

HANDBOOK
FOR
EDUCATIONAL
INTERPRETERS
IN
RUTHERFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS

EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETER HANDBOOK

This handbook is the property of Rutherford County Schools Special Education Department. The information is intended as a guide for persons involved with deaf children. It is an assimilation of information gathered from various workshops, professional in-services, journals, and individual input. For information about specific concerns or questions, please contact the Deaf Ed. teachers or Special Education Supervisor.

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OVERVIEW

Rutherford County Educational Interpreters provide services and support to deaf and hard-of-hearing students who utilize a manual form of language as one mode of communication. Our interpreters work in conjunction with all Rutherford County personnel to provide the most appropriate educational services possible.

Job Description

Qualification:

1. Skilled in a variety of modes of sign language, i.e. Manually Coded English (MCE), American Sign Language (ASL), Pigeon Signed English (PSE), Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE), Contact Signing, and Tactile Sign Language
2. Strong written, verbal, presentation, and interpersonal skills
3. Meets health and physical qualifications

Job Goal:

To enable deaf students in the school system equal access to curriculum and other school-related materials and activities.

Essential Functions:

1. Provide sign language interpretive services in the educational setting as specified in the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) of deaf students to whom assigned.
2. Interpret the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker. When interpreting from spoken English to Sign, the educational interpreter will communicate in the manner most easily understood by the deaf students. When working from Sign to spoken language, the interpreter will voice appropriately for the age and function level of the students.

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3. **ESTABLISH AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE A SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENT(S) TO WHOM ASSIGNED WITHOUT FOSTERING OR ENCOURAGING INTENSE EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT.** Encourage student independence and self-advocacy. Ex. Student should learn how to inform appropriate personnel if their interpreter is not in class, seated where they cannot see the interpreter clearly or if they do not understand what the teacher is teaching.
4. Defer all inquiries or concerns from parents, teachers or other staff members regarding student(s) to the Deaf Ed teacher(s) or appropriate administrator.
5. Maintain student confidentiality, as mandated by both State and Federal law, at all times. **BREACH OF STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY CONSTITUTES GROUNDS FOR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL.** The interpreter may only step out of the interpreting role to report serious behavior which any other school personnel would have to report, such as suspected child abuse (which should be reported directly to the Department of Children Services) or the breaking of laws or school policies.
6. Recognize that the interpreter answers directly to the lead interpreter, deaf ed. teacher(s) and administrators responsible for the educational program of deaf students. Discuss concerns and/or questions regarding either a student or a job-related activity with the above personnel.
7. Demonstrate conduct appropriate to the professional setting and follow the dress code for the school assigned.
 - Only plain tops or smocks are acceptable. Tops must be of a color that contrasts with your skin color. Necklines should not be low-cut; skirts/dresses should not be above knees or slit high. Tank tops and spaghetti straps are not acceptable.
 - Female interpreters should avoid excessive makeup and/or extra long fingernails. Nail polish should be subtle in shade.

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- Jewelry should be kept at a minimum, and hair must be kept from obscuring the face.
 - Male interpreters having beards or mustaches must keep them neatly trimmed, so that the lips are clearly visible.
8. Display behaviors which are cooperative and supportive and should at no time allow him or her self to be placed in an adversarial role.
 9. Adhere to and assume responsibility for knowing the policies and regulations of the classified handbook as well as the interpreter handbook.
 10. Satisfactorily completes all staff development and training activities required by the school system.
 11. Assume full responsibility for maintaining and improving sign language skills as well as maintaining endorsements, licensure, certification, etc. required to serve as an educational sign language interpreter.
 12. **CELL PHONES AND PAGERS ARE NOT TO BE USED DURING SCHOOL HOURS.**

Physical Demands:

This job may require lifting objects or materials weighing up to 25 lbs. Other physical demands required are as follows:

1. Manual Dexterity
2. Talking
3. Hearing
4. Seeing
5. Reaching, handling
6. Walking, kneeling, climbing steps

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Temperament (Personal Traits)

1. Adaptability in performing a variety of duties, often changing from one task to another of a different nature without loss of efficiency or composure.
2. Adaptability in accepting responsibility for direction, control, or assisting with an activity.
3. Adaptability in dealing with students.

