



Frequently Asked Questions

Access in a Virtual Environment: Proactive Planning to Support Effective Communication for Learners Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

In general the teachers do NOT have time to think about access for our students; how do we get the school districts to invest the effort to do these things?

The use of the [Communication Planning Guide](#) is a tool that can be a helpful starting point. Inviting all of the key players such as special education coordinator, audiologist, speech pathologist, general education teachers, intervention specialist, teacher of the deaf, family, interpreter and/or captionist, school technology specialist, etc. will provide a more accurate, comprehensive picture of the communication and access needs of the students for the team to consider. This documentation will help in team planning for learner access. The team will then have a better understanding of the access needs and create a shared access plan together.

For sharing the importance of access with other members of your team, the [Promoting Access for People Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, or Visually Impaired](#) is a free self-paced module. To ensure all students—including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired—grow and learn, it is imperative that educators create inclusive learning environments with equitable opportunities. This starts with providing access to the information students need to learn and grow. From building relationships, to learning, or engaging in the community around us, access promotes independence. And when we promote independence, students are able to grow, learn, and live their best lives.

Can you give information on different programs for video chat and recording oneself interpreting on a prerecorded video?

Video Chat Considerations:

- 1) What does your school district allow? Always, check in with your administrators and technology department.
- 2) Is this being used across the grade (general education) or is this an aspect of a child's IEP or 504?
- 3) When considering the software or platforms being used be mindful about whether this is the student's account or a parent's account. Age does matter. For students under the age of 13, there are rules that can potentially limit what you can use with them. *COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act)
- 4) Ideally, everything should be on the school accounts when possible such as teacher account to student account and a possibly connected parent account. It is recommended that personal accounts are not used for school communication.
- 5) What device is being used such as a tablet, Apple, Windows, laptop, Google/ChromeBook?
- 6) Are you using a built-in camera or an external camera? This will also be important as well as are you streaming one-on-one or in a classroom situation for virtual learning during hybrid or remote settings? For instance, you may need an external camera to show the classroom white board facing one direction and the built-in camera facing the student so the interpreter can voice what the student is saying etc.



7) How will you be ensuring clear audio/visuals for the student(s) and the interpreter as they access the teacher's lesson or classroom?

Visual Platforms

As for recording, LOOM is an option. For those with school accounts you may have access to a free subscription. If you are not with a school, there is a fee. If your work email does not have an ".edu", you may contact the company and request to be relisted as an educational account. This can be used for Picture in Picture interpreting (PIP) of one-on-one lessons that are teacher directed.

Pre-recorded content (not live content):

You will need to change an audio setting in Loom, that way you can hear the audio in the original video such as the classroom teacher reading a story. Consider having the classroom teacher use a Bluetooth microphone to help clean up the clarity of the audio. Distance is not your friend when recording audio 6 feet away from a laptop.

In Loom, play that original video provided by the teacher and record your sign language interpreted video. Choose a corner location dedicated to the "Interpreter bubble"/Picture in Picture (PIP). Upload the video to YouTube and generate captions on YouTube and as a result, the student has access to both the audio (teacher reading the story), and the visual (see the pages of the book). There are different ways to provide visual and auditory access, such as holding up the book, document, etc. to the camera, scanning the pages and sharing, and having the interpreter in a selected corner interpreting as the teacher reads. Be flexible in the use of your space as you may have to move where the "interpreter bubble" so as not to cover up an important area on a worksheet for a given problem. Likewise, pictures vary in where they are on the page within a book.

Lastly, how to upload or provide a link for the student to access depends on the platform you are using such as the Loom link, Google Classroom, or another vendor. Make it simple for students to find and use the appropriate link. Be mindful of time limits and file size limits because each platform has a different cut off point.

Live Interpreting Off-Site (Virtual) Everyone is in the Virtual Space

For small group instruction via popular platforms such as Zoom or Google Meets etc., consider screen size and layout. You may find it easier to use two monitors so that the interpreter can be full screen and the other screen is the classroom (teacher/whiteboard, etc.) Your student may need two devices to help reduce the clutter/activity on one device.

