one party over the other.



## RESPECT

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education treat all parties with respect, resolving conflicts with utmost professionalism.**

Respect is a fundamental principle of successful and mutually beneficial interactions. Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Work collaboratively and cooperatively with colleagues, families, school staff members, and other interpreters and translators.
- Attempt to resolve any conflict that may arise in a prompt and professional manner.
- Strive to recognize personal cultural biases and work towards a resolution.
- Discuss language variations with professionalism providing constructive criticism, resources and peer support when needed.
- Collaborate with school personnel to determine the steps to take should a family decline the services of the interpreter. Schools should follow best practice and allow a trained spoken language interpreter to remain in a meeting for language support, even when a family brings a bilingual community member to assist.
- Always be respectful and not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural beliefs, or national origin.



# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages



## PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education maintain the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from other types of involvement.**

Professional educational interpreters provide meaningful language access services and should stay within the confines of that role during encounters that require them to interpret. We recognize however that there are individuals with dual roles within the school settings. Any individual serving as an interpreter -- including cultural liaisons, parent facilitators, administrators, paraprofessionals, or other bilingual staff called upon to interpret -- will fully comply with the interpreter's code of ethics and standards of practice while they are interpreting. There may be situations where roles unavoidably shift within the timeframe of a single encounter. If this occurs, however, all parties must be made fully aware of the fact that the role has changed. This can be done by making a statement such as the following in both languages: "The interpreter needs to step out of the interpreting role to share information about our upcoming reading workshops."

Educational interpreters should exercise caution when stepping out of their role during an encounter. They should only do so if they feel it is critical to clear communication and all other communication efforts by the parties involved have been exhausted. Interpreters and translators must take into careful consideration the tenet of the Code of Ethics concerning Advocacy and associated standards of practice. Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Always introduce and define the limitations of their role as an interpreter to all parties in both languages before a meeting.
- Ask all parties to address situations pertaining to the second role before or after the session to maintain the integrity of the interpreter's job at the meeting.
- Refrain from personally discussing the case at hand with the parent and/or student.
- Not perform favors for clients such as providing transportation or childcare which may have a negative impact on the interpreter's ability to remain impartial. Interpreters can, however, direct parents to someone at the school who can provide such assistance while continuing to address language access.
- Strive to share any additional pertinent information with the team whenever possible in a pre or post-session, unless an urgent situation arises and it is not recommended for the interpreter to step out of their role during the meeting.



## ADVOCACY

**When the student's health, well-being, or dignity are at risk, or when student educational access and outcomes are compromised, translators and spoken language interpreters in education may be justified in acting as advocates.**

Advocacy is understood as an action taken on behalf of an individual that goes beyond facilitating communication, with the intention of supporting good educational outcomes. Interpreters serve to facilitate direct communication between parties who speak two different languages. Steps to advocate for any party should only be undertaken after careful and thoughtful analysis. If other less intrusive actions have not resolved a well-defined and specific problem, the interpreter may intervene if the situation is urgent and has not been noticed by other parties. For example, the interpreter may intervene on behalf of a student with a life-threatening allergy if it has been overlooked by the other parties. This can be done by making a statement such as the following in both languages: "The interpreter needs to step out of the interpreting role to share information about the student's life-threatening allergy."



# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Notify an appropriate supervisor or authority if they recognize that emotional or physical harm is imminent to a party.
- Notify an appropriate supervisor or authority if the interpreter is aware of an educational disadvantage affecting the student.
- Provide information about internal/external community resources that may be helpful to the English Learner's family as long as resources are also shared with school personnel to maintain transparency and strengthen trust among all parties.



