

How to effectively use

Interpreters

for Parent-Teacher Conferences
and other meetings

Providing Suggestions for ELL Parents:

Be sensitive to the cultural context of the family when making suggestions. Remember that the parents come from various backgrounds and they may have different expectations about school than your native language students. Build on the parents comfort level before you make suggestions.

- Establish a routine for checking and completing homework.
- Suggest that parents ask their children to explain what they did in school each day using their take-home papers.
- Encourage parents to use their native language with their children. We want their first language to continue to develop as they learn English.
- Encourage children to read regularly in their first or second language.
- Offer various ways for staying in touch with your email, phone, or notes to school.



2012 Baldwin-Whitehall School District



Baldwin-Whitehall
School District

Understanding the Terms:

Interpreter: A person who orally converts the spoken word from one language to another.

Translator: A person who converts text to another language in writing.

ESL: English as a Second Language class

ELL: English Language Learner

The Baldwin- Whitehall School District will provide bilingual interpreters to help school staff communicate with Limited English Proficient families. An interpreter can be particularly helpful in assisting with parent-teacher conferences. Knowing how to effectively work with the interpreter during the conference will greatly benefit the parent, student and teacher.

The Skyward system lists your student's home language as well as the parents' names. Check with your ESL teachers, social worker or principals to learn the parents' level of English fluency and verify the need for an interpreter. These staff members have the interpreter list and can guide you to the appropriate individual. In the event we cannot get an interpreter in person, BWSD uses Deaf Talk. Deaf Talk is a telephone conference call system with you, the parents and an interpreter. Deaf Talk is used in the office conference room or social worker's office. Your principal has the telephone number and the district's access code. You call the number, tell the operator our access code for billing purposes, ask for the language you need, and give the parent's phone number and a brief explanation. (For example: I am a teacher calling a parent about the child's grades.) They will then connect with the parents and you can begin the discussion. If more than one staff member is present for the conference call, be sure to introduce everyone.

Using interpreters at meetings

Always use an interpreter from either the BWSD list or Deaf Talk. Not every bilingual person has the language proficiency to interpret parent-teacher conferences. Friends and siblings are not always reliable and have great difficulty being impartial.

Creating the best environment:

- Decide who will initiate greetings and introductions.
- Have the interpreter sit next to the parent.
- Look at and speak directly to the parent.
- Make a positive personal comment about the student.
- Allow enough time. Interpreted conversations usually take longer than normal conferences.

Conveying information:

- Explain one idea using two or three sentences, and then pause for interpreting.
- Do not shuffle papers or talk to others while the interpreter is speaking.
- Explain acronyms (such as RTII or ESL) and educational terms.
- Avoid using educational jargon, slang or figures of speech. Direct and simple statements are the easiest to translate and will not be misconstrued.
- Provide examples of written work, projects or assignments.
- Explain the use of your communication tools such as newsletters, agendas, behavior logs and take home folders.
- Ask parents if they have any questions.
- Check for understanding and clarify if necessary.

