

Best Practices for Communicating Through an Interpreter

- **If you plan to give a speech, presentation, or read from a script, please give the interpreter a copy.** The more familiar they are with the subject matter, the better a job they will do. You can also email the materials to language.access@k12.dc.gov so that LAD can forward them to the interpreter.
- **If possible, brief the interpreter prior to the meeting.** Familiarizing the interpreter with essential information like who, what, where, and why will give the session a more seamless and professional flow. Also, briefing the interpreter on any point that may be sensitive will allow the interpreter to provide the appropriate tone for such issues.
- **Speak directly to the audience, not the interpreter.** You are communicating *through* the interpreter but *to* the school community member.
- **Speak at an even pace and pause between sentences or complete thoughts** so that the interpreter can interpret.
- **Allow enough time for the interpretation to take place.** During *consecutive* interpretation, either the presenter or the limited English proficient (LEP) person speaks, followed by the interpreter. Please be aware that the overall time in this format will be close to double the time of a meeting with no interpretation.
- **Avoid highly idiomatic speech, complicated sentence structure, and sentence fragments.** Many concepts in English have no linguistic or conceptual equivalent in other languages. The interpreter may have to take longer to convey the meaning.
- **Refrain from using metaphors, acronyms, slangs or idioms.** While your interpreter is knowledgeable of metaphors and slang which are used frequently, such cultural phrases may not translate well into the target language. Use simple yet concise wording that will easily be translatable. Often a "short" acronym stands for an entire concept that must be fully explained and translated in another language. Instead of using acronyms, use full words and simple explanations. If you must use professional jargon, explain it to the interpreter before the interpreting session.