## CULTURAL AWARENESS

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education promote and maintain respect for the cultural beliefs and practices of educators, families and colleagues.**

Educational interpreters and translators need to be aware of the unique cultural dynamics of those they serve. It should be noted that educational institutions have their own unique cultural norms and expectations. Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Strive to understand cultural differences within the language groups they serve such as traditions, practices and beliefs. If a particular recommendation conflicts with cultural practices, the interpreter addresses the issue when meeting with school staff outside of the interpreted encounter without many generalizations, without stereotyping, and without making assumptions of a family in a particular culture.
- Share cultural understanding and impressions as members of the multidisciplinary educational team (preferably during the pre or post meeting with school personnel), without explaining culture on behalf of the family.
- Mediate to point out a break in communication due to a cultural difference. The mediation must be conducted in a sensitive manner in order to maintain the flow of communication. The spoken language interpreter can make a statement such as the following in both languages: "The interpreter needs to step out of the interpreting role to clarify cultural differences." Translators must consult with the author or the original document to ensure that cultural differences and misunderstandings are addressed prior to completing the translation.
- Develop awareness of idioms, slang, jokes, and cultural/regional differences.
- Be a source of cultural information but not consider themselves experts in a particular culture nor convey this misconception to other members of the multidisciplinary team.
- Ensure that dialectal and cultural differences are addressed in the evaluation and special education process. Translators and interpreters must be aware of the additional skills required to support families during early childhood screening sessions and psychoeducational evaluations.



## PROFESSIONALISM

**Translators and spoken language interpreters in education must always act in a professional manner.**

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Only accept assignments for which they have been sufficiently trained, prepared, or briefed, in particular when the assignment involves the assessment of speech/language, mental health, and/or student academic performance, and meetings that involve the eligibility and individualized education program of a student.
- Always introduce and define their role to all parties and in both languages.
- Always arrive prepared for the assignment.
- Present themselves appropriately in their attire and demeanor.
- Refrain from discussing students or situations with people outside of the educational setting or outside of the educational team.



# Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages

- Accept the responsibility to mentor new interpreters and translators entering the field, and those in need of developing their skills.
- Engage in appropriate and timely self-care and take advantage of debriefing opportunities, particularly after a difficult meeting.
- Request and be allowed to work, if possible, with another interpreter for assignments lasting longer than two hours and assignments that are expected to be emotionally charged or difficult in nature.
- Accurately represent their credentials such as training, certifications, certificates, and work experience.
- Disclose their cultural and/or linguistic limitations when supporting multidisciplinary teams. A translator and spoken language interpreter must assist linguistically diverse families and school personnel only when the appropriate level of skills, training and certification have been attained.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### **Translators and spoken language interpreters in education strive to continually further their knowledge and skills.**

Educational translators and spoken language interpreters are expected to foster and maintain competence through ongoing learning.

Translators and spoken language interpreters in education shall:

- Seek to improve their interpreting and translation skills and language competency.
- Keep abreast of any changes in special education and general education laws, policies, practices, procedures, and rules.
- Understand the implications of not having appropriate training to assist multidisciplinary educational teams. For example, assisting school psychologists and speech-language pathologists with interpretation of measures used during assessments, requires specific knowledge of assessment protocols, timing and factors that protect reliability and validity of results.
- Make every effort to attend district-sponsored training events or other continuing education opportunities that can contribute to their professional development.
- Maintain awareness of cultural and current events of the communities they serve.

## **Approved by the National Association of Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages (NAETISL) and the National Code of Ethics and Standards Review Committee– 2020 (Revised August, 2022)**

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# Remote Interpretation

## Resources & Suggestions



### Before the Meeting:

- All Professional Interpreters in Education communicating with schools and parents through VRI (Video Remote Interpretation) and OPI (Over-the-Phone Interpretation), must abide by the same professional standards and ethics as onsite interpreters.
- Professional Interpreters in Education must safeguard the privacy of students, parents and school personnel as they do when interpreting onsite.
- Come prepared with the same interpreter tools you use in person (notepad, pen, water).
- Request documents ahead of time but be patient and flexible. Schools may not be able to share information with you. Explain that, as Professional Interpreters in Education, you rely on body language cues shared during face-to-face communication, and additional information prior to a meeting using video/phone is particularly important.
- Ask for the names and titles of attendees, including the student and parent. "Arrive" early, just as you do in-person.
- Let school personnel know what equipment they will need to ensure that the meeting will go smoothly.
- For VRI and OPI involving more than one teacher, it is important to remind parties that only one speaker is assigned to conduct the meeting at a time. A speakerphone, if used, must be in that individual's immediate proximity.
- If confidential or sensitive information needs to be shared with a parent, it is recommended that teachers use an individual headset, not a speakerphone, to speak and listen to the parent and the interpreter.
- Most of the time, as in the in-person setting, you will use consecutive interpretation. You may be asked to interpret simultaneously for area board meetings and thus preparation is key, as well as disclosure of your skills.

