

Building Authentic Access: Understanding Systems, Collaboration, & Student-Centered Interpreting in K-12 Education

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2026 Silent Garden Lecture

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Session Overview



Reframing what we do



School interpreting as an Ecological System



Meeting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing student where they are



The state of the field: EIPA and standards of practice



Interpreting with a Deaf-Heart



Resources

Reframing School Interpreting

- Educational Interpreting → School Interpreting
- Interpreters as related service providers



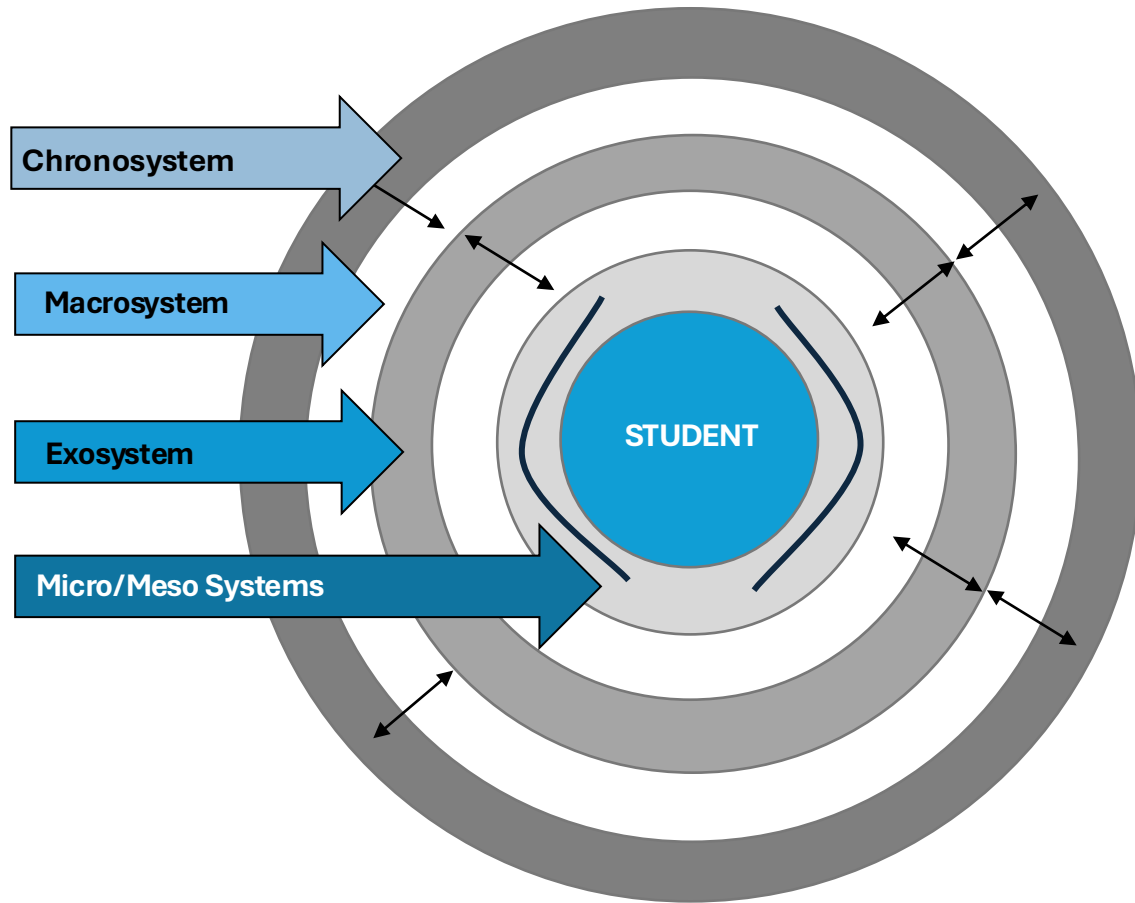
(Brimm, 2018; Fitzmaurice, 2018; Johnson et al., 2023; Lawson, 2021; National Association of Interpreters in Education, 2019)



School Interpreting as An Ecological System

Ecological System Theory

The system includes more than *just* the student and interpreter!