Capacity and Ability Requirements

The following specific capacities and abilities are required of an individual in order to learn or perform adequately the duties of this position:

1. Intelligence: The ability to understand instructions and underlying principles. Ability to reason and make judgments.
2. Verbal: Ability to understand meaning of words and ideas associated with them.
3. Numerical: Ability to perform arithmetic operations quickly and accurately.

Work Conditions:

Normal working environment.

General Requirements:

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by people assigned to this position. They are not intended to be a complete list of responsibilities, duties and skills required of personnel so assigned.

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Terms of employment:

The 180 days during the school year in which students are in attendance. Not to exceed 35 hours per week. Any exceptions to this schedule must be authorized in advance by the Central Office. A time sheet reflecting hours on the job each day will be submitted to the Lead Interpreter who will then submit them to the Coordinator of Special Education.

Reports To:

Lead Interpreter, Deaf Ed. Teacher, Building Principal, and Special Education Supervisor.

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PHILOSOPHY

We believe that each of our students has the right to complete access and full participation in all areas of the general curriculum where appropriate. We consider it part of our responsibility to protect these rights and to advocate for students in situations in which accessibility is limited or denied.

We strive to maintain a high level of professionalism and skill to insure we provide more than adequate interpreting services for our students. We also strive to maintain successful partnerships with the other members of the educational system.

GOALS

1. To consistently and accurately provide our students access to the same information and interactions as their peers.
2. To facilitate our students' participation and success within the general curriculum as smoothly as possible.
3. To advocate for and educate about deafness, hearing loss, equipment and the implications therein, to students and staff whenever necessary or appropriate.
4. To remain aware of and involved in issues relevant to our position, including those related to interpreting, education, technology, and the community.

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LANGUAGE POLICY STATEMENT

In order to facilitate the acquisition and understanding of the English language, members of the Rutherford County interpreting staff use conceptually accurate signs. This system of manual communication allows for the use of both English and American Sign Language in order to most accurately express a given word, phrase, or concept. Fingerspelling is an integral component of our communication system. Interpreters will work with the deaf ed. teachers and each other to know when this is appropriate.

Conceptually Accurate Signs

Language adjustments for the student are made using the following considerations:

- 1) Native signer: deaf parents, siblings, etc.
- 2) Social/emotional ability to use language
- 3) English skills

Special Signs

While interpreters should not "invent" signs, they are encouraged to use special signs agreed upon among those involved in the Deaf Ed program in order to ease communication. This refers to terminology used in classes where there is no known sign. These signs agreed upon should not be considered standard, nor used outside of this particular classroom setting, and should be conceptually accurate.

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ORIENTATION

Interpreter Orientation

It is the interpreter's responsibility to familiarize themselves with the student's goals and objectives for the school year as specified in the IEP. These IEPs are located in the student's special education folder.

Teacher Orientation

The deaf ed. teacher and/or lead interpreter will provide information for the staff who have deaf students in their classrooms. The memo will outline proper procedures to follow when working with interpreters and deaf students. The interpreter will be individually responsible for explaining his or her own roles respectively.

INTERPRETER'S ROLE IN THE IEP MEETINGS

As an Interpreter

The interpreter's role will be solely to facilitate communication to either the deaf student or parent(s). Personal input in this capacity is inappropriate.

As an IEP-Team participant

The interpreter's role shall be to give valuable input pertaining to the student regarding the classroom relationship between the student and the interpreter. The information about the student's performance in the classroom (grades, tests, etc.) should be discussed only by the student's teacher and/or the Deaf Ed. teacher.

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Substitute Information Folders

Interpreters are required to provide an informational folder for substitutes. This must be completed as soon as the student's schedule is set. The folder will be placed in deaf ed. teacher's classroom if applicable or in the student's homeroom or other location deemed appropriate by staff.

The sub folder should contain the following items: 1) the student's name and sign name, 2) student's schedule with the classroom locations, class time, and teacher's name(s), 3) student's mode of communication and language level, with specific examples when helpful, 4) essential information from each class, for example vocabulary lists or classroom logistics. Include a map of the school if available and person(s) to contact for assistance. Any additional suggestions regarding the student's personality or teacher's methods may be included, (i.e. "This student will try to rely heavily on you, encourage independence." or, "This teacher is uncomfortable with interpreters in the classroom, be inconspicuous.") Information in this sub folder must be kept current.