### Check Your Equipment:

- You need good lighting and a professional background (solid is preferred).
- Become familiar with your audio/video features (mute, volume, microphone) to know how to troubleshoot.
- If possible, have a separate device to take notes, sight translate text sent to you ahead of time, or look up words.
- Check the noise in your environment to avoid interruptions. Eliminate background noise and interference (participate from indoors, in a room with closed door and windows to avoid extraneous noise).
- Be aware of video application updates as they may include additional security features to protect privacy.
- Close unrelated programs (email, browsers, or programs that may be running in the background).
- Make sure your device is fully charged or connected. Run a "test" meeting with someone remotely to make sure everything works. Have your computer on a firm surface.
- Cell phone or other devices must be on silence. Turn off all sound notifications (skype, WhatsApp, emails, etc.) while attending virtual meetings.
- Use individual headsets with high quality microphones and echo cancelling. It may be best to avoid wireless headsets as they may have some security vulnerabilities. Wired headsets are recommended.

### During the Meeting:

- Your pre-session is still crucial! Ask participants for their names and titles and ask them to mute themselves to reduce ambient noise. Emphasize to all parties that you are their voice and that everything heard will be interpreted.
- As in face-to-face interpreting, remind parents that they can ask questions if something is not clear. In VRI and OPI, our focus continues to be empowering families to advocate for themselves!
- Remind families and teachers that you will not be reading the chat while you are video interpreting. Your focus should be on the spoken information provided by all parties. Families and school personnel must voice their questions through you.
- Intervene when necessary, just as you do in person. Conversations/terminology may be confusing and you may have questions throughout the meeting. Ask for clarification when needed.
- As a Professional Interpreter in Education using video or phone as your channel, you still manage the flow of communication and you still model proper speaking tone.



# Guidelines for School Personnel Collaborating with Interpreters



It is important that schools take extra steps to communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Bilingual school staff may be able to help with casual communication. For meetings such as parent-teacher conferences, special education meetings, disciplinary hearings and others, it is necessary to take more deliberate steps to protect the integrity of the information. Here are some suggestions when collaborating with a professional interpreter in education:

- Remember: **Speaking the target language does not ensure** that a person will be a good interpreter.
- **Students should not be asked to interpret** as they may not have the language skills necessary to transfer messages from one language to another, and may be inclined to omit or edit crucial information for parents. When acting as interpreters, children may also be placed in an awkward situation which may disrupt family roles.
- Speak with the interpreter prior to the meeting to discuss goals, terminology and background. Share any documents that you will be reviewing during the meeting. Professional Interpreters in Education abide by a **Code of Ethics** that requires them to protect student and family information.
- Professional Interpreters in Education **should introduce themselves** explaining that all information will be kept confidential, that everything heard will be interpreted, and that they will be impartial members of the meeting. This information should be relayed to both, the school personnel and the bilingual/multilingual family.
- Advise the group that **only one person will speak at a time**. It is hard to interpret multiple conversations and the goal is to ensure that bilingual/multilingual families and schools have all the information they need.
- **Speak directly** to the parties involved, not the interpreter.
- Ensure comprehension by asking, through the interpreter, if the bilingual/multilingual family understands what you are saying. **Do not depend upon the interpreter to ensure understanding**. The interpreter is there to deliver messages in both languages. Feel free to ask the interpreter to clarify or rephrase any information.
- **Pause frequently** to allow the interpreter to relay thoughts in meaningful “chunks.” While your message may be short, interpreted messages are often much longer. The interpreter may request that speakers pause if the speech is occurring too quickly or if a term is unknown.
- **Avoid long, complex sentences**, slang, jargon and abbreviations. Humor can often be difficult to interpret.
- Professional Interpreters in Education **will speak in first person** to emphasize their impartiality in the meeting.
- Many people with some fluency in English may still prefer to use an interpreter due to the complexity of educational terms. Please **don't assume that a family does not speak or understand English**.
- Allow time for the family to provide additional information and ask questions. **It is important that families feel that they have been heard**.
- Professional Interpreters in Education can also be cultural mediators and can help you navigate through cultural dilemmas. However, **they are not experts in all cultures**.
- As a neutral party of the meeting, Professional Interpreters in Education **cannot provide their opinions**, suggestions or advice. Interpreters can provide cultural/language insight before or after the meeting if needed.
- Monitor the quality of communication. **Stop and make adjustments** at the first signs of miscommunication. More direct communication can be accomplished when you stay focused on the bilingual/multilingual family and their verbal and non-verbal communication.
- **When you are supported** by a Professional Interpreter in Education, you should be able to forget that you and the bilingual/multilingual family are speaking two different languages!

