



# Working with Interpreters in the Classroom

The following is a list of suggestions that will facilitate the participation of deaf and hard of hearing students in and out of the classroom.

- *The interpreter's role is to facilitate communication. Think of them as "Human Audio-Visual Equipment." This means: please remember to direct your communication to the deaf student, not to the interpreter. Avoid phrases such as "ask her..." or "tell him...", instead talk to the deaf student directly, even though they will be looking at the interpreter.*
- **Familiarity with the subject matter will enhance the quality of the interpreted message. It would be helpful if you could share with the interpreter: outlines, texts, class syllabus, and any other information you feel pertinent to the situation. Add them as an observer on Canvas.**
  - *Interpreters normally interpret one or two sentences behind the speaker. So speak naturally at a reasonable, moderate pace, and keeping in mind that the interpreter must listen and understand the concept before signing it.*
  - **Interpreters translate what you say. The fundamental role of interpreters is to effectively and impartially facilitate communication between persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and hearing persons. They may have to explain, expand on, or repeat what you have said. Their main role is not to be a participant in the class, or tutor, however their translation of what has been said may take longer to convey, because SIGN LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH and the interpreter has to meet the linguistic needs of the Deaf person.**
    - *Allow time during class discussions for the student to raise his/her hand, be recognized and ask questions or make comments through the interpreter. The interpreter may voice for the student or the student may voice for him/herself. Interpreters voice without censoring what the deaf student signs and some students voice for themselves. Remember to allow only one person to speak at a time.*
  - **Keep lines of sight free for visual access to information. In class, the interpreter will attempt to stand or sit in direct line with the student, you, and any visual aids.**
    - *Inform the interpreter in advance if there is an audiovisual element in a presentation, so arrangements can be made for lighting and positioning. Please use videos that have accurate closed captions—please preview all videos with the sound OFF to determine the quality of the captioning.*
  - **Avoid talking while students are focused on written class work. The deaf student cannot read or write AND watch the interpreter at the same time. Please be willing to repeat!**
    - *For interactive situations, semi-circles or circles work best for deaf and hard- of-hearing students—not rows and columns.*
  - **When particularly important information is being covered, be sure to convey it very clearly. Notices of quizzes, tests, assignments, class cancellations, etc. can be written on the board to insure understanding.**

If you have any additional problems or concerns, please feel free to contact the **Debra Radcliffe-Borsch** in the Disability Support Service office at **443-518-3348**, or email her at [drborsch@howardcc.edu](mailto:drborsch@howardcc.edu) or stop by the RCF Student Services Hall, Room 302, and she will be happy to assist you.