Evaluations

All sign language interpreters in Rutherford County Schools are required to be evaluated using a method approved by the SPED Supervisor.

Interpreter Training and Continuing Education

Each interpreter has the opportunity to attend a five-day workshop during the summer and the Statewide Workshop, which focuses on those who serve students who are deaf. The workshops are sponsored by the Tennessee School for the Deaf and paid for by the Rutherford County Board of Education Special Education Department.

Interpreters are encouraged to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues and reading of current literature in the field.

Interpreter use After Normal School Hours

Any additional hours that an interpreter is needed, above and beyond regular school hours, need to be brought to the attention of the lead interpreter and then approved by the Special Education Supervisor. It is through this office that an interpreter can be requested for anything beyond the instructional day.

This pertains to any activity that is not part of the student's IEP or that occurs before or after the instructional day, weekends and summers.

This office also provides interpreters for deaf adults within the Rutherford County School System for IEP meetings or any school related activities.

Responsibility Guidelines

Classroom Preparation

Be familiar with the vocabulary and content so you can convey the information accurately. Use your planning period to read textbooks, review notes, find unfamiliar signs, etc.

Seating and Lighting

Be sure lighting is good. Sit where light does not shine in the student's eyes. Do not sit where there is back-lighting or in front of a window which would make it difficult to be seen. Be prepared to reposition yourself or bring lighting when necessary. Sometimes it is necessary to remind teachers to leave a light on while using the overhead projector or while watching a movie so the interpreter can be seen.

Tutoring

Define new sign vocabulary. Provide additional information when necessary and in consultation with the classroom teacher or the Deaf Ed. teacher.

For students who are not fully aware of the interpreter's role, the educational interpreter may briefly step out of the interpreter role for the following purposes:

- 1) The interpreter may give clues needed for successful interaction. For example, when the student mistakenly directs questions to the interpreter, the interpreter may sign, "I will interpret for you, so you may ask the teacher" (or may use subtle body language or eye cues).
- 2) The interpreter may clarify his/her role in the classroom as situations arise.

INTERPRETERS SHALL NOT COUNSEL, ADVISE, OR INTERJECT PERSONAL OPINIONS.

Attentiveness

Signal student when instruction begins. Bring the student's attention to all the visual aids the teacher uses. **DO NOT ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DEAF STUDENT DURING CLASS TIME.** It is the teacher's responsibility to discipline the deaf student if he or she is not paying attention, sleeping, writing notes, etc.

Guidelines for Educational Interpreters²

1. Interpreters shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
 - A. The interpreter may discuss assignment-related information only with other members of the educational team (i.e. interpreters, teachers, and supervisors) who are directly responsible for the educational program of the deaf student(s) for whom the interpreter interprets.
2. Interpreters shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.

² Modified from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) Code of Ethics with Guidelines for Educational Interpreters.

- A. It is recognized that some deaf students may not fully understand an interpreted message due to differences in culture, language, or experience. It is appropriate for educational interpreters to clarify bits of information, which fit into this category (i.e., hearing-culture jokes, certain English vocabulary that does not translate well). However, this is to be done on a limited basis for the benefit of clear communication and should not be tutoring per se.
 - B. The interpreter is often asked to use a particular sign system. If the interpreter does not feel qualified with this mode of communication they should contact the lead interpreter with their concerns immediately.
3. Interpreters shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
- A. An interpreter should consider the following information about an assignment to determine if his/her skills are adequate for the assignment:
 - 1) the age levels of the students,
 - 2) the content of the various situations (i.e., academic, vocational),
 - 3) special interpreting situations (assembly programs, field trips, films),
 - 4) the student's English skills, and
 - 5) the student's sign language preference (ASL, PSE, SEE, CASE, MCE, Tactile)
4. Interpreters shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
- A. The educational interpreter will represent a positive attitude toward deafness, deaf students, and the Deaf Ed program in the mainstream setting.
 - B. Interpreters must recognize their importance as role models.
5. Interpreters shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

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References

- Frischberg, Nancy. Interpreting: An Introduction.
Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. 1990.
- Proceedings of the Ninth National 1985 RID Convention.
Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. 1986.