For more information about effective ways to collaborate with spoken language interpreters please visit: <https://naetisl.org/resources>





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# BEST PRACTICES FOR LARGE MEETINGS

## INTERPRETERS

### PLAN & PREPARE

- Ask for **materials** beforehand, such as meeting agenda, speech notes, presentation slides, reports and acronyms.
- Know your **audience** and **topic**.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes **before** the meeting
- **Test** the technology you'll be using (virtually or in-person).



### TECH TIPS



Make sure the **talk system** works properly and have spare **batteries** just in case.



Have a **troubleshooting plan** and **backup** technology in case your virtual platform is not working.



**Communicate** if **volume** needs to be adjusted or the **speaker** is going too fast.



Make sure everyone is on the **correct channel** if using the talk system.



**Explain** the simultaneous feature if using a virtual platform.

### ASK FOR HELP



Meet with staff **ahead** of the meeting to go over meeting procedures.



If interpreting **in person**, request a **trained member** to help others with the talk system.



If interpreting **virtually**, assign a **co-host** so you can remain focused on the interpretation.



Ask the school to create **instructions** or slides explaining the process in the **families' language**.

### EXPLAIN

- Ask meeting organizers for 5 minutes to **explain the process** before starting.
- Meet with **the speaker** and ask them to speak at a moderate pace.
- Remind speaker to look out for a commonly agreed **signal** (e.g. raised hand) to indicate they need to slow down.
- Remind speakers to avoid **jargon, idioms, and humor** as they are difficult to interpret.
- Determine in advance the best way to incorporate you as the interpreter during a **Q&A** in virtual or in-person settings.
- **Greet** families in the language you are interpreting and remind them that you will interpret **everything** you will hear.
- Ask families to find you **after the meeting** if further **clarification** is needed.



### INTERPRET

- Speak **loud** and **clear** & **pace** yourself.
- Remain **professional** and take quick **notes** of information you may have missed.
- Work with a **buddy** and switch every 30 minutes. Interpreting simultaneously is mentally **exhausting!**
- Be prepared to switch from **simultaneous** to **consecutive** interpretation or **sight translation** during the session.



### STAY CALM

- **Breathe** and remain **focused**.
- If you **miss** something, **write** a quick note and follow up as needed.
- Remain **in the moment**.
- **Trust** your skills.



### DEBRIEF

- Provide **feedback** to school staff to improve future meetings.
- **Follow up** on information that was not clear to prepare for future meetings.
- Offer suggestions about the **equipment** used including the virtual platform, talk system, or microphone.



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# BEST PRACTICES FOR LARGE MEETINGS

SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

## PLAN & PREPARE

- Identify interpreters versed in **education terminology**.
- Select interpreters with **experience** interpreting **simultaneously**.
- **Share materials** such as meeting agenda, speech notes, presentation slides, reports, and acronyms to be used with interpreters.
- Allow interpreters to arrive at least **10-15 minutes before** the meeting (virtual or in person).



## TECH TIPS



Make sure the **talk system** works properly and have spare **batteries** just in case.



Have a **troubleshooting plan** and **backup** technology in case virtual platforms do not work.



