

The E.I. in the I.E.P

* Supplemental Assignment

By Anna Paulson

The individual students served in 2015 are the most diverse group of students to date. According to the 2015 Minnesota Department of Education Legislative Report, there are 2,450 Minnesota children who have a primary diagnosis of Deaf/Hard of Hearing, with 2,067 in the school age category. The students identified are 65% white/Caucasian with the highest potential that English is their home language. Eleven percent are of Asian descent and another 11% are Hispanic. Fourteen percent are from other ethnic/race groups. Consider that 90% of students who are deaf are born to hearing parents. It is evident that the students we serve have a high probability that neither English nor ASL is their first language. What does this mean for you – the educational interpreter? These facts highlight the premise that you and the student's teacher for students who are deaf/hard of hearing are likely to be the language model for the 'I' – in I.E.P. (These facts highlight the premise that you and the deaf education teacher are likely to be the student's language model for the 'I' – in I.E.P.) Typically, an IEP team includes the parent/guardian, the student, the D/HH teacher, a general education teacher, an administrator, and related services providers as appropriate. As the educational interpreter, YOU are an integral member of that team. As a contributing team member, in addition to adhering to the Professional Code of Conduct, your responsibilities include working to maximize learning opportunities and communication access for students who are deaf/hard of hearing. The bold print

questions below are items to include as special considerations during IEP development.

- **What data is available regarding the student's present level of academic and social language?** As an IEP team member who is with the student most of the academic day, you are the most likely candidate to collect data. Teachers of students who are deaf/hard of hearing must monitor the student's expressive and receptive language skills and document progress. As an E.I., you can support the process of collecting data by listing new vocabulary, question formation and social language use. You can identify the class subjects where the student who is d/hh lacks equal access to peer communication. As the E.I. you are able to identify any learning gaps which may hinder a student's ability to comprehend the concepts presented in class. Consider a student currently using ASL as their primary instructional language whose home language is Spanish and school language is English. A student with this language and communication profile will have difficulty acquiring the second grade concept such of estimation without appropriate pre-teaching outside of the general education session. As an educational interpreter, you can inform the I.E.P team of the student's struggles and abilities to meet the state academic standards. Working together with the D/HH teacher and general education teacher, you can create an observation form to document when the student requires additional support in following directions or applying instructional concepts. There are occasions when you can model language use 'on the spot'. Finally, you can provide a vital source for reliable data and feedback to the IEP team. This is not to suggest that you duplicate the services of the teacher; but rather that you work in concert with the teachers to provide optimal learning opportunities.
- **What are the opportunities for direct communication and instruction in the student's primary language/communication mode?** Along with the teacher for students who are d/hh, you can document the student's access to direct instruction from the general education teacher and direct communication with peers. As the staff member who is the pivot between the general education environment and the student who is deaf/hard of hearing, you can foster direct communication between the teacher and/or peers by encouraging use of signs that are common to the student and his/her peers, and by promoting self- advocacy skills.

- **What other educationally relevant needs must be addressed?** Education does not end at the state standards for learning. Education spills into all areas of life. As you work with your Individual student, keep track of his/her academic and social growth with the foresight towards the years beyond this one. Students who have an educational interpreter by their side often rely on that person in realms beyond educational access. As an IEP member, know your responsibilities in preparing that student for independence and life as a deaf adult. Along with the teacher for students who are d/hh, you can develop a plan for preparing students to advocate for themselves in and out of the classroom. You can encourage self-awareness and independence. You can create opportunities for them to link to various educational staff interpreters for communication access. You can introduce them to the Deaf community and opportunities where they can lead themselves and others.

It is important to note, that each professional is prepared to meet a specific set of expectations. “Scope-Creep” (the convolution of the boundaries limiting scope of practice) is a current phenomenon that results from limited human resources (ex. teachers d/hh and E.I. shortages). The Educational Interpreter can share the professional code of conduct with the team as you prepare to best serve the student. Preparing to be an effective and valued member of the IEP team is an ongoing process that involves development within the scope of your role and as a member of a service team. Educational interpreters play a vital role as members of the IEP team. As the communication conduit and critical link between the instructor and the learner, the educational interpreter - in concert with all of the team members - builds and provides opportunities for each student to achieve his or her maximum academic potential.



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