In one-on-one with the teacher/interpreter/student, there are less screen size issues but the use of certain features such as whiteboard can cause the student to lose visual access to the interpreter/teacher. Understanding various features such as spotlight, pinning a screen, gallery view etc. will help ensure access in virtual and hybrid environments.

In order to use two screens, your student may need more than one account and will need to log in twice. In this case, connect with your school's administrators and technology team. The interpreter



may need to be able to log into an account as well if you are live interpreting common reading programs or math programs.

When recording the lesson as the teacher is conducting the session and the interpreter is providing live interpreting but your student is out sick, know what your district's protocols are for recorded lessons. It may be that the link is uploaded to a district cloud for families to access. There may be a need for a timeline for how many days access is available to the link after being out ill.

Live Interpreting On-Site Learner Off-Site

Live Interpreting on-site (school staff) but the student is off site will require additional considerations as well in the event that she/he is quarantined. If the student needing access in real time or for this pre-recorded content that the team is packaging to upload to a space such as a Google Classroom or if your school has Facebook live streaming of school board meetings, graduation ceremonies, etc., how you provide an interpreter and/or captions will require planning. This may be a Special education access issue for your school but it could also be an American's with Disability Access issue. If a Deaf adult or student within the district wants to access such public events, be sure to understand the process for the who, how, and when for such access. This can often be different individuals responsible for setting it up if it is a Special Education or ADA access issue. Different school funds can also pay for the access of the interpreter or captionist.

Cell Phone Based Options (consider data and Wi-Fi access/issues)

In some extremely rare cases and with school administration approval, video chat programs, that are linked to cell phones, have been used (i.e. Glide, Marco Polo, etc.). These tools can be included within the IEP, depending on the team's decisions, and used to help facilitate sign language vocabulary development between home and school with strict parameters in place. It may also be used as a means for an off campus student to "call" an identified individual if they do not already have a relay account. Other skills can be taught such as sending an SMS text (text from a cell phone to an email address) as an alternative.

Video Relay Service

Relay accounts are for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals to make phone calls via an interpreter. Accounts need to be linked to a parent for minors. For students that are 18 years and older, they may need parent's assistance to set up the account due to verification of individuals by the relay company/federal government to access this free service. It does require a working Videophone or Cell Phone/Tablet/Laptop with access to Wi-Fi. If one is away from the Wi-Fi connection, a data plan may be needed to access the Free relay interpreter for phone calls. This is known as Video Relay Service (VRS) which means the individuals cannot be in the same room such as Deaf person and school employee.

Within the school, be sure that both the audio and visual footage does not include others (unless the school has allowed this with written permission from the other parents/guardians of the minors in the classroom). This is a last resort option since video clips can be uploaded, edited, or shared anywhere. Educating everyone on the expectation and the appropriate use of such access is important.



VIRTUAL LEARNING SERIES

The Ohio Educator Conduct Standards as they have recently revised to include digital communication.

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Conduct/Licensure-Code-of-Professional-Conduct-for-Ohio-Ed>

The Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators provides the framework for professional conduct for all Ohio educators, including coaches, aides, teachers (including substitutes), principals, superintendents, and other licensed individuals serving schools.

Captioning Access

This access can be important even if a student is using an interpreter. Become familiar with the platform you have decided to use as the ease and access of the captions vary greatly by the vendor. The team should look at auto generated (machine) based captions and live (human captionist) as quality, timing/delays, and accuracy is important. Please note that bandwidth, audio, and visual access are still important considerations as the captionist can be on or off site.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

VRI is another aspect that schools may consider in the event that they need to provide interpreted access for students or the public. This is not a free service and may require a contract with an outside agency of the school. This often has a minute by minute cost if you are using an outside interpreting agency and you are not using a district in-house interpreter. This could potentially be used for both live or pre-recorded content.