Student: “Active agent” in their learning

Related Service Personnel (e.g., interpreter):
Microsystem

Educational Team Interaction: Mesosystems

Organization Relationships/Influences: Exosystem

Social Influences (e.g., values, practices, and cultural perspectives): Macrosystem

Historical/Temporal Influences (e.g., pandemic):
Chronosystem

(Girardin, 2023; Johnson et al., 2023)
Originally adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1977

System-Level Factors Shape Access

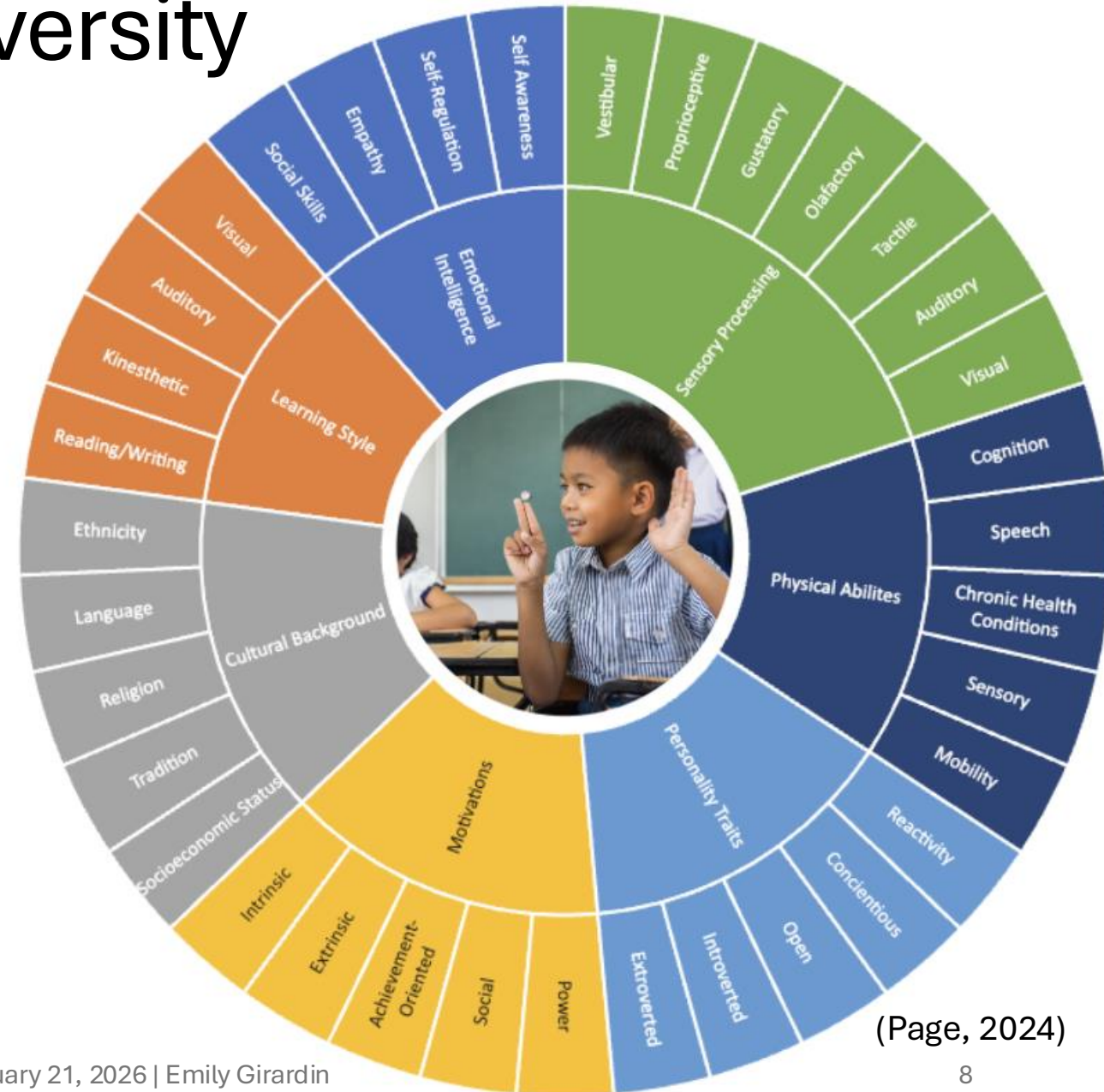
- Through this lens, a new perspective is considered:
 - The *interrelatedness* of all aspects of the K-12 environment – decisions, social conditions, content, capabilities, intentions, personalities – all impact the interpreting work.
- Entire educational system has a ripple effect on the student:
 - The knowledge and skills of the school interpreter
 - The quality of collaboration of the educational team
 - School district's expectations and decisions in the hiring of interpreters and team members
 - Contracting agencies' decisions on who to send for K-12 assignments
 - State level personnel decisions regarding standards for school interpreters
 - The guidelines of the national organizations
 - National Association of Interpreters in Education
 - Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf



Meeting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Where They Are

Recognizing Student Diversity

- Intersection of hearing status, disability, culture, and language background
- Each student's identity and lived experience shapes their access



(Page, 2024)

Hearing and Technology Diversity

The National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders (2021) state:

Worldwide, ~736,900 cochlear implants have been implanted.

In the U.S.:

- 2-3 out of every 1,000 children are born with a hearing loss.
- 1 in 5 teens experience some degree of hearing loss.
- ~118,100 cochlear implants have been implanted in adults.
- ~65,000 cochlear implants have been implanted in children.

Even a mild hearing loss can cause a student to miss as much as 50 percent of classroom discussion.

“Recognizing the intersectionality of students helps ensure that better [interpreting] services are provided. Each student has characteristics, dispositions, and backgrounds that influence their language and cognitive development, how they process information, and how they interact in their educational setting.”

(Johnson et al., 2023, p. 13)

Why this knowledge matters?

- Tailoring interpretation
 - Considering language
 - Considering cognitive load, processing time, sensory integration
- Collaborating with IEP team
 - Observations / data reporting
 - Contributing to IEP development

Example of Application

Student

- High school senior pursuing an applied studies diploma
- Hard of hearing student who was recently diagnosed with autism
- Uses hearing aids and FM system
- Has an interpreter and an instructional assistant in all classes

Classroom

- An inclusive US. History class co-taught by a regular education teacher and special education teacher.
- Students are answering pre-lesson questions

VIDEO EXAMPLE



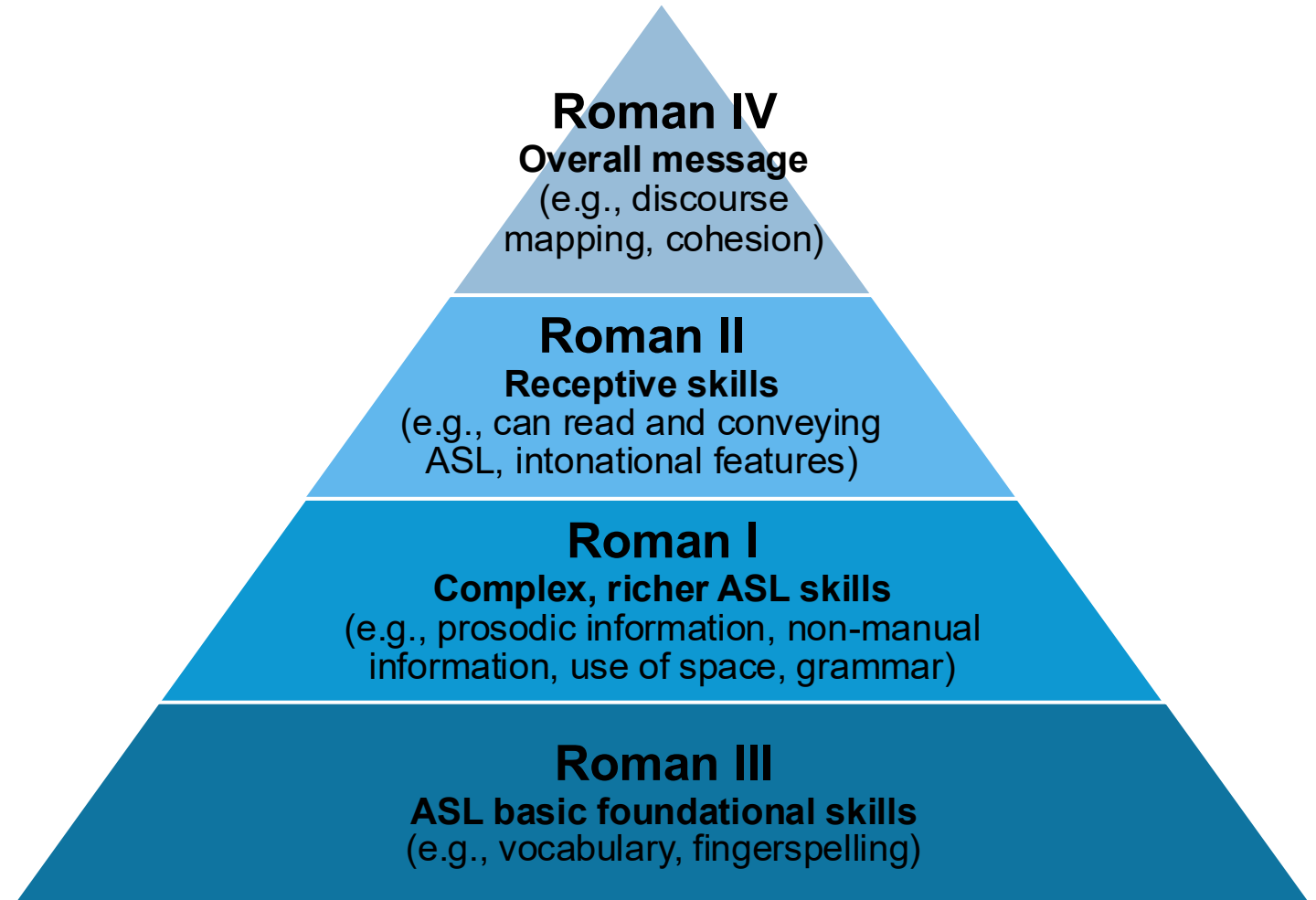
The State of the Field: EIPA and Standards of Practice

