

Working with

Language Interpreters

It is important to have a good relationship with your child's teacher. You know many things about your child. Together, parents or guardians and teachers can plan the best way to help a child learn. You will need to talk with the teacher at parent-teacher conferences and at other school meetings. You may have questions you want to ask the teacher at other times. You have the right to ask the school for a language interpreter to help you talk to your child's teacher. Requesting an interpreter is free for you.

What is a language interpreter?

Language interpreters are trained professionals. They speak two languages fluently and they understand two cultures. They will listen to your conversation with a teacher. They will use your language to restate the teacher's ideas to you. They will use English to restate your ideas to the teacher accurately. Trained interpreters will not give advice. They will not tell you their own ideas or opinions. Interpreters should respect your culture and your beliefs. They will orally interpret written information to you. A trained interpreter knows that your information is private. Interpreters should not discuss your conversations with anyone except the teacher.

Who should not be an interpreter?

It is not a good idea to have a family member or friend interpret for school meetings. Children should not be interpreters. However, you may bring a friend, trusted community elder, or family member to meetings for support. The person you may bring can ask questions to help you clarify the discussion.



How do I find an interpreter?

You can ask the school to provide an interpreter for a meeting with a teacher. Tell the teacher before you go to the meeting. The teacher will need time to find a trained interpreter who can speak your language and English. Remember, you have the right to have an interpreter at no cost to you.

What if I need help understanding written information?

Your school should provide important written information in your language. If you receive information only in English, you can ask for a written translation in your language. The school can orally interpret the written information.

Online translators can help you understand a new word. These online translators are not a good way to understand a long piece of writing from the school. Online translators are not always accurate.



Adapted with permission from MN Department of Education's English Learner (EL) Companion to Promoting Fair Special Education Evaluations: Chapter 5.

For more information, see the following brief by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

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This publication is available in alternative formats. Direct requests to:

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See parent-educator toolkit at: www.nceo.info

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