**Communicate** if **volume** needs to be adjusted or the **speakers** are going too fast for the interpreters.



Make sure all the families are on the **correct channel** if using the talk system.



**Explain** the simultaneous feature if using a virtual platform.

## KEEP IN MIND



Understand that the interpreters **cannot** **troubleshoot** technology issues for others while they focus on interpretation.



If interpreting **in person**, ask for a parent volunteer to **help** the interpreters with the **talk system**



If interpreting **virtually**, assign a **co-host** so the interpreter can remain focused on the interpretation.



Create **slides** in the families' **home language** explaining how to use the talk system or virtual platform

## EXPLAIN



- **Explain** your meeting objective and **clarify** terminology with interpreters.
- Allow interpreters to **explain the process** to families in their language prior to starting the meeting.
- Create a **slide** in the families' **home language** explaining where the interpreter will be and how to use the talk system (in-person) or virtual platform.
- Allow families to ask questions and **get acquainted** with the **technology** prior to starting the meeting.
- Determine in advance the best way to incorporate the interpreter during a **Q&A** in virtual or in-person settings.

## DURING THE MEETING

- Speak **clearly** and at a **moderate** pace.
- Be on the lookout for a commonly **agreed signal** (e.g. raised hand) from interpreters to indicate you need to **slow down**.
- Avoid **jargon**, **idioms** and **humor** as they are difficult to interpret.
- Allow interpreters to **switch every 30 minutes** to avoid fatigue and promote accuracy.
- Remind families where the interpreters will be (in person) after the meeting if **further clarification** is needed.
- If using a virtual platform, ask the interpreters to **stay after** the conclusion of the meeting in case families have a question.



## DEBRIEF



- Provide **feedback** to the interpreters to improve future meetings.
- **Follow up** on information that interpreters pointed out as needing clarification.
- Offer suggestions about the **equipment** used including the virtual platform, talk system, or microphone.

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# BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERPRETATION

## INTERPRETERS

### KEEP IN MIND



If you're a **school-based** interpreter, ask for a **copy** of the special education document ahead of time. If you're a **contract** interpreter, ask your **agency** to request as much information as possible.



Arrive **early** to talk with school staff about the meeting or unknown terminology.



Remain **flexible** with your schedule as not all special education meetings are created equal.



Understand that the school must protect **confidentiality** and **family privacy** and may be able to only share basic information.

### PLAN & PREPARE

- If possible, find out the **names** and **titles** of the people attending, and **how many**.
- Study **terminology** related to the student's disability and eligibility categories, as well as their school level.
- Study the **Parent Rights** and get familiar with the process.



### QUICK TIPS



**Smile.** These meetings are intimidating for everyone regardless of language or culture differences.



If you are interpreting **virtually**, ensure that the family has a chance to ask questions about the **technology** used.



Come prepared to **take notes** and learn new terminology for your next special education meeting.



Be prepared to **sight translate** documents always in the presence and under the guidance of school staff.

### PRE-SESSION

- Request an opportunity to do your pre-session for both school staff and families.
- Ask school staff to spell out **abbreviations**.
- Remind all participants of the importance of **confidentiality** and to avoid **side conversations**.
- **Disclose** your skill limitations, if any.
- Ensure the **families understand** the importance of asking questions and providing feedback.



### INTERPRET

- Ask school staff whether you should interpret **consecutively** or **simultaneously** and respect their preference.
- Ask questions and **clarify**. **Accuracy** and completeness of information are crucial.
- Ask for an **example** if a term or concept is unknown. Oftentimes, **complex terminology** is easier to understand through an example.



### BE PROFESSIONAL

- Always use **formal** language when addressing families.
- Avoid simplifying information on your own. Rely on **school staff** and **families** to lead your **register** adjustments.
- **Respect** the family's wishes for their children's education. Do not undermine their decisions.
- Do not assume the responsibility of **sight translating** long and complex text (such as Parent Rights). Demonstrate **professionalism** and **professional boundaries** by asking school staff to summarize the information for you.



### DEBRIEF

- **Debrief** with school staff after the meeting.
- Ask for and provide **feedback** to improve future special education meetings.



