



South Carolina

EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETING CENTER

Language Facilitators/Language Coach White Paper

A *Language Facilitator* or *Language Coach* is not an *Educational Interpreter* and does not exchange meaning between languages and cultures. *Educational Interpreters* are Related Service Providers per IDEA.

Rather, a *Language Facilitator* is a Deaf para-professional position that provides direct language instruction for Deaf students who are language deprived between preK-3rd grade. The term *Language Facilitator* is commonly confused with the facilitation of language. Following the lead of other states, it is strongly recommended this position be referred to as a *Language Coach*.

Language Facilitators or *Language Coaches* are Deaf adults who use sign language and address a “Deaf child who comes to the school environment without any language and has an urgent need to acquire a first language as soon as possible” (Cerney, B., 2007, p. 13). If a Deaf child enters the school system without sign language, *Language Coaches* are used to combat any delays in acquiring a first language by immersing the child in a natural language environment. Without addressing such language deficits it can result in language difficulties for life (Curtiss, 1977; Lane, 1976, Arpino, 2022) and long-term effects on reading comprehension, mental health, social development, and cognitive development (Friedman and Rusoe, 2015; Hall et al., 2019; Cheng et al., 2019; Hall, 2017; Cerney, J., 2007).

Without a sufficient language base to begin with, the Deaf student cannot benefit from an *Educational Interpreter*. Thus, we often see *Language Coaches* being used for students in preK-3rd grade to develop a naturally encoded language, such as ASL. *Language Coaches* generally have advanced training in language development and understand the progressive levels of language acquisition and cognitive development (Cerney, B., 2007). Beyond this language learning window, Deaf students have sufficient language competency to use an *Educational Interpreter*.

Again, a *Language Facilitator* or *Language Coach* role is different than that of an *Educational Interpreter*. An *Educational Interpreter* exchanges meaning between two languages and cultures in a public-school setting. A *Language Facilitator* is a fluent language user and works with the Deaf child to develop language in one-on-one, or in small group settings.

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