

Understanding the Terms:

Interpreter: A person who orally converts the spoken word from one language to another.

Translator: A person who converts a text to another language in writing.

LEP: Limited English Proficient

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

ELL: English Language Learner

**Interpreting and
Translation Services
410-313-1549**

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International Student and Family Services
Faulkner Ridge Center
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HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
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A Guide for School Staff

How to effectively use **Interpreters** for Parent-Teacher Conferences



The Howard County Public School System provides bilingual interpreters to help school staff communicate with Limited English Proficient (LEP) families, as needed. An interpreter can be particularly helpful in assisting with parent-teacher conferences. Knowing how to effectively work with the interpreter during the conference will greatly benefit the parent, student and teacher.

The first rule: **Always use a certified HCPSS interpreter for meeting with a Limited English Proficient parent.** Do not assume that every bilingual person has the language proficiency to interpret parent-teacher conferences.

Creating the Best Environment

- Decide who will initiate greetings and introductions.
- Have the interpreter sit slightly behind or next to the parent.
- Look at and speak directly to the parent.
- Explain your teaching role.
(*I am John's math teacher.*)
- Make a positive personal comment about the student.

Conveying Information

- Explain one idea using two or three sentences, then pause for interpreting.
- Do not shuffle papers or talk to others while the interpreter is speaking.

- Explain acronyms such as BCR (brief constructed response) and educational terms such as "read aloud" and "reading log."
- Avoid using educational jargon, slang or figures of speech.
- Provide examples of written work, projects or assignments.
- Explain the use of communication tools such as agenda books or weekly calendars.
- Ask parents if they have any questions.
- Suggest or ask if a follow-up conference or contact is needed.
- Check for understanding and clarify if necessary. Some school system vocabulary may be unfamiliar to both parents and interpreters.



Providing Suggestions for LEP Parents

Be sensitive to the cultural context of the family when making suggestions. Remember that the parents come from various backgrounds. Teachers may make suggestions; however, not all LEP parents are ready or able to implement them.

- Establish a routine for checking and completing homework.
- Encourage parents to use their native language with their children.
- Encourage children to read regularly in their first or second language.
- Offer alternative methods for staying in touch, i.e., conference, email, phone, etc.

Special Education Meetings: Additional Considerations

- Always use the Howard County certified Special Education interpreters. They understand the Special Education vocabulary.
- Recognize that a conference with an interpreter could take twice as much time.
- Understand that the interpreter may ask for clarifications of terminology.
- Sight translation (oral interpretation of written material) of up to a half page of text can be done during the conference.