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# BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERPRETATION

## SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

### KEEP IN MIND



Remember that trained **professional** interpreters must follow a **national code of ethics** and **standards of practice**.



If you are **bilingual**, meet with the interpreter **prior** to starting the meeting to understand the **expectations** of who will interpret when.



Meetings with an interpreter will **take longer**. Plan accordingly and inform the team of teachers present.

### PLAN & PREPARE

- Ensure the interpreter selected has received **specialized training** in the field of special education.
- For meetings **longer** than 1 hour, plan to have **two interpreters**. Interpreting is mentally exhausting, especially when **complex** information such as special education terms are presented.



### SHARE INFORMATION



- **Send** the interpreter as much **information** as possible about the meeting to help them prepare. The interpreter can benefit from knowing the **disability category** and **school level** of the student.
- **Share templates** of special education **forms** that are used in your school district.
- Share the **names** and **titles** of the staff members present with the interpreter. This will help the interpreter come prepared and plan ahead for **seating arrangements** for in-person sessions.

### ONE-ON-ONE

- Have a conversation with the interpreter **before** the meeting **clarify** terminology and cultural factors that may impede communication.
- Remember, interpreters are **not culture experts**. However, they can share valuable information about their specific experiences that may **help guide** you.
- Some interpreters prefer to relay information **simultaneously** (almost at the same time as you speak) or in **consecutive** mode (taking turns when speaking). Have a conversation with the interpreter ahead of time to select the **best choice**.
- Encourage interpreters to **ask questions** about **terms** they may not know.



### DURING THE MEETING

- Allow interpreters to **introduce** themselves and their role in English and the language they are interpreting.
- Use **clear** and **plain** language to explain special education **procedures** and **terminology**.
- **Spell** out abbreviations.
- Understand that some terms **may not exist** in other languages and the interpreter may need **more explanation** and **examples** to be accurate.
- Allow **time** for the interpreter to relay the information.
- **Pause** after 3-4 sentences to allow the interpreter to relay the information accurately.
- Encourage everyone to speak **one at a time**.
- **Everything** spoken during the meeting will be interpreted. **Side conversations** are distracting and will prevent the interpreter from providing complete information to the family.



### SHOW RESPECT

Avoid **underestimating** the family's level of education and knowledge about special education.



→ Maintain **eye contact** with the **family**, not the interpreter.



Use a **respectful** and **formal** style to address the family.



**Respect the family's wishes** for their children's education. Do not undermine their decisions.

### ROLES & RESPONSABILITIES

- Avoid **asking interpreters** for input, suggestions, or guidance about a family's decision. A trained and professional interpreter in education will remain **neutral and impartial** at all times.
- Some interpreters can read a document in English and relay the information to the family in their language of interpretation. However, you should remain present as **all questions** should be **directed to you** and not the interpreter.
- **Teach Back**. Make sure the family understands the information by asking them to tell you, in their own words and through the interpreter, what is heard.
- Notice **non-verbal cues** from the family or the interpreter that may reflect that they are not understanding or need clarification.



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# BEST PRACTICES FOR DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS AND TRIBUNALS



## INTERPRETERS

### SKILLS

You will be expected to switch from:



SIMULTANEOUS  
INTERPRETATION



CONSECUTIVE  
INTERPRETATION



SIGHT TRANSLATION

### DISCLOSE

Disclose **skill limitations** or **preferences**. If you're not comfortable relaying:



Profanity



Content that is  
**sexual** in nature

and the hearing relates to these infractions, let the hearing officer know.



### ASK FOR INFORMATION

- Ask for a copy of the "**charge letter**" explaining the student's code infraction.
- Get information about the **parties** that will be present. Schools and families have the **right to be represented** by legal council and may choose to bring a lawyer to the hearing. Come prepared!

### STUDY TERMINOLOGY

- Study **terminology** related to alternative or non-traditional settings.
- Find a translated version of the **student discipline code** and ask questions about unknown terms prior to the hearing.
- Study **vocabulary** specific to the **infractions** (drug slang, teen slang, inappropriate/obscene language).
- Study **legal terminology** and **school policies** related to behavior, interventions, discipline, suspension and expulsion.
- Familiarize yourself with the school district's **discipline appeal procedures**.



