



Professional Interpreters in Education Going from Face-to-Face to Video Remote (VRI) and Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI)

As in-person interpretation is not an option to connect with our English Learner families right now, our network of Professional Interpreters in Education wanted to offer a few suggestions to support you as you navigate the VRI and OPI world, perhaps for the first time. We hope that these suggestions are helpful as you continue to strengthen cultural and language bridges in your communities.

Before the Meeting:

- ☑ All Professional Interpreters in Education communicating with schools and parents through VRI and OPI, must abide by the same professional standards and ethics as onsite interpreters (see resources below).
- ☑ Professional Interpreters in Education must safeguard the privacy of students, parents and school personnel as they do when interpreting onsite.
- ☑ Come prepared with the same interpreter tools you use in person (notepad, pen, water).
- ☑ Request documents ahead of time but be patient and flexible. Schools are also navigating new waters and establishing new procedures and they may not be able to share information with you ahead of time. Explain that, as Professional Interpreters in Education, you rely on all of the body language cues shared during face-to-face communication, and so additional information prior to a meeting using video or phone is particularly important.
- ☑ Ask for the names and titles of attendees, including the student and parent.
- ☑ “Arrive” early, just as you do in-person.
- ☑ Let school personnel know what equipment they will need to ensure that the meeting will go smoothly. Share Guidelines for School Personnel Working with Professional Interpreters in Education (see resources below).
- ☑ For VRI and OPI involving more than one teacher, it is important to remind parties that only one speaker is assigned to conduct the meeting at a time. A speakerphone, if one is used, must be in that individual’s immediate proximity.
- ☑ If confidential or sensitive information needs to be shared with a parent, it is recommended that teachers use an individual headset, not a speakerphone, to speak and listen to the parent and the interpreter.
- ☑ Mode of Interpretation: Most of the time, as in the in-person setting, you will use the consecutive interpretation. You may be asked to interpret simultaneously for area board meetings and thus preparation is key as well as disclosure of your skills.

Check Your Equipment:

- ☑ You need good lighting and a professional background (solid is preferred).
- ☑ Become familiar with your audio/video features (mute, volume, microphone) in case you need to troubleshoot for the parent during the meeting.
- ☑ If possible, have a separate device open so you can take notes, sight translate text that was sent to you ahead of time, or look up words if needed.
- ☑ Check the noise in your environment to avoid interruptions. Eliminate background noise and interference (participate from indoors, in a room with closed door and windows to avoid extraneous noise)
- ☑ Be aware of video application updates as they may include additional security features to protect privacy.
- ☑ Make sure your device is fully charged or connected.
- ☑ Run a “test” meeting with a co-worker or friend remotely to make sure everything works.
- ☑ Have your computer on a firm surface.
- ☑ Cell phone or other devices must be on silence. Turn off all sound notifications (skype, whatsapp, emails, etc.) while attending virtual meetings.
- ☑ Headset: Preferably, use individual headsets with high quality microphones and echo cancelling as we can’t rely on computer audio. The nature of our job as Professional Interpreters in Education is the spoken word, so naturally the most important component of VRI or OPI is going to be the ability for both parties to clearly hear what is being said. You may want to avoid wireless headsets that use DECT or Bluetooth technology as they may have some security vulnerabilities. Wired headsets are recommended.

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During the Meeting:

- ☑ Your pre-session is still crucial! (see sample below) Ask participants for their names and titles and ask them to mute themselves to reduce ambient noise. Emphasize to parents and school personnel that you are their voice and that everything heard will be interpreted.
- ☑ As in face-to-face interpreting, remind parents that they can ask questions if something is not clear. In VRI and OPI, we still focus on empowering parents to advocate for themselves!
- ☑ Remind parents and teachers that you will not be reading the chat section while you are video interpreting. Your focus should be on the spoken information provided by all parties. Parents and school personnel must voice their questions through you.
- ☑ Intervene when necessary, just as you do in person. Conversations/terminology may be confusing and you may have questions throughout the meeting. Ask for clarification when needed.
- ☑ As a Professional Interpreter in Education using video or phone as your channel, you still manage the flow of communication and you still model proper speaking tone.

Pre-Session Sample for VRI or OPI

To the school personnel

My name is _____ and I will be interpreting for all the parties present. Please let me know if you can hear me well or if I need to adjust my volume. Since this meeting is conducted over video/phone, I want to emphasize that I will keep all information confidential and that no one else is in the room with me as I interpret. I am here to convey all of the information I hear from all parties, exactly as it is said. Please remember to take turns speaking to allow me to interpret and pause after expressing an idea. I may raise my hand, like this (if doing VRI) if I need a pause or need clarification. I may also display this sign (if doing VRI you may want to create a “Pause” sign to show). Please speak directly to the parent as if you were in the room. If you need clarification on anything that was said or if you have any questions, please let me know and I will relay those to the parent. Now I will repeat this same information to the parent and we’ll be ready to go.

To the parent

My name is _____ and I will be interpreting for all the parties present. Have you used video/phone interpreting before? If you have questions about the video/phone features, please let me know and I will ask the school personnel to help you. Can you hear me well or do I need to adjust my volume? Since this meeting is conducted over video/phone, I want to emphasize that I will keep all information confidential and that no one else is in the room with me as I interpret. I am here to convey all of the information I hear from all parties, exactly as it is said. Please remember to take turns speaking to allow me to interpret and pause after expressing an idea. I may raise my hand, like this (if doing VRI) if I need a pause or need clarification. I may also display this sign (if doing VRI you may want to create a “Pause” sign to show). Please speak directly to the school personnel as if you were in the room. If you need clarification on anything that was said or if you have any questions, please let me know and I will relay those to the school personnel. Are you ready to get started?

Resources:

- How to Join a Zoom meeting - Spanish: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/es/articles/201362193--C%C3%B3mo-me-uno-a-una-reuni%C3%B3n->
- How to Use Zoom – Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2YmEbLd1c4>
- Google Classroom Orientation – Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddfKI7sVGiA&fbclid=IwAR1kfFO-Sy8inz-9uJwARfsl_yOCHL9eKV-oC6pYk4wAKhv_qbE8pIAWevA
- Standards of Practice for Professional Interpreters in Education: <https://www.sesoincga.org/tools-for-school-interpreters-and-translators/>
- Guidelines for School Personnel Working with Professional Interpreters in Education: <https://www.sesoincga.org/resources-for-teachers-and-school-administrators/>

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