EIPA Scores – Adding Meaning to the Numbers

EIPA = the most widely recognized school-specific assessment tool.

An overall average EIPA score may be misleading (4 domain sub-scores)

The score is a tool, not a trophy





Assessment Outcomes to Guide Growth

A combination of:

- Language competence
- Grammatical skills
- Discourse mapping
- Cohesion

are **ESSENTIAL** for scoring
EIPA ≥ 4.0

(Cates, 2021; Johnson et al., 2023)



State of the Field – Published Statistics

Johnson and colleagues (2023) found:

- 6 states – no published employment standards
- 24 states – provisional pathways to work without meeting standards
- 43 states – no minimum educational standards
- 13 states – no minimum standard for interpreting skills

Department of Education's Office of Special Education Program:

- Yearly reports to Congress on how IDEA is doing
- If a state doesn't have a published employment standard, then everyone in that category is considered fully qualified.
- Illusion of qualified access being provided to deaf and hard of hearing students

No state or federal reporting aligns with the best practice guidelines published by the National Association of Interpreters in Education (www.naiedu.org)



Interpreting with Deaf-Heart

Interpreters committed to student-centered practice

- **We cannot accept the status quo.**
- By the time interpreters connect with the student for whom they are interpreting, the child may have had additional impacts by incomplete access to language, which impacts their life experiences, world knowledge, and developmental milestones.
- Interpreters cannot save the world; however, **we can make a dramatic difference** in the educational life of the child sitting in front of us.
- Interpreters are an essential part of the educational system and absolutely must commit to serving each student's best interest.
- Interpreters are the ones who provide access to the educational content, connections, and interactions. **Our knowledge and skills have an immediate and long-term impact.**

Individual Accountability – Some Action Steps

Deepen your collaboration – our work does not happen in a silo

- Participate on the educational team
- Provide documentation of observations, recommendations, and resources

Expand knowledge – be committed to lifelong learning

- Meeting your state's standards does not mean learning ends
- Use diagnostic tools (e.g., EIPA) to target areas for skills development
- All related service providers are required to have continuing education