### BE PREPARED



- Be prepared to interpret for **witnesses** and read student or witness **statements**.
- Always come prepared to **take notes**.
- Be prepared for **audio** and/or **video** evidence to be presented.
- Be prepared for parties to **examine** and **cross-examine** witnesses about any matters relevant to the charge against the student.

### PRE-SESSION & MEETING

- Prepare a **brief interpreter's introduction** and determine which points need to be stated to encourage a smooth session.
- **Establish the rhythm** of **pauses** beforehand. This is a stressful situation and the audience might need a longer time to process the meaning of what is being said.
- **Disclose** skill limitations or preferences.
- Understand that disciplinary hearings and tribunals are recorded. **Speak clearly** at all times.
- Maintain appropriate **interpreter protocol** for interventions used to **alert** school personnel of any possible **cultural** or **communicative misunderstanding** (e.g. "The interpreter... believes there may be a misunderstanding regarding...").



### DEBRIEF



- If possible, debrief with **school personnel** to determine improvements for future meetings.

### KEEP IN MIND



**Avoid speaking to the family** prior to the hearing or tribunal.



Arrive **10-15 minutes early** to test the interpretation equipment (e.g. talk system) if needed.



Be prepared to **troubleshoot** the interpreter equipment or virtual platform features (if used).

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# BEST PRACTICES FOR DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS AND TRIBUNALS

SCHOOL LEADERS & EDUCATORS



## SKILLS

Interpreters should be experienced in switching between:



SIMULTANEOUS  
INTERPRETATION



CONSECUTIVE  
INTERPRETATION



SIGHT TRANSLATION

## CREATE

To expand interpreters' legal terminology and knowledge of hearing proceedings, create **glossaries** and a sample of possible **scenarios** to study prior to the meetings. For example, scenarios that involve:



Attorneys



Community  
advocates

## PLANNING



- Ensure **appropriate training** for interpreters assigned to disciplinary hearings and expand their knowledge of **legal terminology** in all working languages.
- **Find out** if the family will need an **interpreter**.
- Ensure that the interpreter has **experience** in education settings and is able to manage **simultaneous** (interpreting almost at the same time as the speaker) and **consecutive** interpretation (taking turns when speaking and interpreting).
- Make sure interpreters are familiar with your **school's discipline code**.
- Ensure that **leaders** are **trained** in how to use an interpreter.

## SHARE INFORMATION

- Help the interpreter prepare by sharing the **charge letter** and your **school's discipline code**.
- **Send** the interpreter a **copy** of the **charge letter** to help them prepare.
- **Provide** interpreters with **information** about the parties that will be present, including **legal council**.
- Share **specific information** (student's school level, infraction, possible consequences, etc.)
- Share if **witness statements** will be read and **provide a copy** to the interpreter during the hearing.
- Let the interpreter know if **audio/video evidence** will be presented.



## BEGINNING



- Allow the interpreter to **present an introduction** on how to best work with an interpreter and how to allow the interpreter to best perform their job. **Listen** to the interpreters' **recommendations**.
- Allow the interpreter to provide a **brief introduction** to their role in **English** and in the **language interpreted**.
- Remind the interpreter that the hearings will be **recorded** and to **speak clearly**.

## MEETING

- **Pause** to ensure that the interpreter has had a chance to **relay** the message **accurately** and **completely**.
- Control **side conversations** and overlapping speech as interpreters can only interpret for one person at a time.



## DEBRIEF



- If possible, debrief with **the interpreter** to determine improvements for future meetings.

## KEEP IN MIND



Have the **talk system** for interpreters to use if available.



Depending on the amount of people present and length of the hearing, **more than one** interpreter may be needed.



Meeting ground rules should be provided in both **English** and the **family's language**.

