

## TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES

These guidelines pertain to school generated documents that address academic support and compliance, school site events, and documents for the general public. Interpreters and translation terms are currently used indiscriminately, in professional terms, interpreters translate orally and translators produce written documents.

*Interpretation is the process by which the spoken word is used to transfer meaning between languages.* Interpretation is much more difficult than it might appear to monolingual speakers. Interpreters must have excellent memory, processing, and auditory skills and be able to accurately convey meaning at a rapid pace. Many words or concepts simply cannot be re-said literally in other languages because they might not exist.

*Translation is the process of transferring ideas expressed in writing from one language to another.* Translators must have a superior understanding of the grammatical and idiomatic nuances of two languages. In many cases, a larger number of words need to be used to write in foreign languages than in English, to convey the same meaning.

Interpretation and translation services are available in the following languages. These are the main language groups identified by the District according to the bilingual student population:

Amharic  
Oromo  
Tagalog

Chinese  
Somali  
Tigrigna

Spanish  
Vietnamese  
Arabic

The English Language Learners Department will coordinate translation services intended for District-wide distribution and for interpretation and translation services for program-related communications to ELL students and families.

### When is translation and interpretation required?

Federal regulations require all critical communication with families be conducted in both English and the home language. For those languages in which we do not have translations, we are to make a sincere effort to provide oral communication in the home language.

- The Communication Department is responsible for translation services intended for District-wide distribution.
- The ELL Department is responsible for interpretation and translation services provided for program-related communications to ELL students and families.
- The Special Education department is responsible for interpretation services at IEP meetings.

Most schools have a classified ELL extra time budget for translation and interpretation purposes.

## Translation Service Guidelines

- Carefully review the document to be translated.
- Start the translation process at least 2 weeks before documents are needed.
- Read documents to be translated carefully. Double-check document for timeliness and relevance to bilingual families. Make sure the material is written in concise, clear language, avoiding jargon, idioms, and technical language. If you need to use acronyms such as PTSA, MSP, ASAP, make sure they are defined.
- Bear in mind that translated documents usually increase in size because some English terms cannot be translated literally in other languages. A larger number of words may be needed to convey the intended meaning. Some English words or American concepts do not exist in other languages/cultures.
- All documents to be translated need to be in electronic form, WORD format.
- Consider using School Messenger for short messages and announcements whenever possible.

## Interpretation Service Guidelines

- Interpreters and Bilingual Facilitators staff may be requested for purposes not limited to the following:
- IEP conferences
- Parent/Teacher conferences or parent meetings
- Emergencies involving services to bilingual families
- Graduation issues
- Truancy, disciplinary, and intervention meetings
- Home visits

## How to access and utilize interpreters for school meetings and activities

- Start the process of looking for an interpreter as soon as you schedule the activity or meeting. At least 2 weeks advanced notice is preferred. Remember, bilingual staff might not be available every day.
- Always select district trained staff. Do not ask students, family members or whoever happens to be available to interpret, i.e. the custodial staff or a person visiting the school.
- Contact bilingual staff in your building for interpretation availability first.
- If your school staff is not available for interpretation, IA's from other buildings can be asked. Contact other Bilingual IA's by using the updated Bilingual Staffing List sent periodically from ELL & International Programs to schools or go to <http://inside.seattleschools.org/area/bilingual/translate.htm>. If IA's from other buildings are being requested during the workday, it is important that principals are included in this process.
- Allocate time (at least 15 minutes) before the meeting or event to meet with the interpreter and discuss the goals and purpose of the meeting or activity. Let the interpreter know the most important information you want to convey during the meeting or activity and provide the information in writing, if possible.

- During the event or meeting ask the person conducting the meeting or the presenters to use short and clear phrases, avoid jargon and idioms, provide concrete examples and stick to the subject. This person should maintain eye contact with the family or community members, **NOT** with the interpreter. Side conversations need to be limited, as the interpreter is obliged to interpret all spoken communication at the meeting.
- Persons conducting the meeting or speaking should pause frequently after complete thoughts so that the interpreter can do his/her job and not forget what to say.
- After the meeting, take a few minutes to debrief with the interpreter and get his/her perspective on the process and the outcome of the meeting or activity.

## Who to Contact

For translation and interpretation services intended for District-wide distribution and program-related Communications to ELL students and families: Contact Narcita Eugenio at 206-252-0773/252-0070 or email @ [neugenio@seattleschools.org](mailto:neugenio@seattleschools.org)

Translation Team:

- Farhiya Omer (Somali) at 206-252-0395 or email @ [fhomer@seattleschools.org](mailto:fhomer@seattleschools.org)
- Dereje Negassa (Amharic and Oromo) at 206-252-XXXX or email @ [denegassa@seattleschools.org](mailto:denegassa@seattleschools.org)
- TBD (Vietnamese) at 206-252-XXXX or email @ TBD

## For site-specific translations and interpretations

- Contact bilingual staff in your building for translation availability. To translate into additional alphabets, a limited number of site licenses will be purchased and installed on computers at sites to be determined.
- If bilingual staff in your school is not available for needed translation, IA's from other buildings can be asked. Contact other bilingual IA's by using the updated Bilingual Staffing List from ELL and International Programs Department at 206-252-0072.
- If you cannot locate a building staff person to translate your document, please call Narcita Eugenio, 252-0073.
- For languages not served by Seattle Public Schools' staff, contact the Red Cross Language Bank (206-709-7339 or email: [languagebank@redcross.org](mailto:languagebank@redcross.org)). Red Cross Language Bank website: <http://www.redcross.org/local/wa/northwestregion/programs-services/translation-interpretation>
- Local translation and interpretation agencies also provide translation and interpretation services for a fee.

## How to pay for Translation and Interpretation Services

**The requesting department or program is responsible for costs incurred for translation or interpretation services.** Approval is required from either Department of Communications or ELL & International programs for other translations intended for program-wide or district-wide distribution. For site specific translations: access your school or department budget. All Center Schools (ELL/IP sites) are required to have classified extra time for translation and interpretation purposes. The Special Education Department materials budget may be used for translation and interpretation services

