

# Working with a Sign Language Interpreter

Promising Practices #30

Suggestions for Program Improvement for Ohio Aspire Practitioners

Curriculum/Instruction

## Program Puzzler

A student in your class has a hearing impairment. You are considering using an interpreter to better accommodate this student's needs. What should you consider when using a sign language interpreter in your program?



## Peer Perspective

### Student Considerations

- Everyone should speak directly to the hearing-impaired student and maintain eye contact with him or her when using an interpreter.
- Speak in a normal fashion without shouting or elaborately mouthing words.
- You should expect a time lag when communicating through an interpreter. This does put the student at a disadvantage during discussions and joke telling.
- If you are giving specific information, such as time, date or place, be sure the person who is hearing-impaired repeats it back to you. Many numbers and words sound alike.
- The hearing-impaired student is the best resource on how to communicate more efficiently with him or her.

### Interpreter Considerations

- Be aware that the interpreter interprets everything that is said, which may include irrelevant or inappropriate comments (unless it is determined that a behavior problem exists.) It is helpful if those talking speak one at a time, loudly and clearly. If the interpreter cannot hear what is said, he or she may verbally ask the speaker to repeat.
- Speak to and look at the deaf student when using an interpreter. Do not say "Tell her..." to the interpreter.
- The interpreter should not be considered a participant in the class. If you need to ask the interpreter a question, ask it when he or she is not interpreting.
- The interpreter should not be asked to function as a teacher or an aide—don't ask the interpreter to proctor tests, monitor the class, collect homework, or act as a substitute.
- Interpreters are bound to a code of ethics and are expected to maintain confidentiality with regard to sensitive information about the hearing-impaired student.
- Interpreters do not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.

### Timely Tips

- If the student is eligible for services through Ohio Rehabilitation Services (ORS), ORS may be able to provide a sign language interpreter.
- The Deaf Services Center (<http://www.dsc.org>) in Worthington, Ohio is the largest provider of interpreting services in Ohio.
- You can find listings of sign language interpreters at any of the Community Centers for Deaf. Visit the Ohio Alliance for Community Centers for the Deaf website at <http://www.oaccd.org>.
- You can utilize Video Remote Interpreting which is available for a fee on a per minute basis.
- Transcription services are also available through some Deaf Service Centers for a fee.

## Peer Perspective

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### Classroom Considerations

- Should you plan to use audiovisual equipment, please notify the interpreter. An accompanying script would be useful. Avoid complete darkness when possible.
- The preferred seating arrangement allows the hearing-impaired student to see the interpreter and the teacher easily, in the same line of vision. This may not always be possible.
- Because American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language, persons walking between the interpreter and the hearing-impaired student may cause a break in communication.

### Added Insights

Fishberg, N. (1990, July). *Interpreting: An Introduction*. (Revised ed.). Alexandria, VA: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Siple, L. A. (1993, Fall). Working with the sign language interpreter in your classroom. *College Teaching*, 41, 139-142.

Additional resource for accommodation can be found in:

Smith, T. E. C., Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., & Dowdy, C. A. (2001). *Teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

The Central/Southeast Aspire Resource Center, housed at Ohio University's Literacy Center focuses on special needs topics for Aspire students in Ohio. Information and resources for serving hearing-impaired students are available through the Center at <http://www.ouliteracycenter.org/>

Additional resources for serving hearing-impaired adults in Aspire are available through the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University at <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/deaf/>

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