Remain responsive to each learner - honor the diversity of students



Resources

Interpreting

- Professional Organization - National Association of Interpreters in Education: <https://naiedu.org>
 - Professional Guidelines for Interpreting in Educational Settings (1st Edition): <https://naiedu.org/guidelines/>
 - Educational Interpreter Code of Ethics: <https://naiedu.org/codeofethics/>
 - State Standards: <https://naiedu.org/state-standards/>
- Johnson, L. J., Taylor, M. M., Schick, B., Brown, S., Bolster, L., & Girardin, E. G. (2023). *Complexities in educational interpreting: An investigation into patterns of practice* (2nd ed.). Interpreting Consolidated. <https://www.aslinterpreting.com/complexities-in-educational-interpreting/>
- Rowley, A.J. (2018). Educational interpreting from deaf eyes. In T.K. Holcomb & D.H. Smith (Eds.), *Deaf eyes on interpreting* (174-186). Gallaudet University Press. <https://gupress.gallaudet.edu/Books/D/Deaf-Eyes-on-Interpreting>
- BoysTown National Research Hospital EIPA Resources: <https://eipa.boystown.org/resources>
 - EIPA Levels in Action: <https://eipa.boystown.org/eipa-in-action>
- Preparing School Interpreters (OSEP: H325K210024): Ongoing Growth Resource: [PSI Project – Ongoing Growth Resource](#)

Students

- Center for Atypical Language Interpreting: <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/cali/>
- Hands & Voices Article on Deaf+ and resources: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/dhh-plus.html>
- Hands & Voices DHH Plus Inclusion Checklist for Family-to-Family Support Programs: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/dhhplus-inclusion-checklist.pdf>
- Dr. Thomas Holcomb lecture “Diversity in the Deaf Community” - <https://youtu.be/5jlpYiWdtVk?si=vkRzhcMZE01PtrlP>



Resources con't

Collaboration

- Brimm, K. (2021). *Interpreters collaborating in K-12 education*. In Advances in Educational Interpreting (Edited by E.A. Winston & S. B. Fitzmaurice). Gallaudet University Press. <https://www.amazon.com/Advances-Educational-Interpreting-Elizabeth-Winston/dp/1944838910>
 - Video summary of the article: https://youtu.be/9upADlOsWL0?si=6_KV_xSmN5ef-dWJ
- Fitzmaurice, S. B. (2021). *The role of the educational interpreter: Perceptions of administrators and teachers*. Gallaudet University Press. <https://www.amazon.com/Role-Educational-Interpreter-Perceptions-Administrators/dp/1944838937>
- Example of tools for interpreters, in partnership with team members, to gather / share information with the IEP team:
 - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) & Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP): <https://www.northmsec.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Thurs-6.17.21-Handout-1-Positive-Approaches-to-Supporting-Bilinguals-.pdf>
 - PARC: https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/PARC_2011_ReadinessChecklists.pdf
 - Dr. Cheryl Johnson interview "The PARC & Collaboration" - <https://youtu.be/TZ5fZqH33To>
 - Classroom Participation Questionnaire for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/4.c-Classroom_Participation_Questionnaire_fillable.pdf
- The Impact of CDI's in School w/ Dr. Rosemary Wanis - https://youtu.be/_rKWIMnwwq74?si=E8Ym6QMX97nAoR7V

IEPs

- American Society for the Deaf – Navigating the IEP Process (Resources for Parents and Educators about IEPs) - <https://deafchildren.org/navigatingtheiepprocess/>
- The Deaf Counseling Center reminds interpreters that diagnoses can provide a framework for understanding the complexities of accommodations - https://youtu.be/1lQsK2ba8qE?si=HxjnJv_gE3tf5m3d

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- Lawson, H. (2021). Educational interpreters: Facilitating communication or facilitating education? In E. A. Winston & S. B. Fitzmaurice (Eds.), *Advances in educational interpreting* (pp. 245-265). Gallaudet University Press.
- Page, R. (2024). *Exploring student diversity in K-12: A closer look at deaf and hard of hearing students' diversity* [PowerPoint slides]. Canvas@UNC. Preparing School Interpreters Project (H325K210024).
- National Association of Interpreters in Education (2019). *Professional guidelines for interpreting in educational settings*. <https://naiedu.org/guidelines/>
- National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders (2021). *Quick statistics about hearing, balance, and dizziness*. <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing#8>