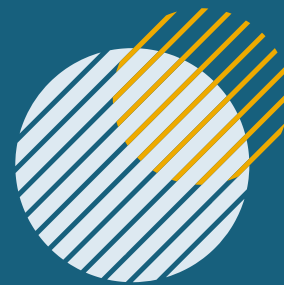




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# BEST PRACTICES FOR TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

## TRANSLATORS



### PLAN



- Verify that the English document is the **final version**.
- **Check** for grammar, idioms, and unclear language. **Clarify** with the owner of the document.
- Make sure the document is received in an **editable format**.
- If the document includes **metaphors, idioms, or jargon**, clarify with the owner before starting.
- If there are **illegible** or **blurry** sections of text in the document, ask for clarification before starting the process.

### EXPLAIN

- Explain that an accurate translation requires **time** and **research**. Rush jobs are subject to inadequacies.
- Be clear about your **deadline** and **request more time** if needed.
- Explain to the owner of the document that translations will potentially **take up more space** than the English versions.



### TRANSLATE



- Make sure to know the **intended audience** for the translation.
- **Read** and **understand** the entire body of the text before you start the translation process.
- Check that information **flows clearly** and that all text and images are included.
- Make sure you are aware of **previous translations** about the **same topic**. Discuss terms and ensure consistency within the same **school district**.
- Convey messages and **avoid** word-for-word translations.
- Match the **design** and **format** as best as possible.
- Check for **typographical errors**.

### AFTERWARDS

- Allow for adequate time to have the translation **reviewed** by a **proofreader** and for you to review their **feedback**.
- If a **glossary** is not available, **create one** after the fact to help you or other translators with documents in the future.
- Build your **translation team** to translate, edit and proofread documents. Involve multilingual families in the process!
- Collaborate and **network** with other translators.





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# BEST PRACTICES FOR TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

## SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS



### LANGUAGE

- Use **plain text**, avoid jargon and technical terms, and always keep it as **simple** as possible while being mindful of the **nuances of language**.
- Avoid using metaphors, jokes, or colloquialisms that will **not translate well**.
- Imagine how the English content reads in **another language or culture**. Are there any idioms, jargon, and **complex** terms that can be eliminated or redefined?
- Highlight words that you **do not want translated** such as names of local organizations, programs, and other proper nouns. Federal agencies and programs, and names of community-based organizations that serve immigrant communities may already have **approved translated names**.



Your **Language Access Plan** should include information about reaching:



**low-literacy families**



families who speak a language that **does not have a written format**.

### INFORMATION

- Keep the information **simple** and **concise**.
- Utilize **infographics** and **images** to help tell the story of what you are trying to convey.
- Incorporate **storytelling** when possible. Some communities can relate to stories or anecdotes when making decisions or asking for help.
- If possible, incorporate short and engaging **video** and **audio** messages.



To protect accuracy and completeness, **rush translations** are **not recommended**.

### GRAPHICS AND FORMAT

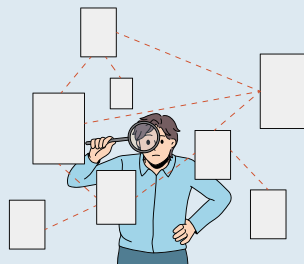
- Translators can work more efficiently with **editable documents** in formats such as Word.
- Keep in mind that the more **graphics, images, tables** or **designs** you have on your document, the longer the translation process will take.
- Remember that most languages tend to **use more words** to explain concepts than English. A translated document will usually be longer than the English version.
- Make sure graphics or photos are **culturally appropriate**. Ask for **community input** on the images to be used.



Interpreters may **not be proficient** at translating documents.

### REVIEW AND SEND

- Give **clear directions** and **reasonable deadlines** to the translator.
- Send the translator the **final version** of your document with no edits, track changes or notes.
- Develop relationships with community organizations or family groups that can **review translations** done for your school.
- Send the **finalized** and **formatted** translated documents and the **original** English-language document to a **reviewer**.
- Inform the translator of **edits/changes** needed as recommended by reviewers.



**Machine translation** and online widgets should only be used in combination with a **human proofreader** to ensure accuracy.

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**Suggested citation:** National Association for Educational Interpreters and Translators of Spoken Languages - NAETISL (2022), Toolkit for Spoken Language Interpreters in Education: <https://naetisl.org/best-practices>







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