

GUIDANCE ON WORKING WITH TRANSLATORS & INTERPRETERS ON NEW YORK STATE ASSESSMENTS

This document is intended to provide guidance for districts when working with interpreters and translators on New York State assessments.

- Interpreter is one who translates speech orally from one language to another language
- Translator is one who translates written text from one language into another language

Schools may provide ELLs with an oral translation of a state examination when there is no translated edition provided by the New York State Education Department. See NYS Assessments: Translated Editions as a supporting document associated with the webinar entitled, *“Guidance on When and How to Work with Interpreters/Translators on New York State Assessments.”*

Ideally, a three-stage approach may be employed when working with translators/interpreters, one which identifies specific activities to be covered **prior to, during, and after** testing. Following are a number of suggestions for working with translators/interpreters to enhance the assessment process.

New York State schools may provide ELLs with oral translations (using an interpreter) of NYS assessments when there is no translated written edition provided by the Department, however this accommodation is not permitted for the Grades 3-8 Common Core English Language Art Tests or the Common Core English Regents.

Students should write their responses in the language they feel most comfortable with, to be translated later.

The following suggestions apply to interpreters providing oral translations of NYS assessments and/or translators providing written translations.

Prior to Testing

- **A confidentiality agreement should be signed** since there is an ethical and legal responsibility to protect the privacy of the student.
- **Interpreters should receive copies of the English edition of the NY State assessment one hour prior to administration-** This will allow the interpreter to become familiar with the test(s) and will provide an opportunity to clarify any ambiguities with directions or other special features of the test(s);
- **It is important to make clear exactly what you expect from the interpreter–** For NYS Assessments, no clarifications or explanations can be provided (written translations will be provided AFTER testing, if needed). Care should be taken not to alter the intended meaning of the text.

- **Stress the importance of avoiding inadvertent cues during the testing-** Remind the interpreter of the importance of avoiding unnecessary rephrasing or changing test items, as either of these situations can invalidate the test results. It is critical to maintain a neutral voice and not provide any hints of the possible correct answer. Care must also be taken not to inadvertently provide cues through body language and rate of speech should be at a normal pace.

During Testing

- **Ensure that the interpreter and student are placed in a quiet environment-** free from distraction so that it is conducive to a standardized testing environment
- **Make sure a professional staff person is present** – not only will this allow for someone to monitor the interpreter/translator, but it will also provide an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings if they arise and ensure that distractions are kept at a minimum.
- **Hang a “Testing in Progress” sign on the door** – to indicate that testing has begun and remove when testing is completed

After Testing

- **Any difficulties relative to the testing process should be discussed-** this is an opportunity to obtain feedback from the interpreter/translator. Any difficulties encountered such as use of idiomatic phrases, differences due to dialects, or the inability to translate native language into comparable phrases in English should be discussed.

If this 3 phase process is followed throughout the testing process, one can help ensure the accuracy of what is being assessed.

For students tested for a possible disability, additional consideration and processes apply. Click on icon below to contact your local RSE-TASC.



References:

Evaluation Assistance Center-East Georgetown University, RMC Research Corporation

Authentic Voices: Creating a clearer communication experience with the people you serve: Opening Doors Diversity

Accommodations for English Language Learners (ELLs) on New York State Assessments

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to ELL students, including former ELLs for up to two years immediately after they have exited English as a Second Language.

Schools may provide testing accommodations to ELLs, as needed, on all NYS ELA and content-area assessments (i.e., Mathematics, Science and Social Studies). Districts/schools must make all necessary arrangements to make these accommodations available for ELLs who need them. A list of NYS approved accommodations may be found in the School Administrator's Manual (SAM) for each respective test.

Testing Accommodations for ELLs students on NYS ELA and Content-area assessments include:

Time Extension (All exams): Schools may extend the test time for ELL students on NYS ELA and content-area Assessments and on Regents Examinations. Principals may use any reasonable extensions, such as "time and a half" (the required testing time plus half that amount), in accordance with their best judgment about the needs of the ELL students. Principals should consult with the student's classroom teacher in making these determinations

Separate Location (All exams): Schools are encouraged to provide optimal testing environments and facilities for ELLs students. NYS assessments may be administered to ELLs individually or in small groups in a separate location.

Bilingual Dictionaries and/or Glossaries: (All Exams except Foreign Language and NYSESLAT). The bilingual dictionaries and glossaries may provide only direct one to one translations of words. Bilingual dictionaries and/or glossaries that provide definitions or explanations are not permitted. Bilingual glossaries in the content areas are available to download at: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/center/technical_assistance/program/language_rbern/resources/glossary (free to download)

Simultaneous use of English and Alternative Language Editions (All Exams except English Language Arts, Foreign Language and NYSESLAT Examinations). For state examinations for which the Department provides written translations, ELLs may use both English and an alternative language edition of the test simultaneously. However, they should be instructed to record all of their responses in only one test booklet. The alternative language edition used by the student should be so indicated on the student's answer sheet. Note: There are no translations of English Language Arts or NYSESLAT examinations.

Oral Translation for Low Incidence Languages: (All Exams except English Language Arts, Foreign Language and NYSESLAT Examinations). Schools may provide ELL students with an oral translation of a state examination when there is no translated edition provided by the

Department. All translations must be oral, direct translations of the English editions. Written translations are not allowed. No clarifications or explanations may be provided. Translators should receive copies of the English edition of the tests one hour prior to administration. The Department's Office of Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBE-RNs) can assist schools in locating suitable translators.

Writing Responses in the Native Language: (All exams except English Language Arts, Foreign Language and NYSESLAT Examinations). ELL students making use of alternative language editions or of oral translations of state examinations may write their responses to the open ended question in their native language. Scoring the tests is the responsibility of the school. However, the Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, and the RBE-RNs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students' responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.